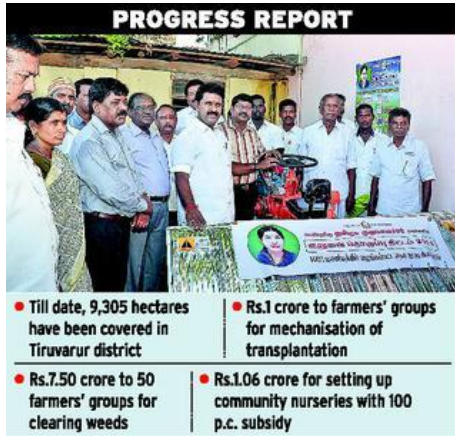


Over 24,000 hectares to be covered under kuruvai package

Rs.9.68 crore allocated to Tiruvarur for inputs, farm implements



A total area of 24,800 hectares will be brought under kuruvai in Tiruvarur district under the special package during the current cropping season using groundwater. The State government has initiated steps to provide adequate inputs and implements to farmers with a budgetary support of Rs.9.68 crore, said R.Kamaraj, Food Minister, at a function held at Valangaiman to distribute assistance to farmers on Sunday. Referring to the shortage of farm labourers, he said the package included mechanisation of various processes right from transplanting the nursery to clearing weeds. A sum of Rs.1 crore has been allocated to 50 farmers' groups for using machines for transplanting nurseries, and another Rs.7.50 crore to equal number of groups for clearing weeds. Mr.Kamaraj appealed to farmers to use groundwater judiciously with the help of the free PVC pipes supplied by the State government. Every aspect of agriculture activity during the season has been well designed and community nursery units with 100 per cent subsidy were being setup at an outlay of Rs.1.06 crore. Zinc sulphate, gypsum, and other nutrients were also being supplied to farmers, he said. Power supply On the question of assured power supply, the Minister said 12-hour-uninterrupted power supply was being provided from June 6. So far, under kuruvai, 4,696 hectares have been covered under SRI method, and 4,250 hectares under normal cultivation. A few farmers have also adopted broadcast technique in 328 hectares. Preparation is on for bringing the balance area under cultivation. Mr.Kamaraj gave away fertilizers, pesticides, and other inputs worth Rs.24 lakh to 71 farmers. M.Mathivanan, Collector, presided over the meeting. P.Manimaran, District Revenue Officer, and K.Mayilvaganan, Joint Director of Agriculture, were present.

Spurt in farming after good showers

'The rainfall is expected to continue for another week'



Farmers sowing cotton seeds in Chandrabanda village, nearly 20 km from away Raichur, on Monday.— PHOTO: SANTOSH SAGAR

Raichur district, which was facing a drought-like situation, witnessed intense farming activities on Monday thanks to the fairly good rains that lashed the entire district on Sunday night. The farmers were found busy on their fields across the district.

Satisfactory rainfall

While Halapur in Manvi taluk recorded the highest rainfall with 64 mm, Kavital in Manvi taluk and Lingasugur received the lowest rainfall with 5 mm each. Other major areas that received good rainfall were Jegarakal (48.6 mm), Yeragera (40.0 mm) in Raichur taluk, Guddur (54.3 mm), Balaganur (45.0 mm) and Turvihah (43.0 mm) in Sindhanur taluk. Other areas received satisfactory rainfall. “Sindhanur, Manvi, Lingasugur and Raichur taluks have received good rainfall. The farmers can start sowing green gram, red gram, cotton, sunflower and other monsoon crops. According to the weather forecast by meteorological department, the rainfall is expected to continue for another week and farmers need not worry,” Joint Director, Department of Agriculture Rudreshappa told *The Hindu* .

Sufficient stock

He said that the district had sufficient stock of sowing seeds and fertilizers which would be distributed to farmers through Farmers’ Facilitation Centres spread across the district. “We have 57,000 metric tonnes of fertilizers, 37,000 quintals of sowing seeds. We have started distribution of seeds and fertilizers through 37 Farmers’ Facilitation Centres spread throughout the district,” he said. He appealed the farmers to take the receipts on buying seeds and fertilizers and keep it with them till the end of the season. He also requested them to contact the officials of his department in case the traders demanded unfair prices or other such malpractices.

Ex ZP members calls for Bidar to be declared as drought-hit

‘DECLARE BIDAR DROUGHT-HIT’

D.K Sidram, former zilla panchayat member, has threatened to hold a protest rally in Bhalki on July 22, to press for the declaration of Bidar as a drought-hit district. Farmers are suffering from delayed rains. The government should provide crop loss

compensation, set up fodder banks, ensure drinking water supply, and prepare to set up gruel centre. For all this to happen, Bidar should be declared as a drought hit district.

Erode farmers dread El Nino phenomenon affecting monsoon pattern

R. KRISHNAMOORTHY

Having suffered setbacks for years due to inadequacy of water for cultivation, farmers in the district now dread indications of El Nino weather phenomenon affecting the South-West monsoon pattern. This year, the Public Works Department has been able to release water only for the old ayacut area of the Bhavani Sagar Dam. Last month, water was released from the Kodiveri Dam for irrigating 25,504 acres wetted by the Arakkankottai - Thadapalli channels, benefitting farmers in Gobichettipalayam, Anthiyur and Bhavani regions. Absence of rain so far from the North-East monsoon and the precarious water position in the Bhavani Sagar Dam has raised apprehensions among the farming community in the Kalingarayan and Lower Bhavani Project ayacut areas that their predicament would precipitate further. According to official sources, the Public Works Department is in a quandary. Last year, the department was in a position to release water during August for irrigating 15,743 acres in the Kalingarayan canal ayacut, and 1.03 lakh acre in the LBP canal ayacut. This year, the department has drawn flak from the farming community for not giving any commitment so far on the water release schedule. Farmers' associations have planned a series of agitations for water release, knowing full well that they would be fighting a losing battle. The PWD, sources said, is not prepared to take the risk as it had already been taken to task by the farmers as well as the State Government for not fulfilling the commitment it had made for water release for three cycles of special wetting earlier this year. The department was able to keep the commitment only for two cycles with available water in the Bhavani Sagar Dam, but could not implement the third cycle of release in the absence of anticipated rainfall. Usually, the district receives more rainfall from the North-East monsoon season. This year, the scarcity is already being felt acutely. In the event of failure of North-East monsoon, the priority would be for conserving whatever water is available for drinking purposes, the sources said. In this backdrop, the El Nino phenomenon that would affect the pattern of South-West monsoon could turn out to be the proverbial last straw on their back, the farmers fear. Only a depression in the sea would save the situation for the farmers, PWD sources said.

Farmer Producer Organisation concept yet to catch up in T.N.

