

Focus on biological control of pest in paddy, soil test

Programme on integrated pest management



A training programme for farmers under way in Tuticorin on Tuesday.

Farmers were exposed to better management practices and basic techniques of soil testing at a programme on integrated pest management, organised by Agricultural College and Research Institute, Killikulam, in association with Ratan Tata Trust, Mumbai. Delivering the inaugural address here on Tuesday, N.K. Dhakshinamoorthy, Joint Director of Agriculture, Tuticorin, stressed the importance of biological control of pests in paddy crop in the Tamirabarani command area. V. Subramanian, Dean of the college, who presided, reiterated the need for soil testing to manage the pest and prevent diseases in crops. Soil testing could ameliorate ill effects of indiscriminate use of fertilizers and pesticides. It would create an environment conducive for agricultural activity. G. Ravi, Head, Department of Entomology and principal investigator of the programme, urged the farmers to reduce pest and disease incidence by using pesticide for enhancing productivity and quality in rice grains. T. Tamilmalar, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Seydunganallur, said the field level staff of Agriculture Department had been deputed to conduct soil testing campaign for the benefit of rice growers in villages including Alwarkarkulam, Aarampannai, Manakarai, Nanalkadu and Murappanadu of Karunkulam blocks in the district. N. Selvam, Agricultural Officer, Mobile Soil Testing Laboratory, Kovilpatti, explained the importance of soil testing besides correct procedure of sampling of soil. He answered queries on soil problems faced by farmers. The programme was attended by farmers, faculty members of agriculture department, Village Administrative Officers and village presidents. N. Murugesan, Professor of Entomology, proposed a vote of thanks.

Urea may be shifted to nutrient-based subsidy regime

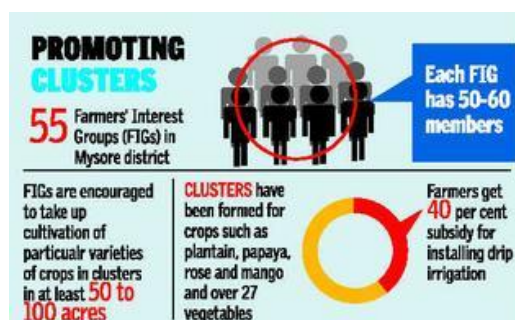
PUJA MEHRA



Buried in the Budget fine print is another big-ticket reform. The documents reveal that the Modi government plans to increase the administered price for urea “immediately” and move to a new nutrient-based urea policy. The Centre’s subsidy policy is widely blamed for the overuse of urea on Indian farms. Urea is the only fertilizer that remains under statutory price control and its maximum retail price is fixed by the government. The difference between production cost and the administered concessional price is allowed as subsidy. For the purpose of the calculation of the subsidy element, the Fertilizer Ministry, in consultation with manufacturers, determines the production cost for every urea plant separately. As a result, the manufacturers’ lobby is opposed to reform. The other fertilizers were brought under the nutrient-based subsidy regime by the previous government by which subsidy is not paid to the manufacturer on the basis of the production cost. Instead, the quantity sold is taken into account. The Modi government’s decision to bring urea under the nutrient-based subsidy regime assumes significance as the reform was first proposed by the Manmohan Singh government. The United Progressive Alliance shifted other fertilizers to the new subsidy regime but not urea owing to the then Fertilizer Minister M.K. Alagiri’s resistance to the reform. Saying that his Ministry’s proposal for fertilizers to be shifted to the new subsidy regime had ended up including urea also without his knowledge as he did not understand either English or Hindi, Mr. Alagiri had the Cabinet approve the reform for all fertilizers but urea. As a result, urea is the only fertilizer that continues to be subject to price distribution and movement control under the Fertilizer Control Order issued under the Essential Commodities Act. If the Modi government bites the bullet on urea subsidy, Finance Ministry officials estimate, the resultant fertilizer subsidy savings this year could be about Rs. 20,000 crore, enough to enable Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley meet the challenging fiscal deficit target.

Horticulture Department to help farmers register FPOs to boost output

SHANKAR BENNUR



With 55 Farmers’ Interest Groups (FIGs) formed in Mysore district to promote particular varieties of horticultural crops, the Department of Horticulture here is assisting farmers to register Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) under the Indian Companies Act, 2013 to improve farm productivity, derive effective business models and market farm produce without the intervention of middlemen. The department is hoping to get at least two FPOs

