

550 tonnes of paddy seeds at subsidised rate ready

Farmers in the district will get 550 tonnes of paddy seeds at subsidised rate as the district has received paddy seed subsidy of Rs.55 lakh for the 'kar' paddy season this year. According to Joint Director of Agriculture S. Chandrasekaran, water has been released from Manimuthar, Papanasam, Ramanadhi, Gadana, Karuppanadhi and Adavinainar dams to enable the farmers to go in for 'kar' paddy cultivation though the southwest monsoon is yet to intensify in catchment areas and also in the regions close to the Western Ghats. Following the release of water from the dams, farmers of Ambasamudram, Cheranmahadevi, Mukkoodal, Kadayam, Tenkasi and Shencottai have started preliminary operations for the first paddy season. To meet the requirement of the farmers, the Department of Agriculture has stocked adequate quantity of 'Ambai 16' and 'Aaduthurai 45' paddy seeds and chemical fertilizers in all primary agriculture cooperative banks and also in private shops. Farmers will get a grant of Rs.10 per one kilogram of paddy seed. In other words, farmers will get a subsidy of Rs.500 per one 50 kg bag of paddy seed. "Though the Department of Agriculture has made all arrangements for this paddy season, the disturbing dry spell prevailing in the catchment areas threatens farmers' prospects. Hence, agriculturists should follow the 'System of Rice Intensification (SRI)' technique which would save a lot of water while giving better yield to growers," said Mr. Chandrasekaran. Farmers following the SRI technique may use machines for transplanting paddy saplings, for which Rs.3,750 per hectare is being given as subsidy.

'Strengthen tea industry'

The need for government assistance to strengthen the tea industry in the Nilgiris has been stressed by the Plantation Labour Association (PLA) owing allegiance to the AITUC. In a memorandum sent to the Union Minister of State for Commerce Nirmala Seetharaman, the district president of the PLA T. Balakrishnan urged her to facilitate the direct sale of Nilgiri tea especially the products of Tamil Nadu Tea Plantation and Industrial Cooperative Tea factories to the defence and railway sectors. The tea sector should be declared as an agro-based industry and the Tea Board should ensure that the auction prices do not fall below Rs. 120 per . The practice of importing tea should be put an end to. The Centre should help make good the losses incurred by Tantea. The Indcoserve, apex body of the Indco factories, should be protected to help small tea growers.

Waive farm loans, government urged

The former Minister for Excise M.P. Renukacharya asked the State government to waive farmers' loans as many districts face a drought situation. Addressing reporters here on Sunday, he stated that more than 150 taluks in the district were affected and the number would only go up and farmers would face harassment from banks and other financial institutions if they are unable to repay the loans. "Thought the situation is alarming, the

Chief Minister S. Siddaramaiah has not taken any precautionary measures to control the situation and help farmers,” he added. He also alleged that the CM was issuing false reports that funds had been released and steps were being taken to control the situation. “Then the CM should come out with a list and also the places visited by all district in-charge ministers in the State to review the situation,” he demanded.

Government urged to hold talks with farmers’ groups

Implementation of K. Kasturirangan panel report



Various farmers’ organisations have called upon the Agriculture Department and the State government to hold ‘serious discussions’ on the impact of the K. Kasturirangan commission report on the farmers’ fraternity. The suggestion was placed at a State-level meeting chaired by Minister for Panchayats and Social Welfare M.K. Muneer here on Saturday. The meeting reviewed the arrangements made to host the State-level Farmers’ Day celebration from August 16. Farmers’ forums owing allegiance to various political parties unanimously came in support of the idea. “They are unlikely to consider it as some of the officials have already made the observation that the topic will lead to heated arguments that could affect the celebrations,” a farmers’ organisation leader from the district said. Government officials were more concerned over celebrating the event in the name of farmers than focusing on their problems and anxieties, another leader said. A few others criticised the plan of the department to limit the celebrations to the city. They urged people’s representatives to take note of the issue and hold promotional rallies and campaigns in rural areas. The subcommittees constituted to steer the State-level event presented the detailed estimates at the review meeting. Officials said Rs.55.50 lakh would be spent during the four-day event. Additional funds required to host the event would be mobilised through sponsorships, they added.

Logo released

Dr. Muneer released the logo of the event by handing it over to Purushan Kadalundi, MLA. The department shortlisted the logo from the nine entries it received from various professional and amateur artists.

Kurnool farmers go for cotton cultivation in a big way



Bt Cotton is being favoured by farmers in Kurnool as well as in neighbouring districts. More and more farmers are turning to cotton due to stable prices last season and good yields on account of genetically modified versions which demonstrated resistance to pests. According to agriculture department, last year the crop was sown in 2 lakh hectares which was likely to cross the 2.5 lakh hectares this year, emerging as the major crop.

Incentive

In view of the patronisation of cotton, other crops like groundnut, sunflower and other routine crops suffered badly. The area under groundnut is falling year after year. Maize and castor, which showed improvement in the recent years is likely to stagnate this year. Joint Director of Agriculture Tagore Naik has said stable prices and less expenditure on pest management proved to be a major incentive for farmers. The sowing in the land supported by irrigation amounts to 70,000 hectares and was completed in the district much before the present spell of rains.

Sowing


The farmers intending to cultivate cotton in dry land completed sowing in the past one week due to copious rains.

Heavy demand for seed






The dealers and producers of cotton seed said the stock moved at a great speed last week indicating heavy demand. Marketing experts feel that the large area might cause a slump in the prices in January.

As rains deceive, veggie prices bleed everyone dry

T. KARNAKAR REDDY



CURRENT PRICES
Tomato
Rs.50/kg

				
Carrot	Chikkudukaya	Chilli	Bitter gourd	Yam
Rs.80	Rs.60	Rs.60	Rs.60	Rs.60

• Vegetables don't come from local farmers anymore. This is why prices are soaring
K. LAKSHMAIAH, VEGETABLE VENDOR

• I used to cultivate vegetables for my domestic needs till June, but the dry spell has forced me to come to the market
P. MUTHYALAU, A FARMER

• I'm making do with the cheaper vegetables like ivy gourd, ridge gourd and lady's finger now
S. MANGAMMA, HOMEMAKER

Prices of most vegetables have risen manifold thanks to the prolonged dry spell

Those who visited the weekly vegetable market in Nakrekal town on Sunday were in for a shock: the going rate for a kilogram of tomatoes was Rs.50! This would mean a 150 per cent rise from the Rs.20 that it cost only a couple of weeks ago. It is not only tomato – the prices of most vegetables have sky-rocketed during the period, and the prolonged dry spell in the district is to blame. Nalgonda had recorded 60 per cent deficient rainfall in June, and the figure is 80 per cent for July (till Sunday). Vegetable vendor K. Lakshmaiah says the arrival of vegetables from local farmers have come down leading to the soaring prices. While the price of carrot is Rs.80 a kg, broad beans (*chikkudukaya*), chilli, bitter gourd, yam and few other vegetables come for Rs.60 a kilogram in Nalgonda town and across the district. Most of the remaining vegetables are sold for around Rs.40. Both consumers and vendors fear that any further delay in rains would make the vegetables costlier making it unaffordable to the common people. For the moment, some are making do with the cheaper vegetables: ivy gourd (Rs.30), ridge gourd and lady's finger (both Rs.40 a kg), says homemaker S. Mangamma. She appealed to the district administration to open special counters that sell vegetables at affordable prices to the common man. P. Muthyalau, a farmer, says he used to grow all kinds of vegetables, at least to be consumed domestically in June, but the prevailing drought conditions have forced farmers like him to buy from the market.