C. JAISANKAR

The year 2014 is being observed as the "Year of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPO)" by the Government of India. More than six months have passed, but the concept is yet to catch the imagination of farmers and other stakeholders in Tamil Nadu. It (FPO) is one of the important initiatives taken by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation of the Ministry of Agriculture to mainstream the idea of promoting and strengthening member-based institutions of farmers. As per the concept, farmers, who are the producers of agricultural products, can form groups and register themselves under the Indian

Companies Act. These can be created both at State, cluster, and village levels. It is aimed at engaging the farmer companies to procure agricultural products and sell them. Supply of inputs such as seed, fertilizer and machinery, market linkages, training & networking and financial and technical advice are also among the major activities of FPO. The Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) has been nominated as a central procurement agency to undertake price support operations under Minimum Support Price (MSP) for pulses and oilseeds through the FPO's. However, not many FPO's are registered in the State. As per a rough estimate, the number of FPO's will not be more than 40 as on date. It is said that many of them are yet to be registered under the Indian Companies Act. Of them, just 6 or 7 are successfully functioning with the support of well wishers, who motivated the farmers to form producer companies. But the statistics of Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) shows that only one FPO is registered in the State. As per the statistics of SFAC, out of 192 registered FPO's in India, 34 firms are functioning in Madhya Pradesh, followed by Maharashtra with 32. There are 22 farmers producer companies in Rajasthan. When asked about the lack of penetration of the FPO concept among farmers, a senior agricultural official told *The Hindu* that though the concept had many advantages to transform the economy of progressive farmers it had not achieved the expected success. However, about six companies in different parts of the State were doing well with the support of outside stakeholders. The performance was almost same in most of the States. He added that there was a need to synchronise the stakeholders including the State and Central governments, officials, bankers, financial institutions, private sector organisations, civil society groups, elected members and others to popularise the FPO concept. A concerted comprehensive campaign was needed to create awareness among farmers to start companies.

Farmers protest

The members of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam staged a demonstration in front of the Tiruverumbur union office urging the State government to declare the State as drought hit. They demanded the Centre to set up the Cauvery Water Management Board. Their other demands included waiving of all farm loans, take up dredging, compensation to plantain farmers whose crop was damaged in the gale.

Bellandur lake gets a green makeover

1,000 saplings planted by SayGreen volunteers and defence personnel



Members of the SayTrees environment trust planting saplings at the Bellandur Lake bed along with defence personnel in Bangalore.—Photo: V. Sreenivasa Murthy

As many as 1,000 saplings of 20 different varieties were planted by around 600 volunteers and defence personnel along Bellandur lake on Saturday morning. The massive sapling plantation drive was initiated by SayTrees, a non-governmental organisation. Native varieties of neem, amla, Aakasha Mallige, Champaka, honge, jackfruit, Indian Oak and Indian Willow, were chosen and planted. The saplings were brought from nurseries in Tamil Nadu and a few on the city's outskirts, said Sumant Parmar from SayTrees. Sudha from HP, who volunteered in the plantation drive, appreciated the effort that had gone into choosing saplings that would support and complement the local ecosystem. "It is good to come together for the cause of seeing a greener Bangalore courtesy SayTrees and ASC Centre (North)," remarked Rinku Tripathi, wife of Brigadier Alok Tripathi, Commandant, ASC Centre (North). SayTrees hopes to plant over 10,000 trees in the city this monsoon. The NGO plants the tallest saplings in the safest place available and maintains them for a year to ensure high survivability, Mr. Parmar said.

'Give priority to agriculture in Budget'

SARATH BABU GEORGE



Official statistics prove that there has been a marked fall in the production of food crops in the State.— File photo

The Kuttanad Vikasana Samithi has urged the Central government to ensure priority for agriculture in the Budget. This was required to revive the sector, it said. In a statement, samithi executive director Thomas Peelianickal said there has been a marked fall in the production of food crops in the State. While the State produced 35-40 per cent of the total demand in 1980-81, the corresponding figure stood at 13 per cent currently. Official statistics also prove that the land under paddy cultivation and the productivity have both come down. The area under cultivation has gone down from 2,08,160 hectares in 2011-12 to 1,97,277 in 2012-13. Likewise, paddy production has also fallen from 5,68,990 tonnes in 2011-12 to 5,08,290 in 2012-13. Similarly, coconut production has decreased 23 per cent since 2012-13. Considering that the year was observed by the United Nations as the International Year of Family Farming, the Central government must evolve schemes that promote cultivation in all households. Organic farming must be provided high priority in the Budget. According to Fr. Peeliyanickal, cattle, poultry and honeybee rearing, and fish farming were not considered as part of agriculture by the Central government. This has denied the benefits of various schemes, including loan subsidy, to a large number of workers in the sector. They must be brought within the ambit of such schemes to ensure their well-being. Around 5 lakh hectares on land remained barren in the State and nearly one lakh hectares could be used for paddy cultivation. A Paddy Land Renovation Mission must be constituted by including scientists, environmentalists and agricultural engineers. The Central government must shoulder the expenses for the endeavour. A legislation that facilitates providing barren land on lease for cultivation should be enacted. Around 29 lakh landless farmers in the State would benefit from the recommended move, he said. Farmers, who have no other sources of livelihood, must be provided agricultural loans for their various needs including construction of houses, healthcare, marriage and education. Minimum prices must be set by the government for various food crops in a manner that the farmer managed the expenses incurred during cultivation. Interest-free loans must be provided for purchasing farming equipments. Intrusion of saline water into fields and lightning must be considered as natural calamities. He called for strengthening the functioning of the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture and the National Mission on Seeds. Agro-machinery service centres must be set up at all panchayats to ensure the effective functioning of equipment owned by 'padasekharam' committees. Fertiliser manufacturing companies must no more be permitted to fix the maximum retail prices of their products. The prices of fertilisers must be brought down to ensure that the farmers received decent returns for their efforts, Fr. Peelianickal said.