this year to market banana and vegetables. All FIGs have been registered in a span of two years. Nine FIGs were proposed for registration this year. Each society has about 50–60 farmers as members, who were encouraged to take up cultivation of particular varieties of crops in a cluster (a group of villages) in at least 50 to 100 acres, according to horticulture authorities here. Deputy Director of Horticulture N.M. Nagaraj told *The Hindu* that clusters had been formed bringing together farmers of different villages in each hobli. They get subsidies besides technologies that advance the yield. Clusters had been formed for crops such as plantain, papaya, rose and mango. Over 27 vegetable clusters had been registered, he added. The schemes from the State and the Union government that promote horticultural crops are integrated and the benefits were collectively extended to the FIGs. They can avail subsidy under the schemes specific to each cluster. One of the aims of the FIGs is to make horticulture “technology-driven”, Mr. Nagaraj said. He said farmers get 40 per cent subsidy for installing drip irrigation, which is mandatory in cluster development programmes. Similarly, they can also avail other crop-specific subsidies. The area of each cluster depends on the type of crop selected for cultivation, he said. Besides technological interventions in horticulture, steps for efficient use of water were also recommended, Mr. Nagaraj said, and added that five vegetable clusters had been formed in Varuna hobli, which is highest at the hobli level. With the FIGs gaining stability, the next step would be to register FPOs, he said. “Farmers have realised the importance of the FIGs’ and are keen on opening companies to improve market opportunities.” Mr. Nagaraj said farmers would get support from the department for running their companies for the first three years.

Farmers willing to pay will get 24x7 power for IP sets

B.S. SATISH KUMAR

Pay if you want round-the-clock power supply appears to be the message the government wants to give the farmers who are getting free power — but only for about seven hours a day — to run their irrigation pump-sets. This was evident during the reply of Energy Minister D.K. Shivakumar to the debate in the Legislative Assembly on the Energy Department’s demand for grants on Tuesday. He announced a new scheme for energising IP sets which also has provisions to ensure 24-hour supply from high-tension lines for farmers willing to install meters and pay for the consumption. Farmers willing to pay for power and interested in immediate connection would be given connection from the 11 kV high-tension lines to ensure 24-hour supply for their IP sets. However, the farmers would have to pay for the power infrastructure such as drawing of new lines and installation of meters, he said. Farmers who are getting free supply now have been given the option to switch over to the payment option to get round-the-clock power by installing meters. Such farmers would be provided aerial bunched cables which ensure safety. While the Escoms would bear the cost of such cables, farmers would have to bear the expense of transformers and pay the prescribed deposit. Explaining the constraints in supplying three-phase power to operate IP sets, the Minister said it would require about Rs. 1,000 crore to

provide one hour of three-phase supply to IP sets which number around 22 lakh in the State.

Prices of low quality white arecanut go up

RAVIPRASAD KAMILA



Prices of a low quality white arecanut called 'pathora' has jumped by 56-64 per cent insix-and-half months. —File photo

Bullish trend in the white arecanut market for the past six months has pushed the prices of not only the best quality but low quality as well. Prices of a low quality white arecanut called 'pathora' (arecanut with hairline cracks) has jumped by 56-64 per cent in the past six-and-half months. According to sources in Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (Campco) Ltd., the prices of 'pathora' have now gone up to Rs. 250-270 a kg from Rs. 160-165 a kg in January. It was an indication of scarcity of produce in the market, sources told *The Hindu*. The last highest price for 'pathora' was in August 2013 when it touched Rs. 90-100 a kg. Ramesh Kainthaje, an arecanut grower, said some farmers even sold 'pathora' for Rs. 290 a kg to private traders a few days ago. "I do not remember 'pathora' getting this high a price ever," he said. Sources said manufacturers of pan masala prefer blending 'pathora' with red variety of arecanut. As the red variety was costlier than best and low quality white arecanut, the manufacturers have begun mixing 30-40 per cent of white arecanut with red variety, pushing the prices of all varieties of white arecanut irrespective of quality. Sources said that 'pathora' constituted usually five to 10 per cent of a quintal of arecanut harvested by growers here. Manchi Srinivasa Achar, president, All India Areca Growers' Association, Puttur, said 'pathora' prices this year surpassed the prices of the best quality of arecanut last year.

Huge subsidy for drip irrigation

ANIL KUMAR SASTRY

The Horticulture Department will offer subsidy for farmers to introduce drip and sprinkler irrigation systems for horticulture crops on up to five hectares (ha) of land in a bid to conserve water as well as to improve the yield. While 90 per cent subsidy will be offered up to two ha, 50 per cent subsidy will be offered to the next three ha to all farmers in the district, said an official release. The subsidy would be provided to horticulture crops except coffee, tea and rubber. Fertigation, the process through which fertilizer is mixed in

water before being dispensed to plants, was compulsory and part of the drip irrigation system, the department said. It said the fertigation would ensure availability of nutrients to plants without any wastage. It would also save expenditure on fertilizer by 20 to 40 per cent, and the cost on labour and electricity. Apart from fertilizer, light nutrients as well as plant protective chemicals too could be dispensed directly to the plants through fertigation, the release said. The horticulture plot for which subsidy is sought should be in the name of the farmer. In the event of joint-holding, the applicant should produce a no-objection certificate from co-owners. Those interested may approach the senior assistant director of the department in their respective taluks, the release added.