'Maa Thota' a boon for tribal farmers

NABARD plans self-employment programmes

CATCHING UP WITH CASH CROPS | NABARD helps **2,500** tribal families under 'Maa Thota'

- 1 It is being implemented in 8 mandals including Seethampet and Patapatnam
- 2 2,500 acres of land developed with amla and cashew plantation
- 3 Border plantation, inter-crop techniques help generate extra income
- 4 Each family is earning between **Rs.30,000 to Rs.40,000** a year

Many tribal women and youngsters are coming forward for training programmes. We want to train them in production of jasmine and mushrooms
M.D. VASUDEVAN,
District Development Manager, NABARD Srikakulam district

Scheduled tribe communities, hitherto considered backward due to their lack of exposure to outside world, proved they are second to none if provided with opportunities to hone their skills. Many tribal families in the district are generating income of their own and some of them are even employing others thanks to the support from National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development and a non-governmental organisation Action in Rural Technology and Services (ARTS). As many as 2,500 tribal families were benefited with the flagship programme of Maa Thota which is being implemented in 8 mandals including Seethampet and Patapatnam. Tribals, who were known to use primitive technique, are taught about the importance of new technology under the Maa Thota programme. An extent of 2,500 acres of land was developed with amla and cashew plantation. Border plantation, inter-crop techniques helped them to generate additional income. Each family is earning between Rs.30,000 to Rs.40,000 a year with adoption of new techniques in agricultural activity. "Many tribal women and youngsters are coming forward for training programmes as they were inspired with Maa Thota beneficiaries. We wanted to train them in production of jasmine and mushrooms since they help them to get income quickly," said M.D. Vasudevan, Srikakulam District Development Manager of NABARD. ARTS Director Sanyasi Rao said, "We realised that it is not possible to provide employment through agricultural activity alone due to non availability of land. We concentrated on self-employment programmes for others."

Marketing

A tribal woman Lakshmi told *The Hindu* that she understood the importance of marketing their produce to get remunerative prices. "We are eager to participate in NABARD's exhibition-cum-sale programme to be held in the last week of July. Many women in our area are keen to get training in preparation of other products," she added. Cane, bamboo

products, tribal textiles, jute bags, organic and natural products will be displayed at the proposed exhibition.

Awareness rally taken out on farm loan waiver



Vivekananda Youth Association members at an awareness rally on crop loan waiver in Vijayawada on Sunday.- Photo. Ch. Vijaya BhaskarVivekananda Youth Association took out a rally in the city on Sunday to create awareness among public about crop loan waiver. Association president V. Krishna Prasanna said the crop loan waiver proposal had put farmers and government in a piquant situation. Middlemen took lakhs of rupees worth crop loans with an eye on crop loan waiver. Genuine farmers were facing hardship due to crop loans taken by middlemen. Small and marginal farmers are not able to enjoy the fruit of the scheme.

Check dam saves the day for Lyabarthi's farmers

GOLLAPUDI SRINIVASA RAO



The check dam on the Akeru rivulet in Lybarthi village of Wardhannapet mandal in Warangal district.– PHOTO: M. MURALI

When most farmers in the district are distressed over scanty rainfall, others, those from Lyabarthi village in this mandal know nothing of such worries, thanks to the check dam across the Akeru rivulet. The check dam has come to the rescue of at least 80 farmers of the tiny village, catering to the farming needs of two crops a year, and their drinking water needs too. Takkellapalli Ajay, a farmer, described it as a blessing to the village. The check dam had been serving farmers in Lybarthi, Ramdhan Thanda and Bhandhanpalli thanda, he said. "The then DWMA (District Water Management Agency) Project Director D.S. Jagan heard our pleas and was kind enough to sanction Rs.10 lakh in 2009 for this check dam," he added. The check dam has been indirectly catering to many other farmers by way of recharging the groundwater as well as open and bore-wells in the vicinity.

The water-level in the check dam stretches to nearly a kilometre, and even during the summer season, it had been brimming with water, said M. Ramesh, a villager. Mr. Ajay felt more check dams could be built across the Akeru rivulet, all along its stretch from Wardhannapet to Lybarthi and beyond. Water has been going downstream and the farmers were not able to utilize it. In many villages on either side of the stream, farmers need water for their cattle too. Mr. Ramesh said the only tank in the village had gone dry during summer, and they had been waiting for a good rainy season. "It is very bad to see cattle with parched throats. All the animals eagerly make a beeline to the tank in search of puddles and muddy waters to quench their thirst," he lamented.

Delhi's green cover rises

ANUMEHA YADAV

Forest cover of the Capital has increased by 3.61 sq km to 179.81 sq km from 176.2 sq km in 2011, says report



The State of Forest Report 2013 has shown an increase in forest cover in Delhi compared to 2011. Officials and ecological experts agree that this may be due to more plantations rather than improved conservation of dense forests. The forest cover of Delhi has increased by 3.61 sq km to 179.81 sq km from 176.2 sq km in 2011. The highest increase in forest cover, an increase by 2.83 sq km, was in South-West Delhi. While the "Very Dense Forest" cover did not grow at all and was recorded the same at 6.76 sq km, "Moderately Dense Forest" decreased by a trifle 0.1 sq km, from 49.48 sq km to 49.38 sq km. "From 2009 onwards, we have been focusing on over 280 hectares plantations in areas like Garhi Mandu and Bhati near Badarpur planting the slopes of former sand quarries with saplings. These saplings were not recorded in the previous survey as they were still very young. Now, some have grown three to 12 feet high and these are being captured by the satellites," said a senior official in the Department of Forest. The biennial State of Forest Report records any plots of over one hectare with a tree canopy density of 10 per cent as forest cover. The spectral signature from leaves of trees gets captured by the satellites, explained forest officials. While most of the increase in forest cover can be explained by the expansion of "Open Forest" from 119.96 sq km to 123.67 sq km and an increase in the area recorded as scrub from 0.7 sq km in 2011 to 2.24 sq km rather than greater dense forest cover, experts say this may still be a positive trend for two reasons.

“One, the trend in other States is that open forest and scrub have increased, while dense and moderately dense forest cover decreased, which means dense forest degraded into open forest. In Delhi, the data does not indicate this as the decrease in moderately dense forest is only 0.1 sq km, while dense forest remained constant. So, there was not much degradation in good forest. Two, it seems that the plantation efforts of the government have gone well and led to an increase in green cover,” said Kumar Sambhav Shrivastava, a forests expert with the Centre of Science and Environment. “While plantations cannot replace natural forest, which act as complete ecosystems, the increase in green cover in the face of higher urbanisation pressure is a good trend. The macro trend will emerge better if one examines the NCR data where the maximum real estate development is on,” he said.

Vegetable prices soar in Haryana, Punjab

In the wake of scanty monsoon rains and short supply, prices of vegetables in Haryana, Punjab and Chandigarh have soared sharply over the last ten days. Most of the vegetables including potato, cauliflower, capsicum, beans, green peas, bottle gourd, bitter gourd, spinach, carrot, cucumber, pumpkin, among other vegetables have registered an increase in their prices. In the retail market, ‘Pahari’ variety of potato is selling between Rs. 35-Rs. 40 per kg, a jump of around Rs. 10 per kg, while another commonly available variety of the tuber crop is priced between Rs. 25-Rs. 30 per kg, up by nearly Rs. 7 a kg. The maximum increase has been in prices of the green peas, which have shot from Rs. 50 per kg about ten days back to Rs. 80-Rs. 100 per kg now. The price of tomato, which was available for about Rs. 20 per kg until a week ago, has also zoomed to Rs. 40 a kg, a trader in Mohali said. Onion prices, however, have remained stable at around Rs. 30 per kg. Other vegetables including beans, capsicum, cauliflower have also witnessed rise in their prices, traders said. Prices of beans are hovering over Rs. 80 per kg, up from Rs. 40-Rs. 50 per kg earlier while cauliflower is selling between Rs. 50-Rs. 60 per kg as against Rs. 40 per kg earlier. As the two States have received scanty rains owing to monsoon turning weak after its late arrival, cucumbers which are high in demand during summers, have also become costly selling at Rs. 30-Rs. 50 per kg for different varieties as against Rs. 15-Rs. 25 per kg earlier. - PTI

Kharif sowing still lagging

GARGI PARSAI

With monsoon deficient by 53 per cent of the long period average in the country, kharif sowing has not picked up in the last week. It is lagging in all summer crops. The sowing period normally lasts till early August. The India Meteorological Department said on Friday that of the 36 met sub-divisions, monsoon has been deficient over eight and scanty over 18 sub-divisions. Rainfall has been in excess over only one sub-division and normal over nine sub-divisions. Monsoon is deficient by 74 per cent of the long period average in central India, 62 per cent in south peninsula, 49 per cent in northwest India and by 22 per

cent in East and the northeast. However, the IMD sees favourable conditions for advance of monsoon in parts of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh in the next three days.