State yet to initiate action against onion hoarders

BIJU GOVIND



The district administration is yet to begin operations against traders and merchants for hoarding onions and potatoes despite the Centre bringing the two vegetables under the Essential Commodities Act. Last week, the Centre, following advice from the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, brought onion and potato within the preview of stockholding limits. This was after prices of onion and potatoes began skyrocketing. Retail markets in the city are selling both between Rs 32 and Rs 40 a kg. District Collector C.A. Latha told *The Hindu* on Monday that the district administration had got no communication so far from the State government in this regard. "For that reason, we have not carried out any surprise checks. Possibly, we may have to seek alternative steps to check prices," she said. The onus of carrying out the crackdown on hoarding is on the State government. Subsequently, the Department of Civil Supplies in each district has to adopt measures against hoarding. Retail outlets in the city have been selling onions and potatoes without any ceiling. Onions command a price above Rs 32 a kg while potatoes, anywhere between Rs 32 and 40 a kg. Green grocers sell both the vegetables at prices depending on the wholesale market while local department stores, hyper markets and multi-brands have fixed their own prices depending on the availability. Official sources said that the State government is required to impose stock holding limits. The rule could be made applicable for the entire year. The soaring prices of vegetables have been attributed to various reasons including hoarding due to speculation that a weak monsoon would affect the kharif crop in other States. Many believe that traders are creating an artificial scarcity on onion and potatoes during the month of Ramzan. The consumption of these vegetables had grown following the rise in population of migrant workers. Onions and potatoes have been chiefly used by the labourers from the north, Ms. Latha admits. Consumers believe that the prices would shoot up unless the district administration initiates action against hoarders. The stockholding limit ensures that traders cannot stock more than a prescribed quantum.

State to take up soil testing of farm lands

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has said that the government would take up soil testing in the agricultural lands of all farmers in Telangana to improve productivity. The results of testing would be computerised and stored in mandal offices, Mr. Rao told a meeting of officers here on Monday. He said the production by farmers was good, but not the productivity. Mr. Rao added that Telangana had a typical mix of black cotton, red, sandy and light soils, giving farmers immense potential for seed production. Telangana could become the seed bowl of country if the potential was exploited.

Extension activity nil

However, the extension activity of agricultural officials left much to be desired. Even research at Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University had gone down. The imparting of knowledge to farmers by officials was almost zero. He asked Agriculture Minister Pocharam Srinivas Reddy to visit Israel along with agriculture officials to learn good agricultural practices. Mr. Rao said the government had set a target of planting 33,000

saplings in every village each year to improve green cover. The aim was to create an ambience of travelling on roads in the forest.

Collector lauds organic farming at Gosala

Krishna district Collector M. Raghunandan Rao on Monday lauded the organic farming practices and conservation of rare breed of cattle varieties at Gosala situated at Pinagudurulanka village in Krishna district. Mr. Rao accompanied by the progressive farmer and environment activist Y. Vijayarama Raju visited the agriculture field where the farmer experiments with several organic methods.

Bengal gram growers in distress as market crashes

S. MURALI

The price of the pulse falls to Rs. 2,700 a quintal as against Rs. 8,000 earlier

THROWN INTO A CAULDRON
RYOT SPEAK

With banks issuing notices, farmers are clueless as to how they will wriggle out of the crisis

Piling up of stocks in cold storages is due to indiscriminate imports from Australia, Canada and Iran

"Anti-farmer" EXIM policy has caused over 21 lakh quintals of Bengal gram lying in cold storages

Centre should explore markets for KAK-II and Mexican bold varieties cultivated in the district

State government should come out with a **Rs. 200-crore** market intervention scheme to bail out growers

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) regime has put paid to hopes of Bengal gram growers in Prakasam district of realising a decent return for their produce for the third year in succession. The "anti-farmer" EXIM policy of the Union government has resulted in over 21 lakh quintals of exportable variety of Bengal gram lying in cold storages in the wake of the alleged indiscriminate imports from Australia, Canada and Iran, lamented farmers at a meeting called by the Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangam (APRS) here on Monday. Farmers, who have cultivated Bengal gram in 2.50 lakh acres in the district, are clueless as to how they will wriggle out of the distressing situation, as banks have issued notices to auction their produce. "The situation has turned from bad to worse, with the price of the principal pulse crop in the district plummeting to as low as Rs. 2,700 a quintal as against Rs. 8,000 which prevailed three years ago," said APRS-led Tenant Farmers' Association State secretary N. Ranga Rao. "As a short-term measure, the State government should come out with a Rs. 200-crore market intervention scheme to bail out the growers, as it is a question of life and death for them," said YSRC Farmers' Wing district convenor Mareddy Subba Reddy. "As a long-term measure, the Centre should

explore new markets for the exportable KAK-II and Mexican bold varieties cultivated in the district as an alternative to tobacco,” said APRS district vice-president K. Koteswara Rao. He added that farmers could continue cultivation only if the Narendra Modi government implemented the M.S. Swaminathan panel report. Ongole Agriculture Market Committee chairman A. Ganasyam underscored the need to strengthen marketing network and regulating crop size. Meanwhile, Prakasam district TDP president D. Janardhana Rao promised farmers to arrange for a meeting with Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Agriculture Minister P. Pulla Rao and to ensure that stocks were lifted by offering a bonus price to offset losses. TDP ryots wing district president K. Venkaiah called for a united struggle cutting across party lines to put pressure on Union and State governments to intervene in the market on their behalf. The meeting resolved to impress upon the State government to take up the issue with Union Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitaraman, APRS district secretary D. Gopinath said. The farmers also pressed for a minimum of Rs. 3,500 a quintal for the local variety, Rs. 4,500 for KAK-II variety and Rs. 5,000 for the Mexican bold variety.

State criticised for not providing farm loans

The Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangam on Monday criticised the State government for failing to ensure farm loans during kharif season.

Pending dues

In a statement here, Rythu Sangam general secretary Ravula Venkaiah said the banks were not providing loans to farmers until they repay the previous dues. He said that many farmers were added to the list of defaulters for failing to repay the farm loans that were taken in the past.

Loan waivers

He alleged that the government was delaying the loan waivers, citing RBI guidelines. He asked how can Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu promise to waive loans despite knowing that it was going to be a huge financial burden on the State's exchequer post bifurcation.

Banana farmers reel under 'butterfly' attack

T. NANDAKUMAR



Larva damages the whole leaf save the midrib

Scientists at the Kerala Agricultural University have called for heightened vigil against a new and devastating pest that threatens to blight banana crops in the State. The pest, identified as the Banana Skipper or Palm Redeye (*Erionota thrax*), is a chocolate-brown butterfly belonging to the family Hesperidae. It is also known as Banana Leaf Roller because its larva or caterpillar cuts the leaves at the edges and makes a series of cylindrical rolls before developing into a pupa. A heavy infestation could damage the whole banana leaf, leaving only the midrib intact. According to Dr. Arthur Jacob, Professor and Head of the KAU's instructional farm at Vellayani near here, the pest was reported last year from different locations in the State. He said the damage was now found to be spreading to the southern parts, especially Thiruvananthapuram, a major producer of banana. The infestation has been found to be heavy in a few banana farms at Kalliyoor, Kakkamoola and Pallichal near Vellayani. Originally reported from Southeast Asia, the banana leaf roller pest is distributed in Northeast India, Sikkim, Nepal, the Andaman islands, Mauritius, Malaysia, China, Vietnam, Hawaii and Papua New Guinea. Measuring 4 to 6 cm in length, the white powder-coated caterpillar prefers banana leaves though it is occasionally found to infest coconut palms also. Citing reports from other countries, Dr. Arthur said natural control was the best remedy. The introduction of natural parasites has been advocated to bring the damage under control. An expert team of the KAU has advised farmers to be vigilant against the spread of the pest. The scientists have called for field scouting and periodic destruction of the rolled leaves by burning to kill the larvae. "Chemical control measures are seldom required, but if the manual removal of the leaf rolls is not possible, treatments timed to control the newly hatched larvae may be attempted with the backing of field studies," Dr. Arthur said.

Farmers decry poor representation on panels

MITHOSH JOSEPH

17 panels formed for Farmers' Day fete

Various farmers' organisations in the district have voiced dissent over the non-inclusion of their representatives in lead roles in the sub-committees formed to host the State-level Farmers' Day celebrations in Kozhikode from August 16. Representatives of farmers' organisations alleged that the 17 sub-committees recently formed to conduct the four-day State-level event had elected chairmen who had hardly any link with the agriculture sector. "Even two lawyers have been included in the group to lead the State government's formal celebration for farmers," they said. Kulathingal Johnson, district president of Kerala Karshaka Union (M), said the neglect shown towards farmers' associations had dampened their spirit. "District leaders of the organisations, including the Kerala Karshaka Sanghom, Kisan Sabha, Kerala Karshaka Union and Karshaka Morcha, have openly expressed their dissent," he said. According to Mr. Johnson, Farmers' Day was the only occasion when farmers got an opportunity to draw the attention of the authorities to their problems, dreams and intervention expected on the part of the government for their

welfare. “How can we be part of a Farmers’ Day celebration where farmers have hardly any role to play?” When contacted, a senior officer of the Agriculture Department said the State-level celebration was charted in such a way to include only select delegates from various organisations. “We had invited representatives of all the major political parties to the sub-committee formation meeting in Kozhikode on June 22, but, none of them found any fault with the way the committees were formed, he said. He said there would be separate programmes in each panchayat under the leadership of Krishi Bhavans to observe Farmers’ Day. “In those programmes, we have directed the organisers to strictly include the representatives of all leading farm organisations,” he added. P. Viswan, former MLA, and currently the district president of Karshaka Sanghom, said he was made a member of the accommodation committee formed for the State-level celebrations. “We will have to rethink the way we should cooperate with such kind of a Farmers’ Day celebrations,” he said.

Farmers may lose standing crops on 2.13 lakh ha

H. S. NARASIMHA KUMAR



The Hindu Farmers in Mysore district are apprehensive of delay in rains as agriculture will be stunted. File photo: M.A. Sriram

Agriculture Dept. to suggest alternative cropping if situation does not improve

Standing crops in over 2.13 lakh hectares sown during the Kharif season in Mysore district may wither if there is insufficient rain in the next 15 days. Except for Nanjangud taluk, which received normal rainfall, all six other taluks in the district have received less rainfall. Owing to failure of monsoons, there is a chance that farmers may lose standing crops. Mr. Shivakumar, Deputy Director of Agriculture, told *The Hindu* that the department would wait another week and if there was no rain by then, the department would take up a drive to motivate farmers to go in for alternative cropping system.

Horse gram, ragi

It will educate farmers about the pros in taking up alternative crops such as horse gram, beans and ragi and making good on losses incurred, he said and added that the

department had ensured that seeds and fertilizers would be available to the farmers if they go in for alternate crops. The total targeted sowing area in the district is 4.19 lakh hectares, of which sowing has been completed in over 2.13 lakh hectares. Standing crops require good rainfall and at least two or three showers may rejuvenate the standing crops, according to the agriculture officer. The Deputy Director said that the annual normal rainfall of Mysore district was 801.4 mm and average expected rainfall till July 1 was 319.1 mm. This year, only 281.1 mm rain has occurred so far. According to the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre, Mysore may get rains by July 10. Average rain fall in H.D. Kote taluk till July 4 is 395.1 mm, whereas only 326 mm has occurred. Other taluks have also received less than expected rainfall. Mr. Shivakumar said agricultural operations in the district had come to a halt owing to lack of rain in the past one and a half months. He noted that agricultural operations in most parts of the district which are rain fed might be thrown out of gear if the dry spell continued for one more week.

Date extended

The last date for insuring crops had been extended till July end, Dr. Shivakumar said, calling upon farmers to insure their crops immediately. He directed the farmers to contact their nearest Raitha Samparaka Kendras and banks to get their crops insured so that even if they incur crop losses, a major portion may get reimbursed.

Water level

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 47.63 feet on Monday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 2,446 cusecs and the discharge 2,000 cusecs.

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Tuesday, Jul 8

Max Min
35° | 26°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 89

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:47

Sunset: 06:39

Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Wednesday, Jul 9

Max Min
39° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday
Jul 10



39° | 27°
Cloudy

Friday
Jul 11



33° | 27°
Cloudy

Saturday
Jul 12



33° | 27°
Cloudy

Sunday
Jul 13



32° | 27°
Cloudy

Monday
Jul 14



33° | 27°
Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi 

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:29

Humidity: 75

Sunset: 07:22

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1002



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Delhi Government Planning to Sell Onions, Potatoes at Liquor Outlets

As part of its efforts to check prices, the Delhi government is planning to use liquor outlets in the capital to sell onions and potatoes. The idea was put forth by the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (DSIIDC) at a meeting to discuss ways to contain prices of onions and potatoes, a government official said. The meeting was chaired by the Principal Secretary (Finance) here today. Almost 250 locations in various government premises have been identified for setting up temporary

shops to sell onions and potatoes on wholesale rates.

In addition, the Delhi Jal Board will sell the vegetables at wholesale rates at 25 locations and SDMs at 33 locations. Among other departments, the Excise department will set up 15 stalls and the Public Works Department (PWD) 25. Three municipal corporations will also sell onions and potatoes at various earmarked locations. The National Co-operative Federation of India (NFFC) will be running three mobile vans and will also open shops at five locations for sale of onions and potatoes. The Principal Secretary (Finance) also directed the Commissioner (Food and Supplies) to step up efforts for sale of the vegetables at the wholesale rates through fair price shops (FPS). More than 288 FPS have already been identified for this purpose and more shops are being identified. At present, these are being sold at 70 government premises at the rate of Rs 22 per kg. This is in addition to the 70 mobile vans which are in operation and cover more than 250 locations every day. The business head of SAFAL, who was present in the meeting, said they would sell onions and potatoes on "no profit, no loss" basis for the next three months at its 380 outlets in Delhi. It was also decided that an awareness campaign will be launched to aware the people about the rates of onions and potatoes in Delhi, as well as the rates at which they are being sold at SAFAL outlets and at government offices. Delhi Lt Governor Najeeb Jung will review the steps taken by the government to check prices of these essential commodities tomorrow.