Palm tree climbers sweat it out in a 'dying' trade

D.J. WALTER SCOTT



It is risky and tiresome, but I have no option, says Palpandi, who climbs 50-60 trees a day.— Photo: L. BALACHANDAR

When the Tamil Nadu government formed the Palm Products Development Board in 1995, palm workers in this region honoured Congress leader Kumari Anandan, offering him palm jaggery of his weight, for espousing their cause. But not a single tree-climber has benefited from the board all these years. About 10,000 families, living in more than 20 coastal villages of the Kadaladi block, make a living, climbing hundreds of trees for tapping 'neera' and making palm jaggery. Almost all of them are working as a kind of bonded labourers for big traders. Men in bare chest and barefoot climb palm trees twice a day to tap palm juice, while women prepare jaggery from February to August. They live in miserable conditions to pay back the loan from the traders. Three members of a family toil for over 12 hours a day to make one 'sippam' (10 kg) of jaggery, which can fetch Rs. 600 to Rs. 1,000, depending upon the demand. And the family lives in make-shift huts in the palm groves for the entire six months to earn Rs. 1.5 lakh. "At the end of the season, all of us will have repaid our loans and will return home but not before getting fresh loans from the traders to make ends meet during the next six months when there will be no work," says V. Palpandi, 54, of Boopandiyapuram, near here. When men of his age struggle to go for a walk, Palpandi climbs 50-60 trees a day. "It is risky and tiresome, but I have no option," he says. "I have been climbing trees since I was 12," he says, putting out his hardened palms and foot, as his wife and daughter look on. In the four decades, Palpandi has been under the grip of the traders who lend him money on an interest of two paise. He has registered himself with the local primary cooperative society and has obtained a licence from the district palmyrah jaggery cooperative marketing federation for tapping 'neera,' but has not availed himself of any financial or marketing assistance. As most of the palm trees in the region stand on patta land, Palpandi and many others take 100 trees on lease from the land owners after paying them Rs, 6,000 a season. M. Thirumani, 34, a Class VI dropout, is the youngest tree climber in the region, and Mani Nadar, 72, is the eldest. "In the next five to ten years, you will not find tree

climbers, and palm jaggery, the nature's gift, will become a scarce commodity," says Thirumani. Except a few, like P. Boominathan, who are engaged in jaggery sale, the present generation pursue education and go for other jobs. When the trade is dying, the government can offer palm workers financial support as it does help out farmers, fishermen, potters and other rural workers, says V. Pandi, 55, of Selvanayagapuram, who has also been working under a trader for over four decades.

Water level

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 47.39 feet on Sunday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 875 cusecs and the discharge 944 cusecs.



Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Monday, Jul 14

Max Min
34° | 28°

Rain: 0
Humidity: 70
Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:49
Sunset: 06:39
Barometer: 1003

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Tuesday, Jul 15

Max Min
35° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Jul 16	Thursday Jul 17	Friday Jul 18	Saturday Jul 19	Sunday Jul 20
35° 27° Cloudy	35° 27° Partly Cloudy	34° 27° Partly Cloudy	34° 27° Partly Cloudy	33° 27° Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 05:49
Humidity: 70 Sunset: 06:39
Wind: normal Barometer: 1003



Veggie Prices Go Through Roof

Monsoon may have picked up bringing relief to anxious farmers. But it has come at a cost. For, vegetable prices have climbed sharply — some of them have more than doubled in the last one week. Beans, which was selling at Rs 40 a kg at Russell Market last week, rose to Rs 100 on Sunday, while the prices of carrot shot up even more sharply from Rs 32 to Rs 100. The prices of tomato also went up to Rs 42 from Rs 15. Mohammad Parvez, member of Russell Market Fruits and Vegetable Vendors Association, attributed the price rise to rain, which resulted in a short supply during Ramzan. “We have no stock of these vegetables.” HOPCOMS director Nagini Chandrashekar cited export as a reason for the rise in tomato prices. “Kolar used to supply tomato to the city. Now they are exporting it. So, tomato is not coming here.”

Sugarcane Growers Seek Govt's Help

Andhra Pradesh Sugarcane Farmers Association (APSFA) has requested the government to take measures for the clearance of dues worth `200 crores from the sugar factories to sugarcane farmers. In a memorandum to the CM, the APSFA said that even though crushing of sugarcane was completed three months back, as many as 16 factories in the state had not paid the dues yet. Since no joint meeting was organised to discuss the farmers' issues in the last three years, the APSFA has asked the chief minister to organise a joint meeting of the farmers and owners of the sugar factories and resolve the issues.

Focus Shifts to 'Irrigated Dry Crops' in Karimnagar District



With the truant monsoon worrying the farming community over the prospects of cultivation this Kharif season in the district, agriculture officials are encouraging farmers to go in for 'irrigated dry' (ID) crop cultivation. Following prediction of a poor monsoon by meteorological authorities, agricultural authorities have already suggested a reduction in the crop area. During Kharif the normal crop area is 5,18,349 hectares but this season cultivation will be taken up in a lesser extent, perhaps by about 42,700 hectares. Sowing has been completed only to 40 percent extent in the district. Paddy and cotton are the main crops in the district, and paddy is expected to be raised in 1,63,574 hectares and cotton in 2,13,934 hectares. “Of the 5,18,349 total expected area coverage, maize is likely to be raised in 57,432 hectares, food crops 24,923 hectares and ID crops like green gram, red gram, castor and others in the rest of the area. We are promoting ID crops to avoid

unnecessary risk to farmers. Our mandal-level agriculture officers are conducting village meetings to motivate farmers on ID crop cultivation,” joint director of agriculture B Prasad has said. He said that they are distributing ID crop seeds on 50 percent subsidy in the Kharif season and advised farmers not to worry about low rain forecast but to cultivate ID crops using the drip irrigation system. According to agriculture authorities, normal rainfall in June is 199 mm but only a 90 mm rainfall was registered last month, ie the district has received nearly 50 percent deficit rainfall. To lure the rain god in the villages people following traditional systems ‘Kappatalli’ game and performing rituals at respective temples for rain god’s mercy. It seems their prayers are being answered as a moderate rain has been lashing the district since Saturday night, bringing smiles on the faces of farmers. Losing no more time, they have started tilling the fields to sow the seeds. A cotton farmer, Rajaiah of Chinnabonal in Sircilla mandal, said the cotton seed sown a month ago by spending Rs 10,000 per acre has not germinated till now and hopes that the current rain will help him and other cotton-growers. Another farmer, Chinna Pochalu of Husnabad mandal, says that already Rohini, Mrigasira, Arudra Kartis (as per tradition rain prediction days) passed off without any rain and Punarvasu commenced on Sunday. “If it does rain adequately even now, paddy and cotton cultivation will take a severe hit,” he said.