Monsoon Late, Groundwater Comes to Farmers' Rescue

Despite the delay in the arrival of southwest monsoon in the state leading to water bodies drying up, and several experts predicting a very weak monsoons this year, there is some respite. Groundwater level in many parts of Hyderabad and Rangareddy districts has improved considerably, meaning farmers can continue to rely on borewells in case of a further delay in monsoon. Thanks to the 30 percent excess rainfall received in the region last year, the water table seems to have come to the rescue of farmers this time. Chevella mandal in Rangareddy district, which has over the years, remained one of the worst in terms of groundwater levels, has recorded the highest rise of 21 metre in the water level. When water was available at 30 m depth last June, it has come up to 9 m last month. "The water table has recharged due to the 30 percent excess rainfall last year. If the monsoons are weak this year, it will reflect in the water table next year," said Ramesh Kumar, deputy director, Groundwater Department (Hyderabad and Rangareddy). Thirty of the total 37 mandals in Rangareddy districts have recorded a positive in June compared to last year. The overall increase in the district is stated to be up to 3 metres. Several mandals like Ghatkesar, Hayatnagar, Maheshwaram, Manchal, Medchal, Yacharam, Pargi, Vikarabad, Nawabpet and Pudur, apart from Chevella, have recorded a rise of between 4 m and 11 m. According to him, even a normal monsoon this year would reflect negatively on the water table next year. "Percolation of rainwater is almost nil with the city growing into a concrete jungle and tanks in the peripheral areas vanishing. Rainwater harnessing, if not taken up on a large scale, would not help," he said. The data for Hyderabad city's 11 mandals shows figures that remain marginally the same as last year. When groundwater, on an average, was available at a depth of 9.91 metre June last year,

it has improved to a depth of up to 9.72 metre, with Nampally mandal recording an improvement of 5.13 metre. When water was available only at a depth of 12.6 metre last year, this June water is available at 7.4 metre depth. Groundwater levels have improved from 14.3 metre depth to 4.20 metre this year, an improvement of 10.10 metre. At the same time, in Bantawaram mandal where water was available last year at 27.6 metre depth, it is now available at 15.92 metre, an improvement of 11.69 metre. Pargi mandal recorded an improvement of 8.9 m, followed by Hayatnagar, Manchal and Maheshwaram, which recorded an improvement of 7.65 m, 7.25 m and 7.2 m respectively. Yacharam and Vikarabad witnessed an improvement by 6.5 m and 6 m, followed by Medchal at 5.76 m. Pudur, Nawabpet and Ibrahimpatnam mandals recorded an improvement of 4 m each.

Stone Laid for Modern Fish Market

Ports-Fisheries Minister K Babu laid the foundation stone for the state-of-the-art fish market in Nedumangad town on Monday. He said the government has given administrative sanctions to set up a chain of 39 state-of-the-art fish markets. With a budget of Rs 14 crore, fish markets will be set up in Kulathoor, Pangode, Chirayinkeezhu, Poovachal, Kazhakkootam, Venjarammoodu and Nedumangad. Apart from these, 13 more places will be chosen to set up fish markets. The modern fish market chain is an initiative of National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) and Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC). The cost of construction of the market in Nedumangad is estimated to be Rs 2 crore. The Minister said that the work on the market will begin in 15 days and it will be completed within a year. The two-storeyed fish market will be spread over an area of 7300 square feet. It will have 66 display stalls and flake ice units. The top floor will have facilities to sell dry fish. The function was presided over by Palode Ravi MLA. He said that construction works of Nedumangad KSRTC Bus Station would be completed by December. The construction works of the new building for Nedumangad sub treasury, stadium, town hall and renovation of Koyikkal Palace will be completed in a time-bound manner, he said. Nedumangad Municipality chairperson Lekha Suresh, KSCADC MD K Ambadi, municipal officials and representatives of various political parties attended.

TNAU to Teach Students How to Use Media for Agriculture

J&J Media Solutions director, J Parthiban (left) and TNAU Registrar R Rabindran (right) at the college campus on Monday | EXPRESS

Express News Service

Coimbatore: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Tamil Nadu Agriculture University (TNAU) and J&J Media Solutions at the TNAU campus on Monday.

The 48-hour course which will commence in August is open to the students of TNAU as well as others.

The course fee is ₹4,000 per person. A regular batch on alternate weekdays for TNAU students and a special weekend batch for others have been planned.

The course titled, 'How to earn, while you learn' will

teach media advertising, filmmaking, marketing and 2D animation.

Candidates will get certificates from TNAU after successfully clearing an examination at the end of the course.

A TNAU official said that guidance regarding part-time job opportunities in corporate, advertising agencies, DTP centres, event management, TV channels,

6 Guidance regarding part-time job opportunities in corporate, advertising agencies, event management, TV channels, and newspapers would be provided during the course

— A TNAU OFFICIAL

newspapers and magazines would be provided during the course.

The official added that the purpose of introducing a media course into an agricultural setup is to guide the students as regards how to use the media as a tool to promote agriculture.

J Parthiban, Director of J&J Media Solutions, said that 3D animation classes have not been planned as of now as it would be a burden for a beginner.

They would rather concentrate on strengthening the basics and create an interest in media as a career option among the students.

Preference would be given to successful candidates of the course in the future endeavours, he added.

The MoU was signed between the Registrar of TNAU, R Rabindran, and J&J Media Solutions Director, J Parthiban, in the presence of K Ramasamy, the Vice-Chancellor of TNAU.

28% tea unsold at Coonoor sale

PS SUNDAR

Some 28 per cent of the year's highest offer of 22.18 lakh kg at Sale No: 26 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions remained unsold, despite prices dropping Rs. 3/kg over the previous week. Even at this low price, tea worth about Rs. 5.20 crore remained unsold reflecting inadequate demand at asking price. Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped both the CTC leaf and dust market when Komal Enterprises bought them for Rs. 190 a kg. In all, 118 marks got Rs. 125 and more. Among orthodox teas, Kodanad tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped when Om Enterprises bought it for Rs. 222 a kg. In all, 39 marks got Rs. 125 and more. Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 47-50 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 100-160 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs. 50-54 for plain dusts and Rs. 120-175 for brighter liquoring dusts. Export purchase was less and limited to plainer less-priced teas. Pakistan made selective purchase at a wide range of Rs. 90-128 a kg. Many CTC leaf invoices suffered withdrawal despite shedding up to Rs. 5 a kg. Secondary orthodox dusts eased Rs. 3-5. Some CTC dusts were withdrawn despite shedding up to Rs. 6 a kg.

New cardamom crop arrivals begin, but quality off-mark

GK NAIR



Cardamom market was subdued following the suspension of auctions for a week by the auctioneers. The auctions will resume from July 8, auction sources said. However, trading in the open markets in Bodinayakannur in Tamil Nadu and the primary markets in Kerala's Idukki and Wayanad districts took place in a small way. Small quantities of fresh crop, reportedly of inferior quality, were traded, market sources in Bodinayakannur told *Business Line*. According to the growers, weather conditions have not improved as

expected since major cardamom growing tracts such as Kumily, Kattappana and Vandannettu are yet to receive the usual South-West monsoon rain. However, prevailing weather conditions, some of the growers said, are suitable for agriculture and hence the cardamom crop would be normal this year. According to them, incessant rains would accelerate diseases in plants, whereas, intermittent showers punctuated by sunshine keep the plant healthy and with sufficient wet conditions required by it. Therefore, there is unlikely any crop loss during the current season, they claimed. During the current season of the crop ending this month, arrivals were 21,134 tonnes against 15,040 tonnes during the same period a year ago. Sales were 20,496 tonnes against 14,409 tonnes. The weighted average price as on June 29 was Rs. 645.31 (Rs. 700.72) a kg. Prices of all graded varieties (Rs. /kg): AGEB 950-960; AGB 790-800; AGS 760-770 and AGS-1:740-750.

Monsanto to directly market its cottonseeds in India

HARISH DAMODARAN



Monsanto will start selling cotton hybrid seeds in India under its global brand 'Deltapine' from the current kharif season. Currently, Monsanto Holdings Private Ltd (MHPL) – the 100 per cent-owned Indian subsidiary of the US agri-biotech major – is marketing cotton seeds under the 'Paras Brahma' brand. This brand belonged to Emergent Genetics India Ltd, a firm that Monsanto had acquired in 2005. "The introduction of the Deltapine brand from this year shows our commitment to growing the cotton hybrid seeds business in India," Jesus Madrazo, Vice-President (Corporate Engagement) of the St Louis, Missouri-headquartered company told *Business Line*. There is no plan, though, to phase out the 'Paras Brahma' brand, he said. Monsanto has a four per cent market share of the estimated 45 million-packets-a-year Indian cotton hybrids seeds market. The main players in this Rs. 3,700-crore segment are Nuziveedu Seeds, Kaveri Seeds, Mahyco, Ajeet Seeds, Ankur Seeds, DCM Shriram Bioseed and Rasi Seeds. All these companies, nevertheless, use Monsanto's proprietary 'Bollgard' insect pest resistance technology in their hybrids. For this, they pay a trait fee amounting to roughly 20 per cent of the maximum retail price. According to industry observers, the introduction of 'Deltapine' brand indicates Monsanto's keenness to use both the Bollgard technology licensing as well as direct marketing routes to expand its cotton seeds business in India. Monsanto is already an established direct market player in the hybrid corn and vegetable seeds

segments. Sales in both these are under Monsanto's global brands: 'Dekalb' (corn) and 'Seminis' (hot pepper, tomato, cauliflower, cabbage and beans). In hybrid corn, Monsanto India Ltd – a listed company, in which MHPL and the American parent together hold 72.14 per cent – has a 25 per cent share of Rs. 1,500-2,000-crore market, in which DuPont-Pioneer, Syngenta India, Nuziveedu, Kaveri and Bioseed are the other major players. MHPL has a roughly 10 per cent share of the country's Rs. 1,500-2,000 crore vegetable hybrid seeds market, which also has the likes of Nunhems (a Bayer CropScience subsidiary), Syngenta and Namdhari Seeds.

Outlook turns bullish for soya on delay in monsoon



BULLISH OUTLOOK FOR SOYABEAN

Notwithstanding strong foreign cues, soya oil ruled flat on scattered and weak buying with soya refined in local mandis on Monday was being quoted at Rs. 660-65 for 10 kg while soya solvent ruled at Rs. 625-35. Soyabean gained Rs. 100 on weak arrival with its prices at Rs. 3,950-4,100 a quintal. . Prospects for soyabean are bullish following the delay in monsoon and drop in supply as traders and stockists hold back the beans. Plant deliveries of soybean on Monday also ruled at Rs. 4,100-50 (down Rs. 25 from last week) on weak arrival. Weak demand on the other hand dragged soyameal to Rs. 36,800-37,200 a quintal. Our Correspondent

Mixed trend in sugar



Sugar prices were mixed on Monday with spot prices ruling steady and futures declining. On the Vashi wholesale spot market, prices ruled steady but on futures it declined over Rs. 20 till noon as physical demand remained need-based and supply were ample. *Naka* and mill level prices ruled unchanged. Arrivals in the Vashi market were higher at 64-65 truckloads and local dispatches were lower at 60-61 loads. Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs. 3,102-3,186 (Rs. 3,102-3,202) and M-grade was Rs. 3,200-3,382 (Rs. 3,200-3,382). *Naka* delivery rates: S-grade Rs. 3,040-3,110 (Rs. 3,030-3,110) and M-grade Rs. 3,140-3,280 (Rs. 3,130-3,280). Our Correspondent

Plunging soyameal shipments drag oilmeals export



Oilmeal exports dipped 46 per cent in June to 1,93,313 tonnes against 3,60,822 tonnes in the same period last year. The drop in exports was largely due to a sharp fall in soyameal shipment as crushing of soyabean was affected on the back of supply onstraints. Soyameal export in June plunged to a record low of 2,637 tonnes, according to the Solvent Extractors Association data. However, there was good demand for rapeseed and castorseed meal at 99,054 tonnes and 91,422 tonnes against 95,847 tonnes and 49,288 tonnes recorded in May. Oilmeals export in the first quarter of this fiscal was down 31 per cent at 5,92,850 tonnes (8,56,686 tonnes), the association said in a statement. Soyameal prices were down two per cent at \$696 a tonne against \$710 logged in May. Rapemeal prices were down at \$267 (\$274). The dollar depreciated against the rupee to 59.74 in June against 59.28 registered in May. Shipments to all the major markets including South Korea, Iran and Thailand were down in the first quarter of this fiscal. Europe and Iran registered the sharpest fall of 67 per cent and 61 per cent at 36,017 tonnes (1,09,062 tonnes) and 1,02,275 tonnes (2,60,734 tonnes). Oilmeals import by South Korea was down three per cent at 2,95,249 tonnes (3,04,745 tonnes). Exports to Thailand and Vietnam were down 21 per cent and 20 per cent at 44,192 tonnes and 29,664 tonnes, respectively. Oilmeal exports have been under stress after China banned the import of Indian rapeseed meal in January last year due to contamination. SEA, through the Government, has taken several measures to resume trade ties with China.