Paddy Cultivation Cut to Half in Nalgonda Dist

The cultivation of paddy in the district was curtailed to more than half of the position in view of delay in monsoons. The cultivation of paddy as expected to be undertaken is 1,80,000 hectares of land as was done in the previous year. But due to delayed rains, transplantation was taken up in 9,726 hectares of land and nursery (Vari thukalu) in 5,390 hectares of land, but according to officials the nursery was in 53,000 hectares of land. That means cultivation is under cultivation only up to 50 per cent when compared to previous year. Farmers are switching to ID crops (metta pantalu) due to scanty rainfall and little Krishna water trickling down from the Nagarjunasagar dam and Musi water as well to cultivate paddy. Against a normal rainfall of 129.6 mm this month, the present rain fall is 84.1 mm only as such it was showing deficit position. Due to delay in transplantation, the production will be reduced to just three to four bags per acre. As a result, the price of rice is likely to go up from Rs 800 to Rs 1,200. Bodhanam Narsi Reddy, a farmer of Kothapally village in Kanagal mandal, said, “I have five acres of land, previously cultivated total paddy, but in present position I planted cotton in three acres. In the other two acres I will take up paddy cultivation. Delay of rains is pushing farmers to ID crops (metta pantalu). Munasu Satthaiah, a farmer of Charlapally village in Nalgonda district, fears a drop in output due to delay in rains, sowing, transplantation, etc. Joint director of agriculture V. Narsimha Rao says there will not be loss due to delay in rains. There is time till the end of this month for transplantation. But most farmers are not convinced and are afraid of the situation. Hence their shift to irrigated dry crops.

Bouyant Farmers in Krishna District are Unfazed Despite Delayed Monsoon



Intermittent rainfall in the past two days has raised the hopes of farmers in Krishna district. Paddy farmers, who were anxious over the fate of kharif crop until a week ago, have started preparing seed beds. The release of Krishna water for drinking purpose has come as an icing on the cake. The farmers now hope for release of water for irrigation purpose. “There is fear all around that delayed monsoon may hit kharif cultivation this year. Problems in Krishna water release after division of the state have troubled the farmers. Usually, by this time paddy seed beds would have been prepared and at some places transplantations would also have been started. However, the farmers were in a dilemma all these days due to lack of water,” explains M Rajendranath, a paddy farmer belonging to Garikaparru village in Thotlavalluru mandal of the district. The amount of rainfall over the past one week is by no means sufficient to raise paddy crop in the district. But it has raised the expectations of the farmers. Among the four districts falling under Krishna Delta, paddy is cultivated in about 11.7 lakh acres during the kharif season in Krishna and Guntur districts alone. This accounts for almost 90 per cent of the total cultivable land in these two districts. In Krishna district, paddy is cultivated in about 2.57 lakh hectares. On an average, about 14.8 lakh metric tonnes paddy is produced in the district every year. The renewed enthusiasm of paddy farmers is mainly due to the past record of the district. “A similar situation marked by delayed monsoon and water problem at the start of kharif season occurred in 2012. But the farmers went ahead with cultivation. Though cultivation is delayed, we are sure that it will gather momentum by the first or second week of August,” opined Rythu Samaikya Sangham president Nagendranath Yerneni. Nagendranath says that at least 80 TMC water will flow into river Krishna between Nagarjuna Sagar and Prakasam Barrage from the catchment area during this period in any year, irrespective of the quantum of rainfall. “This 80 TMC water is meant for Krishna and West Godavari districts and no issues over its sharing will affect its release. Also, drinking water tanks are almost full and the farmers are hopeful that water for irrigation will also be released soon,” adds Nagendranath. As it will take about three weeks to prepare seed beds before transplantation, the farmers have started preparing them hoping that the required water will be available by August. Krishna district deputy director of agriculture ANCH Bala Naik has expressed the confidence that paddy yield in the district will not come down due to delayed monsoon. “We have faced situations like this even in the past when kharif paddy cultivation is delayed. Though this time cultivation is delayed it can be taken up till mid-August. There is no need to panic. Short duration paddy varieties can be cultivated,” he added. Though paddy production in

Krishna district may not decrease during this kharif, the prices of rice in the open market may increase in the first half of 2015, as the produce will reach the market late.

Increase in Inflow Cheers Drought-hit Farmers in Cauvery Basin

The increase in the inflow of water to KRS and Kabini reservoirs has cheered farmers in the Cauvery basin. The farmers who were worried over canals and lakes going dry in the past two months, are now heaving a sigh of relief. As Kodagu received heavy downpour, the level in KRS reached 83 ft on Sunday against 81 ft in the first week of July. The inflow was 2,356 cusecs while outflow was 357 cusecs.

WATER LEVEL AT MAJOR DAMS	
KRS	KABINI
Max level: 124.80 ft	Max level: 2,284 ft
Water-level: 82.85 ft	Water-level: 2,272.50 ft
Inflow: 2,356 cusecs	Inflow: 8,000 cusecs
Outflow: 357 cusecs	Outflow: 1,000 cusecs
LAST YEAR	LAST YEAR
Water-level: 90.90 ft	Water-level: 2,280.25 ft
Inflow: 8,023 cusecs	Inflow: 15,000 cusecs
Outflow: 2,811 cusecs	Outflow: 15,000 cusecs

Rain in Wyanad region in Kerala helped increase inflow to Kabini reservoir. Sources said compared to last year, the rain in Wyanad region was comparatively less. The level in the reservoir reached 2,272.50 ft with an inflow of 8,000 cusecs and outflow of 1,000 cusecs. Fifteen days ago, the level was 2,269.50 ft. Agriculture Department officials said water will be released into canals by the end of July and irrigation activities can be taken up. At present, the farmers are harvesting the remaining paddy and it will be completed soon. The delay of the monsoon by more than one-and-half months has left farmers worried, because they cannot grow major crops. They said they would have taken up cotton, jowar or tobacco cultivation, had the monsoon come on time. Farmer leader Badagalpura Nagendra said they halted irrigation in the district for the past two months as the water level in both the reservoirs was low. "Due to below average rainfall, we can't grow cotton, jowar or tobacco. After the release of water to canals, we are planning to grow paddy and pulses," he added. Agricultural department officials said the farmers may lose 30-40 per cent crops sown in Mysore district, owing to the failure of monsoon in June.

Farmer Uses Bike to Plough Land



Laxman Maruti Muchandi, a young farmer from Yallur near Belgaum, has found a novel way to cultivate his 4.5-acre field without using oxen or a tractor. Muchandi has used a motorcycle to plough the field for sowing paddy. Muchandi said it was very difficult to

get farm labourers. Some demanded `11,000 to plough his field, after which he decided to use his motorcycle. He used one-and-a-half litres of petrol to plough one acre and it worked out to `1,500 to plough the whole field. His brother Rama helped him. Villagers from surrounding areas have started visiting him to watch him work, on hearing of the new method.

Paddy Cultivation goes to Seed Despite Govt Schemes



The various steps taken by the government to promote paddy cultivation notwithstanding, the extent of land under paddy crop is on the decline in the state. The area under cultivation has fallen by more than 15,000 hectares since 2010-11, show statistics presented in the Assembly last week. In 2010-11, the state -- which considers rice as its staple food -- had a little over 2.13 lakh hectares of rice fields. It fell to 2.08 lakh hectares in 2011-12 and to a little over 1.97 lakh hectares in 2012-13. Steps taken by the LDF and UDF governments helped only to slow down the pace of the diversion of farm land for other purposes such as construction. Between 2011-12 and 2013-14, various government programmes have helped to bring as much as 6,684 hectares of land, that was lying fallow, under paddy farming, according to a reply given by Agriculture Minister K P Mohanan in the House. The minister said the government was able to make 3,407 hectares of fallow land cultivable in 2011-2012. Land to the extent of 1,373.4 hectares were added in 2012-13 and another 1,903.35 hectares in 2013-14. During 2013, the government spent `2.47 crore on promoting paddy cultivation on fallow lands. Under the centrally-funded Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, the government has drawn up plans to encourage farming on unused land in 12 districts during 2014-15. Farmers stand to get a subsidy of `15,000 per hectare under the project.