Rain may break out over peninsula, central parts

The India Met Department (IMD) has joined the outlook for a fresh low-pressure area likely developing over North-West and adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal (off Odisha coast) by the weekend. The 'low' is expected to help increase rainfall activity over peninsular and central India, the Met said on Monday afternoon.

Typhoon landfall

This would mostly coincide with the landfall and subsequent weakening of North Pacific super typhoon Neoguri over Japan. The monsoon could not make much progress over the past few days given the dominating presence of Neoguri within the larger Asian monsoon system.

Rush of flows

But on Monday, the rush of flows from Arabian Sea across the southern Indian peninsula and directed into Neoguri had dropped rain over parts of the region. This is expected to continue for a couple of days. It has helped the monsoon announce its arrival over most parts of Vidarbha and Aurangabad in Maharashtra. The monsoon has also entered parts of west Madhya Pradesh and entire east Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh; and more parts of northern Rajasthan. Its northern limit continued to pass through Veraval and Surat (extreme south Gujarat); Nasik and Aurangabad (Maharashtra); Bhopal and Shivpuri (Madhya Pradesh); and Alwar and Bikaner (Rajasthan). Regions not covered by the monsoon yet are West Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and West Rajasthan. The emerging 'low' is expected to make positive change in the scenario from the weekend. The Met has forecast rain also at many places for North-East and East India and along the West Coast.

Heavy in UP

The existing 'low' over east Uttar Pradesh has brought some very heavy to extremely heavy rain in the region and adjoining Bihar during the 24 hours ending on Monday morning. The 'low' is embedded in a trough that connects Punjab with the north-east of the country, not the Bay of Bengal. Given the lack of direct moisture supply, it is expected to start weakening from Tuesday. The trough will realign itself to dip back into the Bay of Bengal with the formation of the fresh 'low' which will show up over land along the Odisha coast and drive rains into central India as well. Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana and northern half of Seemandhra may benefit along with the West Coast.

Business Standard

Agritex showcases latest equipment, technologies

The second edition of agriculture trade show, Agritex 2014, has brought together companies offering high-grade seeds, latest agriculture technologies and products for better farm productivity. The three-day exhibition, inaugurated by A Padma Raju, vice-chancellor of Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University, at the Hitex exhibition grounds here today, also displayed advanced farming equipment from across the world. About 100 stalls have been set up by domestic and international companies. The state agriculture department has also put up a stall to educate farmers on various steps being taken by the government in Telangana. This edition of Agritex will provide knowledge to farmers in the local language. Agriculture institutions including Nabard, Angrau, Directorate of Rice Research, National Institute of Rural Development among others are part of the event. Under the Focus Edition of Agritex 2014- a program aimed at bringing together international firms in the global seed technology supply chain, and open up discussions on development opportunities seed technology and agriculture technology and business - SeedTech Asia platform will introduce leading seed technologies that benefit the Indian farmers.

Drought stares at 38 districts



With the southwest monsoon's progress a worry, the Union department of agriculture is keeping a close watch on 38 districts across the country where the rainfall condition till June has been alarming and chances of drought are the highest. The assessment is based on rainfall in June and the first few days of July. Of the 38 districts, half are in Maharashtra, nine in Madhya Pradesh and two in Uttar Pradesh. Of 411 districts where farming takes place during the kharif season, 282 are on the watch list of the government due to poor rains in June and early July. The situation is normal in 91 districts. As of last Friday, kharif crops were sown in 18.24 million hectares, 43 per cent less than last year and 23 per cent less than the normal area. The area under paddy, the main foodgrain during kharif, and coarse cereals were at five-year lows of 4.51 mha and 0.17 mha, respectively. "India Meteorological Department (IMD) has assured us the situation will

improve from July 11 and rainfall will revive across central and western India. Till that happens, we are keeping our fingers crossed,” an official said. He added the biggest impact of the less than normal rain could be felt in Gujarat, Rajasthan and major parts of Maharashtra. “For Gujarat, there could be respite if it rains in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, as that rejuvenates the Narmada basin. This is not the case with Rajasthan and Maharashtra,” he said.

DROUGHT MONITORING

Agriculture drought situation in districts after June

State	Normal	Under watch	Alert
Maharashtra	6	8	19
Madhya Pradesh	3	33	9
Gujarat	1	24	0
Rajasthan	5	21	6
All India	91	282	38

Total might not match as all states not been included

Source: Government

He added July was the most important month for sowing, as it gets the largest amount of rain during the four-month monsoon. So, a clearer picture would emerge after the middle of the month.

IMD's second stage forecast, issued in June, scaled down the rainfall estimate 93 per cent of the Long Period Average from 95 per cent in August, both below normal. Actual rainfall

from June 1 to July 6 had been 43 per cent below normal, among the worst in recent years, it said. Private weather forecasting agency Skymet had last week lowered its forecast for the monsoon rain to 91 per cent of average rainfall of the past 50 years; its earlier projection was 94 per cent. And, raised the probability of drought across the country to 60 per cent, as against its earlier estimation of 25 per cent. A meteorological drought is declared if 20-40 per cent of the country receives less than normal rains. “The worst chance of drought is expected in northwest India at 80 per cent, followed by central India at 75 per cent and the south at 50 per cent,” Skymet said. The patchy progress of the monsoon is also having its impact on the water levels in 85 important reservoirs. Till July 3, water levels in the storages were 36.87 billion cubic metres, 24 per cent of full capacity. Water in most reservoirs across the western, central and southern parts was below last year's level.

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Subsidised loans of Rs 600 cr may not reach sugar mills

As much as Rs 600 crore of subsidised loans of the Rs 6,600-crore package announced by the government in December, to enable cash-starved sugar mills to clear cane arrears, won't reach them, as many applications failed to meet stringent eligibility criteria set by lenders, official and industry sources said on Monday. While the deadline for sanctioning loans at up to 12% interest subsidy expired on June 30, banks are directed to complete the disbursement process by September. This has reinforced apprehension that even if the Centre notifies its latest decision to provide additional subsidised loans of R4,400 crore, a chunk of that may not reach the mills. Food minister Ram Vilas Paswan said last month the

government would provide the additional package only if the industry gave a guarantee that it would clear all cane arrears, which had hit R13,000 crore last month.