Potatoes Out, Beetroots on Menu



Potato and onion are daily staples — there's no denying that. But a walk through the neighbourhood Pazhamudir would reveal that a kilo of potato costs as much as beetroot or sweet potato — tubers which rank lower in the preference order. Nutrition value aside, consumers have gradually begun to incorporate these into their menu because the regulars are just as expensive anyway.

“Though there are certain items like greens which I buy irrespective of price, we have begun to include beetroot, capsicum and sweet potato in our diet. But we can’t use it daily as the kids don’t really prefer the taste,” said 43-year-old S Vidyashankar, a resident of Mandaveli. However, if the same veggies are spread on a pizza or stuffed in a burger, the kids readily eat it, he added. There’s very little chance that anybody who grew up in the last three decades or so, crossed their teens without hearing about broccoli. And with greater exposure to international cuisines, cookbooks and cooking programs on television, broccoli and turnips have found their way into kitchens in the city. However, given the exorbitant prices: broccoli costs Rs. 200 per kilogram, it is used sparingly and only in upper middle class homes. “I came to know about broccoli and its powers in cancer-prevention from the website. I use it once a week in soups. But we consume potato only once in two weeks; the reliance is on sepakezhangu, bitter gourd and kovakkai, for daily use,” said V Maheshwari, a middle aged home-maker. However S Magesh, a vegetable vendor in Mylapore market, minces no words as far as consumption of these vegetables is concerned. “I have only two or three select customers who buy these 200 rupee vegetables. Prices of tomato, onion and potato might keep increasing, but common customers have no way out. They will buy that. The only way out is they cut down on consumption or buy slightly lower quality stuff. Broccoli and capsicum might be useful for cancer prevention, but not everyone has cancer,” he said.

Organic market untouched by hike



Continuously soaring vegetable prices mean cutting down on potato and onion in delicacies, unavailability of samosas in chaats and less tastier food. “What’s worse? This trend would continue for a while,” say vegetable merchants in the city, citing peak summer and low yield as reasons. However, the organic vegetable market has not fluctuated much with these changes and the merchants attribute it to direct purchase from the farmers. Sriram N from Vaer Organic store, an online shop for organic vegetables, fruits and grocery added, “The prices have been constant for a while now and I don’t foresee any change. For instance, onion has been sold for ₹64 per kg including home delivery charges for over two months.” He said that the change in the market price was a response to increased demand. Also, middlemen purchase the vegetables from the farmers and sell the vegetables at a higher price in the market. “We also don’t have to hoard or save for exports. We help the farmers and our regular customers; we never burden them with increasing demand or prices,” said Rajendran S, another vegetable merchant in the city. The sellers felt that the demand does not increase seasonally as the

number of customers who buy organic vegetables is the same and that the supply-demand chain is constant. However, not all the vegetables are available due to the constantly changing weather with alternating showers and heat. Sriram said, "Coriander does not germinate well in this weather and I haven't sold it for a month and a half but we expect to receive a stock soon."

Purchase based on priority



Spiralling vegetable prices are forcing buyers into a rethink, as priority becomes the key word. Not surprisingly, retail shops are aware of the financial strain that purchasing vegetables has on the consumer. Walk into a retail shop and it is very likely that the prices listed on the board will be for quarter kilogram of the respective produce. "I think it provides an idea of the pressure on most working class households. Even the upper middle class families are sensing the heat," says Leo Fernando, a resident of Kolathur. "The situation has changed made people shift focus from comfortable living to sustained living," he adds. Fernando, who adds that vegetables like beans are now a luxury item, says that he has discontinued the practice of buying vegetables and other produce in large quantities due to the increasing prices. "A small coconut costs me `25 the other day. It is tough to purchase large stocks given such prices," he says. However, a few customers have taken to selective shopping, targeting individual stores, marts and retail outlets, for a particular type of vegetable that may cost less. "I buy certain vegetables from a nearby Reliance outlet because it costs less there," says P Vijayan, a resident of Pazhavanthangal.

Wholesale onion prices drop at Koyambedu, tomato to follow suit

In some good news for those teary-eyed consumers purchasing onions at its present steep prices, the Koyambedu market has witnessed a drop in onion rates and it may soon reflect on the price boards at your neighbourhood retail outlets. Onion, which was sold for `30 per kg at Koyambedu, has seen fresh stocks arrive from Madhya Pradesh, to compensate for the loss in stocks that used to come from Nasik. "Unfortunately, a spell of hail storm destroyed produce in Nasik. But we have compensated for that by bringing in produce from Madhya Pradesh," says V R Soundara Rajan, Koyambedu vegetable market advisor. He says that the failure of monsoons is the primary reason behind the high price of the vegetable. "We get tomato stocks from Hubli, Belgaum and other places in Karnataka. Lack of rains there has affected production. However, we are hopeful the prices will come down," he adds. But he doesn't expect the price of beans to fall, "Bean stocks come from Andhra, Chittoor and nearby places. Water scarcity is adversely

affecting the production. In some places there is no water for up to 1000 feet. It is a grim situation,” he added. Wholesale Koyambedu prices (Up-to-date; all prices in kg)

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Kochi tea auction sees lukewarm response

Several varieties of tea witnessed heavy withdrawals at the Kochi tea auction last week due to lack of or low bids. The market for Good Liquoring teas and those which major blenders showed interest in was steady to firm. The demand for others were irregular, quoting Rs. 3-5 lower and witnessing withdrawals. In Sale No 28, 14,40,000 kg of CTC dusts was on offer and the demand was fair, with 73 per cent getting sold. There was subdued demand from upcountry buyers and exporters were less active, auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said. In Orthodox grades, 13,500 kg was on offer and the market witnessed heavy withdrawals. Only a small quantity of Orthodox dust sold was absorbed by exporters. In best CTC dusts, PD varieties quoted at Rs. 91-111, RD grades fetched Rs. 96-131, SRD Rs. 106-138, and SFD Rs. 108-152. With fair demand, 2,38,000 kg of Orthodox leaf was on offer. The market for Good Liquoring Nilgiri Broken and Fannings was firm. The market for others was irregular. However, the demand was good for CTC leaf grades and the quantity on offer was 69,000 kg. The demand for select best varieties was steady to firm. As for others, it was irregular and low

Mandya banks' farm loans touch Rs. 1,342.55 cr

Public sector and commercial banks have achieved Rs. 1,342.55 crore agriculture disbursements in the financial year 2013-14. G S Basavarajappa, Lead District Bank (Vijaya Bank) Manager, Mandya, informed the District Level Review Committee (DLRC) meet that disbursements for crop loans stood at Rs. 1,244.15 crore. Disbursements for the non-farm sector stood at Rs. 116.50 crore and other priority sector stood at Rs. 692.91 crore. The disbursements for the total priority sector stood at Rs. 2,151.96 crore. The figures of taluk wise disbursements for the district are as follows: K R Pet stood at Rs. 216.54 crore, Maddur stood at Rs. 458.51 crore, Malavalli stood at Rs. 236.95 crore, Mandya stood at Rs. 650 crore, Nagamangala stood at Rs. 149.26 crore, Pandavapura stood at Rs. 214.89 crore and Srirangapatna at Rs. 224.93 crore.