Of the sanctioned amount, banks have already disbursed R5,200 crore to mills. The subsidised loans are to be used exclusively for paying cane dues to farmers. As many as 400 mills applied for the loans until June 30, banking industry sources told FE. They said currently there are no plans to extend this deadline. Industry sources said many sugar mills, which were actually in need of money, didn't get the loans, while some other mills with relatively better financial positions got the succour, as the finance ministry didn't impress upon banks to ease their lending criteria. In January, the department of financial services had written to the Indian Banks' Association, saying lending would be subject to norms relating to security, future cash flows for the life of loan (five years), establishing the viability and debt servicing capacity and conduct of loan, including the restructuring guidelines as notified by the RBI for the sugar industry from time to time. Moreover, mills whose loan accounts have turned into non-performing assets (NPA) are also covered under the scheme, provided the state government concerned gives its guarantee for their new loans. Millers had sought a relaxation, saying that if they were so financially sound as to meet the tough norms, they wouldn't have approached the government for a bail-out package. Sources said no state government offered guarantee for mills whose accounts turned into NPAs, including Mawana Sugars which last year approached the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction for a package. This resulted in the rejection of loan applications of certain mills.

Govt starts consultation process to sell 10 mt of wheat in open market

In a bid to check price rise, the food ministry has started consultations with the finance ministry to sell around 10 million tonne (mt) of wheat from Food Corporation of India's (FCI) stocks in the open market. Sources told FE the wheat would be sold under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) to bulk buyers and traders from September. At the start of the month, FCI had wheat stocks close to 40 mt against the strategic reserve and buffer stock norms of 19.1 mt. "At present, wheat prices are stable and traders have enough stocks from this year's crop," a senior official said. According to Agricultural Marketing Information Network (Agmark) data, wholesale wheat prices were quoted on Monday at R1,402 per quintal at the Khanna market (Punjab) and R2,100 per quintal in the Visakhapatnam market. However, after consultation with the finance ministry, the food ministry will move a cabinet note to seek approval for selling excess wheat stock in the open market. The OMSS would be in operation from September 2014 to March 2015. FCI commences the wheat procurement drive for the season from April 1. Experts said FCI must sell at least 10 mt of rice and wheat in the open market to keep prices in check, particularly when there are reports about a deficient monsoon likely impacting foodgrain production. Sources said wheat prices under OMSS would be kept at R1,500 per quintal along with freight to the consuming locations from Punjab, the key producer of the grain. The government has been selling wheat through OMSS in the last few years in a bid to reduce FCI's excess grain stocks. In the last fiscal, FCI had sold 5.8 mt of wheat to bulk buyers such as flour millers under OMSS. The corporation had realised an average price of more than R1,604 per quintal for the wheat sold to private traders. Earlier, the

government had targeted selling 8.5 mtof excess wheat stocks to bulk buyers by the end of March 2014. In 2013-14, about 20 key consuming states such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal and Maharashtra were allocated 2 lakh tonne of wheat for sale to bulk buyers. Himachal Pradesh and the north-eastern states have been allotted 50,000 tonne of wheat each under OMSS. Meanwhile, the government's foodgrains stock at the start of the month has fallen to 66 mt from 70 mt reported in the previous month. The government has rice stock

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh writes to CMs seeking views on farm insurance scheme

Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh has sought suggestions from state chief ministers by end of this month to evolve a suitable insurance scheme for the benefit of farmers. "We are desirous of introducing a new crop insurance scheme to protect the farmers against both yield and price fluctuations. I would appreciate if your suggestions are sent to us by end of July," Singh said in the letter. A Farmer Income Insurance Scheme (FIIS), introduced during 2003-04 on pilot basis in 22 districts of 14 states, was later dropped. This scheme aimed to protect farmers' incomes by integrating production with prices, he said. Since last year, several state governments have been implementing the New National Crop Insurance Programme, which was formulated by merging pilot Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS) and Pilot Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS) and adding certain features for the benefit of farmers. Some states, on their request, have been allowed to continue to implement the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) during this year. The NAIS was introduced in 1999-2000 to protect farmers against crop losses due to natural calamities like drought and floods. Premium rates under this scheme are highly subsidised and the responsibility for payment of claims over and above the amount collected as premium is shared equally by the centre and states. The WBCIS was introduced on pilot basis in 2007 to provide insurance protection to farmers against adverse weather such as deficit/excess rainfall, high/low temperature and humidity, which adversely impacts agricultural production.

Vegetable prices likely to rise, pulses to be stable: Traders

Even as rainfall remains weak, and the India Meteorological Department forecasts show patchy rainfall until mid-July, vegetable traders say prices are likely to rise although pulses are expected to be stable. Pulses traders say that sales have increased in the past 15 days as vegetable prices are increasing in retail. "Housewives are buying more pulses due to the media hype over rising vegetable prices. The stable prices of pulses have also contributed to the rise," said Sunil Baldeva trader at the Naya Bazar market of New Delhi. Ample supplies in the market have corrected prices of chana dal in wholesale by 8 per cent to Rs 32 a kg in the past fortnight. Yellow peas is at Rs 33 a kg and masur dal is at Rs 60 a kg. "In the next week to ten days when rains pick up, vegetable prices are

bound to increase. At that time, fields will be inundated with water and supplies will slow down," said Rajinder Sharma, president of the Azadpur mandi in New Delhi. The trader who is also the general secretary of the Azadpur Potato and Onion Merchants Association said that prices of onions and potato were stable. "Rather than increasing the minimum export price, exports should be closed and import duty be relaxed for certain vegetables," he said. Prices of potato in Azadpur and even Mumbai's Vashi market were in the range of Rs 17-19 a kg and Rs 17-24 for onion, respectively. As per Sahoo, prices of most vegetables over last year's have been down by around 20 per cent excluding potato and onion. Safal sells around 300 tonne of fruits and vegetables daily with onions contributing around 15 per cent to the total throughput. The scenario in the southern and eastern part of the country is much different where temperatures are high owing to patchy rains. Vegetable crops which were in the flower-setting stage have been burnt, said Shriram Gadhave, president of Maharashtra-based All India Vegetable Growers Association. "Vegetable production has fallen by 50 per cent and prices of tomato, cucumber, cabbage, cauliflower, okhra, bottle gourd, have increased by 5-10 per cent in the past one week," he said. Similarly, in West Bengal prices of vegetables are inching upwards as the state is yet to receive adequate rains for vegetables to grow in plenty. Prices of vegetables like pointed gourd, ridged gourd have appreciated by 20 per cent-30 per cent in a week. Traders say prices will climb further if it does not rain. Agriculture marketing minister Arup Roy said that the state government is keeping a close vigil on price movement. However, retail chain Mother Dairy feels that it is early to talk about price rise with incessant torrential rains yet to hit the region.