Award for rubber growers

Nominations are invited for KM Chandy Memorial Best Rubber Grower Award for 2014. The award consists of Rs. 1 lakh and a citation. Technical officers and scientists of the board, presidents of Rubber Producers' Societies, director board members of board's

companies in RPS sector and Rubber Marketing Societies can nominate rubber growers for the award. The nominated grower should have a minimum of ten years experience in rubber cultivation and have a minimum rubber area of 0.40 ha but not exceeding 10 ha. Our Bureau

Heavy withdrawals at Kochi tea auction

V SAJEEV KUMAR



Several varieties of tea witnessed heavy withdrawals at Kochi tea auction last week due to insufficient volume of bids. Market for Good Liquoring teas and those which came under the selection of major blenders was steady to firm and sometimes dearer. Others were irregular and lower by ₹3 to ₹5 and witnessed withdrawals. In sale no 28, the quantity on offer in CTC dust was 14,40,000 kg and the demand was fair with almost 73 per cent being sold. There was subdued demand from upcountry buyers and exporters were less active covering only a small quantity, auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said. The quantity on offer in Orthodox grade was 13,500 kg and the market was lower witnessing heavy withdrawals. A very small quantity of Orthodox dust sold was absorbed by exporters. In the best CTC dust, PD varieties quoted ₹91/111, RD grades fetched ₹96/131, SRD ruled ₹106/138 and SFD stood at ₹108/152. With a fair demand, the quantity on offer in Orthodox leaf was 2,38,000 kg. The market for Good Liquoring Nilgiri Broken and Fannings was fully firm to sometimes dearer. Others were irregular and lower. However, the demand was good for CTC leaf grade and the quantity on offer was 69,000 kg. The select best tea varieties were steady to firm. Others were irregular and lower and witnessed some withdrawals. Exporters operated at lower levels. In the dust grade, both Injipara (Prm) RD and SRD quoted the best prices of ₹156 each followed by Monica SFD and Injipara (Prm) SFD at ₹155 each. In the leaf category, Pascoe's Woodlands Hyson Green Tea fetched the best prices of ₹317 followed by Sutton FOP at ₹301.

Vegetable prices soar in Haryana, Punjab

In the wake of scanty monsoon rains and short supply, prices of vegetables in Haryana, Punjab and Chandigarh have soared sharply over the last ten days. Most of the vegetables

including potato, cauliflower, capsicum, beans, green peas, bottle gourd, bitter gourd, spinach, carrot, cucumber, pumpkin, among other vegetables have registered an increase in their prices. In the retail market, 'Pahari' variety of potato is selling between Rs 35-Rs 40 per kg, a jump of around Rs 10 per kg, while another commonly available variety of the tuber crop is priced between Rs 25-Rs 30 per kg, up by nearly Rs 7 a kg.

Peanut to perk up

G CHANDRASHEKHAR



Despite being high in oil and protein content, groundnut (peanut) has lost out to other oilseeds in the complex, such as soyabean and canola in the global oilseed market in recent years. Support in terms of policy, investment and research for this oilseed has declined. No wonder, global peanut production has been languishing at around 39-40 million tonnes in recent years, a mere 8 per cent of aggregate world oilseeds production versus, say, soyabean that accounts for a whopping 60 per cent. Foreign trade in meal is 6.5-7.0 million tonnes while that in oil is about 5.5 million tonnes. Trade in kernels is negligible at about 2.5 million tonnes. Not just in the world market, in India too, groundnut has lost its pride of place among major oilseeds. Until the late 1990s, groundnut oil used to be the kingpin among edible oils and held a major share in the country's vegoil basket; but not any more as its production has slipped far below that of rapeseed oil and soyabean oil. Use of groundnut meal or de-oiled cake as animal feed has also shrunk around the world, including in our country, because of the problem of aflatoxin, a carcinogenic fungus that colonises the kernels. As food safety standards tighten steadily, it is necessary for the processing and consuming sectors to be aware of aflatoxin contamination and take remedial measures such as detoxification to address the problem. Because of its high dependence on the south-west monsoon, groundnut production in kharif season has fluctuated from year to year depending on spatial and temporal distribution of rains, while rabi harvests have held fairly steady at 15-16 lakh tonnes.

More on the table

But the food use of the oilseed is expanding rapidly. Bold varieties (usually hand-picked selected kernels) are now being increasingly diverted for food use or as table nut in the company of almond, cashew nut and pistachio; or consumed as roasted, salted or coated nuts. It is estimated that out of the kernel production of 50-55 lakh tonnes, food use

currently stands at an estimated 12-13 lakh tonnes or about a quarter. Fluctuating production from year to year has also meant volatile market conditions. India exports 2-3 lakh tonnes of groundnut kernels every year not to the traditional premium markets in Europe, but to the less fastidious markets in South-East Asia. The minimum support price for groundnut in-shell stood at ₹4,000 a quintal in 2013-14, having been raised successively from ₹2,300 a quintal in 2010-11. However, the increase has not triggered any productivity gains as yields still languish at about one tonne per hectare while the world average is higher at about 1.6 t/ha. For 2014-15, groundnut in-shell production target is 90 lakh tonnes comprising 72 lakh tonnes for kharif and the rest for rabi season. MSP for kharif season has been kept unchanged at ₹4,000 quintal. Dry conditions in the principal growing States of Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh the whole of June means there is risk the kharif target may not be achieved. In view of a looming harvest shortfall, industry and trade (oil mills, exporters, local traders) dealing in groundnuts and its derivative products have to exercise caution. Prices are likely to remain firm and potentially move well above the MSP.

Business Standard

Rubber production up 66 per cent in June



After recording a fall in April and May, domestic natural rubber production increased 65.8 per cent in June, when compared with the same month last year. The production in June this year rose to 63,000 tonne, as against 38,000 tonne in June, 2013, as per the latest provisional data of the Rubber board. Supported by higher production in June, production in the first quarter of the current financial year increased 11.3 per cent to 167,000 tonne from 150,000 tonne for the same period of last financial year. Higher production in June was mainly on account of lower monsoon showers, which helped growers to continue with the tapping of trees. Rubber production had dropped marginally during April and May of this year, when compared with the same months of last fiscal year. Production dropped 3.8 per cent in April and 10.2 per cent in May as against the respective months in 2013. Normally rain affects tapping and processing of rubber, which happens during June and July. While the consumption of natural rubber increased 5 per cent in this June and the cumulative consumption got up 2 per cent during April - June period. The Rubber board data records a consumption of 86,000 tonne in June compared

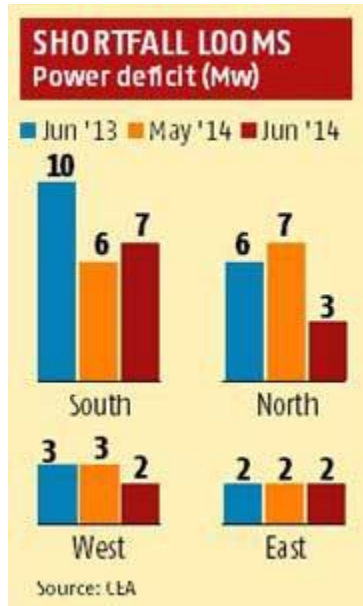
to 81,710 tonne in last June. The overall consumption in April - June period was 251,000 tones as against 246,015 tonne. The sharp increase in imports continued in the month of June also and 32,550 tones were imported as against 23,001 tones, registering a growth of 42 per cent. There was a whopping increase of 65 per cent of the overall import of the commodity during April - June period. 96,392 tones were brought in during the period as against 58,345 tones in the same period of last financial year. According to the data rubber export was very meager during June as the shipment was just 60 tones in June and the cumulative figure for Q1 was 119 tones as against 1888 tones, registering a fall of 94 per cent. In April 38 tones were exported and in May this was 21 tones only. The board's estimates indicate that at the end of this June the total stock in the country is 207,000 tones. This was 188,000 tones in June 2013. Tyre sector concern

Meanwhile, Raghupati Singhania, Vice Chairman, Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA) said that the latest budget laid down a roadmap for reviving infrastructure and manufacturing both of which are crucial for sustained growth of auto and tyre sectors. The emphasis on road development with commitment of significant funds towards NHAI fulfils an urgent need to spur up infrastructure development in India. FM's proposal for development of expressways, parallel to industrial corridors, will help revitalise the Medium & Heavy Commercial Vehicles segment which has seen negative growth for two years in succession. However, tyre sector was immensely hopeful that in view of Govt's avowed thrust on enhancing manufacturing competitiveness, the inverted duty structure prevailing in tyre sector will be corrected. That anomaly, which is continuing for the last several years, has not been addressed and is a matter of added concern with the industry. As it is, India's regional trade agreements are adversely impacting the domestic tyre industry as tyres in large volumes are finding an entry into India while import of raw materials is restricted as a direct outcome of these agreements. That could have really helped the Indian tyre sector without in anyway violating WTO regulations, he added.

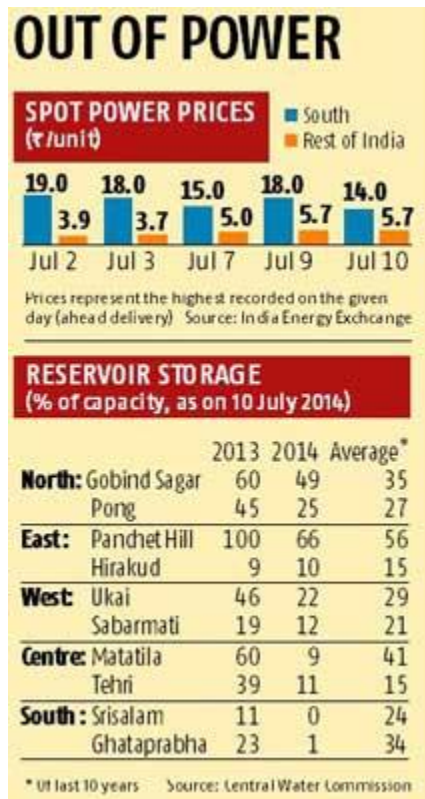
Fear of drought, power deficit woes heightens

The sluggish southwest monsoon, which yielded one of the driest Junes in a century this year, appears disappointing this month as well. The absence of a revival that was expected from July 6 has heightened the possibility of a drought in 10 per cent of the districts where kharif crops are sown and increased the fear of a power deficit problem spreading from the South to other parts of the country. According to India Meteorological Department (IMD) data, monsoon till Friday was 43 per cent short of the normal level - the worst since 2009, when India had suffered its severest drought in 30 years. Until the end of last month, too, the monsoon rainfall was 43 per cent less than normal. Until Friday, rainfall in the northwestern parts of the country was 52 per cent less than normal, while it was 61 per cent below that level in central India and 35 per cent less in the southern areas. IMD, however, is hopeful the monsoon could gather momentum from Tuesday in North India, parts of which received some rainfall on Sunday as well. But the weather department warned the monsoon might remain weak over western parts of India for the next 15 days. This forecast has led to the fear of a drought in at least 40 of the 400-

odd districts in the country where sowing of kharif crops takes place. Department of agriculture officials said the situation in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan looked grim so far. Maharashtra's Vidarbha and Marathwada areas, Gujarat's Kutch and Surat, and the entire Rajasthan were staring at the possibility of a drought. If it indeed happens, production of pulses, oil seeds, coarse cereals and some vegetables could be affected.



This might raise the prices of these products, compounding the problem of inflation seen due to high prices of some vegetables like onions, potatoes and tomatoes. As of Friday, kharif sowing had taken place over 25.66 million hectares, about half the area covered during the same period last year, data from the agriculture department showed. More importantly, this is 35 per cent less than normal area - the average of area on which sowing took place in the past five years. There could be a more severe crisis if power disruptions - currently confined to South India, mainly due to a weak monsoon bringing down water levels in the reservoirs there - spread to other parts of the country. Power problems are feared to hit central, western and northern parts of the country over the next 10-15 days. In fact, water levels in 85 major reservoirs across India have receded. The electricity deficit has widened in South India and spot power prices have zoomed over the past few weeks, fuelling concerns of a pan-Indian effect of the worrisome trend.



The southern region recorded a peak power deficit of seven per cent in June, compared with 1.7 per cent in West, two per cent in East and three per cent in North. Also, this month so far, power prices in the spot market of the South have stayed between Rs 7 and as high as Rs 19 per unit. By comparison, the highest price recorded in other regions has been Rs 5 a unit. The power shortage in the South has been worsened by the lack of a transmission corridor to import electricity from other regions. The state transmission utility's power grid is yet to commission the second half of the 765-kiloVolt line between Sholapur in Maharashtra and Raichur in Karnataka, which is crucial to importing 2,100 Mw of power. Of the 30 water reservoirs in southern India, water storage in 27 was less than 40 per cent of their capacity as on July 10. Storage in Andhra Pradesh's reservoirs was 67 per cent below the level the Central Water Commission considers normal. By that standard, storage in Tamil Nadu's reservoirs was 64 per cent below normal, Karnataka's 59 per cent less and

Kerala's 47 per cent below normal. In a record of sorts, Andhra Pradesh's Srisalam dam, with a mega capacity to store 8.3 billion cubic metres (bcm), has been dried empty by the extended rainless spell. At present, this dam has zero per cent storage, compared with 11 per cent last year and an average of 24 per cent over the past decade. Similarly, Karnataka's Ghataprabha dam was left with a mere one per cent of its storage capacity, against last year's 23 per cent; Renuka dam had two per cent storage, compared with last year's 12 per cent, and Tamil Nadu's Vaigai dam had four per cent storage, against last year's 26 per cent. Central Water Commission (CWC) data also showed the situation in other parts of the country, too, was far from comfortable. In North India, for example, water in major reservoirs was at 43 per cent of capacity as of July 10, compared with 53 per cent during the same period last year. News agency PTI, meanwhile, reported on Sunday that in the wake of a sudden rise in demand for power due to hot weather conditions, the power distribution corporations in Haryana supplied an all-time record 190.10 million units of power in the state on Saturday and the transmission and distribution system took highest peaking load of 8,612 Mw. These figures for the corresponding day of last year were 166.01 million units, with 7,755 Mw peaking load on the system. In western parts, comprising Gujarat and Maharashtra, water levels in reservoirs were 21 per cent of full capacity, compared with 28 per cent in the same period last year. Similarly, water levels in the reservoirs of central India were at 30 per cent of total capacity, against 38 per cent in the same period last year. So far, the impact of reservoirs' receding water levels on power has been more pronounced in South India, as this region had received very little rainfall during the winters as well.

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Vegetable prices soar in Haryana, Punjab



In the wake of scanty monsoon rains and short supply, prices of vegetables in Haryana, Punjab and Chandigarh have soared sharply over the last ten days.

Most of the vegetables including potato, cauliflower, capsicum, beans, green peas, bottle gourd, bitter gourd, spinach, carrot, cucumber, pumpkin, among other vegetables have registered an increase in their prices. In the retail market, 'Pahari' variety of potato is selling between Rs 35-Rs 40 per kg, a jump of around Rs 10 per kg, while another commonly available variety of the tuber crop is priced between Rs 25-Rs 30 per kg, up

by nearly Rs 7 a kg. The maximum increase has been in prices of the green peas, which have shot from Rs 50 per kg about ten days back to Rs 80-Rs 100 per kg now.

The price of tomato, which was available for about Rs 20 per kg until a week ago, has also zoomed to Rs 40 a kg, a trader in Mohali said.

Onion prices, however, have remained stable at around Rs 30 per kg.

Other vegetables including beans, capsicum, cauliflower have also witnessed rise in their prices, traders said. Prices of beans are hovering over Rs 80 per kg, up from Rs 40-Rs 50 per kg earlier while cauliflower is selling between Rs 50-Rs 60 per kg as against Rs 40 per kg earlier. As the two states have received scanty rains owing to monsoon turning weak after its late arrival, cucumbers which are high in demand during summers, have also become costly selling at Rs 30-Rs 50 per kg for different varieties as against Rs 15-Rs 25 per kg earlier.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Food Corporation India starts maize procurement in Bihar to ensure MSP to farmers



Concerned over farmers in Bihar selling maize below the MSP, Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan on Sunday said Food Corporation of India (FCI) has been asked to procure the cereal crop at the support price in the state. Currently, FCI is procuring maize in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Chattisgarh. "Against the maize MSP of Rs 1,310 per quintal, farmers in Bihar are getting only Rs 900 per quintal. To protect the interest of farmers, we have begun maize procurement via FCI in the state," Paswan said. About 16 procurement centres of FCI have been opened for undertaking maize procurement in nine districts -- Khagaria, Purnea, Madhepura, Bhagalpur, Chapra, Vaishali, Motihar, Bettiah and Jamui, he added. Paswan further said that the Bihar government could have initiated maize procurement on its own after knowing their farmers are being deprived of the basic MSP. "The current policy permits state governments to initiate MSP operations for coarse cereals. Some states are doing this," he said, while noting that the Bihar government has sought the Centre's intervention at the

fag end of maize procurement season. Maize MSP stands at Rs 1,310 per quintal for this year. FCI, which normally procures wheat and rice in big way, has purchased about 12.15 lakh tonnes of maize from five states so far in the ongoing 2013-14 season, as per the official data. Last year, FCI's total maize buy was only 2,243 tonnes. Bihar with an annual production of around 27-28 lakh tonnes is the second biggest maize producer in the country. It has 6.85 lakh hectares under this crop. Maize is not a staple food in Bihar. Quality maize is grown thrice a year during autumn and in rabi and kharif seasons

Poor monsoon in 2014 takes a toll on food crops, farmers planting alternative crops

Poor monsoon rain is beginning to take a heavy toll as planting of food crops so far is worse than the drought year of 2009, and authorities in some regions have diverted water from fields to drinking water taps, compounding the misery of farmers. Farmers in many regions are planting alternative crops, which are less remunerative but can endure water scarcity and mature quickly to make up for late sowing. Water in 85 major reservoirs has fallen rapidly below the 10-year average at a time the tanks fill up to be able to irrigate fields after the monsoon and maintain hydropower generation. Monsoon showers lashed parts of north India on Sunday, heralding the start of the Sawan month, usually a rainy phase in the traditional calendar, but the country needs sustained showers to make up for the 43 per cent rain deficit so far. The weather office says monsoon will gather pace in the days ahead, which can still salvage agriculture. But the current situation raises the spectre of food inflation, which had rocketed to 20 per cent in 2009 and remained stubbornly high since then, impacting interest rates and growth. Total crop planting in the Kharif season has halved from last year. The oilseeds crop is the worst-hit with planting completed in only 22 lakh hectares as on July 11, which is down more than 80 per cent from last year and significantly lower than 56 lakh hectares sown at the same time in 2009, when the country suffered the worst drought in nearly four decades. Cotton planting is also lower than in 2009. Total area under rice, coarse cereals and pulses is 135 lakh hectares, lower than 153 lakh hectares sown by this time in 2009. Coarse grain planting is much lower while rice and pulses are slightly better than the drought year. The situation is particularly severe in the stretch from Odisha to Maharashtra and Gujarat, which the weather office calls 'central India'. In this region, the area with rainfall closest to normal is Konkan and Goa with a monsoon deficit of 45 per cent since June 1. Rain deficit in Narendra Modi's native state of Gujarat ranges from 77 per cent in Saurashtra and Kutch to 4.96 per cent in the rest of the state. "The agricultural situation in Gujarat, interior Karnataka and major parts of Maharashtra, west Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan needs to be monitored continuously and preparation may be taken up for adoption of contingency plan and arrangements may be made for availability of sufficient seeds and other inputs for agricultural operations," the weather office said. Acreage of India's largest vegetable export, guar, could also increase as companies have been distributing free seeds to farmers. The crop, which is largely sown in the dry areas of west Rajasthan, Haryana, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, requires only two to three showers. "Guar is a very sturdy crop and even if it rains by late July, farmers can sow the

crop. However, our main focus will remain on cotton and groundnut, which account for 50 per cent of the total Kharif area in the state," said Raj Kumar, principal secretary in the Gujarat government. Farmers in the state could plant crops in only 14 lakh hectares, down from 50 lakh hectares last year. "There has been no rain and with reservoir position critical, water is only being released for drinking and not irrigation. If it rains as per the Met department forecast, then we can go for groundnut and cotton sowing till July 15," he added. Farmers in Gujarat, Maharashtra and parts of Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka are also planting alternative crops. Availability of water for irrigation is a big challenge because of poor water levels. The level in the 85 important reservoirs stood at 36.5 billion cubic metres (bcm) against the total capacity of 155 bcm. The water level was at 55.438 bcm in the year-ago period, according to the Central Water Commission. Water was the lowest in reservoirs in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. "We have prepared contingency plans for all the 13 districts of the state. Farmers are being advised to go for sowing of maize, and red gram, bengal gram, pigeon pea," said Anil Chandra Punetha, principal secretary, agriculture, Andhra Pradesh. He was optimistic that in case the progress of rains improved, there could be no loss in production. In Andhra Pradesh, sowing has been done in less than 6 lakh hectares from the total arable land of 41 lakh hectares.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Parched lands drive dairy farmers to vegetable markets

For V Muthupeyandi, a small farmer owning two milch cows, a visit to the Mattuthavani Central Market early in the mornings has become a routine affair over the past few weeks as he has to collect vegetable waste for his cattle. Hailing from Pullaneri village in Chellampatti block, Muthupeyandi is one among many farmers in the district who collect discarded cabbage and cauliflower leaves from big vegetable markets in Madurai to feed their livestock. The reason: failure of monsoons in the region for the last three years and the drying up of most of the pasture lands putting the farmers rearing livestock in a tight spot. According to a provisional census report of livestock released in 2013 by the animal husbandry department there are a total of 2.28 lakh cows and bulls and more than 4,000 buffaloes in addition to over 1.5 lakh goats and sheep in the district. Though green fodder is raised by some farmers whose wells have enough water, it is still not adequate to share with the others. Green grass is available in the market at Rs 10 per 5 kg bundle but its supply is steadily dwindling. Each animal may consume four bundles per day and other fodder like groundnut, sesame and groundnut cakes and rice husk. With fodder prices steadily increasing, they are finding it difficult to feed their milch animals, say dairy farmers in the district. A Muthupandi, district secretary of Tamil Nadu Milk Farmers Association says they are in a very tight spot. "We are not able to keep our animals nor sell them off because there is no price. It has been three years since it rained properly in the region and most of regular pasture grounds are bone dry," he said. Dairy farmers find

discarded vegetables like tomatoes and brinjals as well as cabbage and cauliflower leaves, as supplement for fodder. "They would come with empty sacks to the market around 5 or 6am and collect all discarded vegetables for their cattle. It may cost them Rs 30 for a sack full of discarded vegetables," says P Muthukumar, a vegetable vendor from Mattuthavani Central Vegetable Market. "Discarded vegetables may not cost much and many vendors will give away old vegetables for paltry sums. But it will cost us Rs 30 to 40 per sack transporting them back to villages," says Muthuveyandi. Dairy farmers desperately hope rains in the coming days will end their plight. "Every day, the number of farmers thronging markets for vegetable waste only keeps increasing. It hurts our pride to run after discarded vegetables but we have to save our animals. We desperately pray that there will be good rains in the coming days," says Ganesan, a dairy farmer from Karugapillai village near Chellampatti.