Address irrigation woes before executing Yettinahole project, say farmers

ANIL KUMAR SASTRY

'There is no scientific study on water in the Nethravati in monsoon and summer'



Farmers' leaders at a meeting with the district administration in Mangalore on Tuesday.—
Photo: R. Eswarraj

Expressing their anguish over the Yettinahole project envisaging diversion of the Nethravati, farmers in Dakshina Kannada on Tuesday urged the State government to first provide a comprehensive irrigation and drinking water scheme for the district. Speaking at a meeting here, Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangha leader Ravikiran Poonacha said farmers in the district would not allow to implement the project unless the government satisfied their requirements. "The district is bereft of any irrigation scheme and farmers are forced to spend a lot to irrigate plantations and paddy fields. In such a situation, there is no question of allowing the river diversion project," he said. Mr. Poonacha said farmers in the district were kept in the dark about the project even as no scientific study appeared to have been carried out on the quantum of water available in the Nethravati during the monsoon and the summer. The Minister for Water Resources had promised to hold a dialogue with people in Dakshina Kannada before initiating the project, and there had been no meeting so far, he said. Another farmer wondered how the government could go ahead with the project in an eco-sensitive zone. He feared that the already existing man-animal conflict would only get intensified if the forest area in the Western Ghats was vandalised by the project. Mr. Poonacha also demanded setting up of a committee to plan comprehensive irrigation for the district. Deputy Commissioner A.B. Ibrahim, who was chairing the meeting, said the issue would be placed in the next Karnataka Development Programme review meeting, as the present meeting does not have experts from the field.

Zilla panchayat chief executive officer Thulasi Maddineni said drinking water was being made available to all through a multi-village drinking water project. Farmers raised a host of other issues, ranging from crop loans to compensation to arecanut growers and from subsidy for agricultural equipment to destruction of paddy fields by unbridled real estate activities. They wanted a complete ban on conversion of paddy fields for non-agricultural purposes as farmers were serious in cultivating paddy. Ms. Maddineni asked farmers to raise their individual grievances before the monthly meetings being organised every month in zilla panchayats.

Crop insurance: last date to pay premium extended to July 31



Krishna Byre Gowda

The State government has extended the last date for farmers to pay premium for weather-based crop insurance scheme to July 31.

Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda announced this in the Legislative Council on Tuesday. The extension of the last date — from June 30 — was made based on a demand by farmers following inadequate rainfall in the State. A Government Order in this regard was issued on June 28, he said. The weather-based scheme covers 19 crops, including jowar, ragi, bengal gram, potato, chilli, grapes, banana and cotton in Bangalore Rural, Bagalkot, Belgaum, Bellary, Bidar, Bijapur, Chikmagalur, Chitradurga, Chickballapur, Davangere, Dharwad, Gadag, Hassan, Haveri, Kolar, Koppal, Raichur, Ramanagaram, and Yadgir districts.

Banned

Earlier, replying to BJP member Somanna M. Bevinmarad, the Minister said the sale of Bt cotton hybrid seeds by Mahyco had been banned in the State from March 22. Following this, the company had approached the court and the case had been disposed of now. “Action is being taken against the company per the court order,” he said. Mr.

Bevinmarad complained that despite the ban the company was selling the seeds and also taking signatures of farmers on prepared consent letters that endorsed the quality of the seeds. “Several farmers who have used the seeds have suffered losses. How can they endorse the quality of the seeds,” he asked. The Minister said such an instance had been reported in Haveri and the Joint Director of Agriculture in Haveri had warned the company against taking signatures on consent letters. “The company has been asked to provide technical assistance to farmers and not force them to sign any letters. Now the company had stopped taking signatures,” the Minister said.

Cauvery water release irks farmers

M.T. SHIVA KUMAR

The Irrigation Department on Tuesday evening increased the quantity of water being released from the Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) to Tamil Nadu triggering protests by farmers across the district. The outflow from the reservoir near Srirangapatna in the district, the lifeline of several districts in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, was at the rate of 1,453 cubic feet per second (cusecs) at 6.30 a.m. on Tuesday, and it was increased to 8,052 cusecs at 6.30 p.m., according to a top official at Cauvery Neeravari Nigam Ltd. (CNNL), who wished to remain anonymous. The inflow on Tuesday evening was at the rate of 20,106 cusecs. Water-level in the reservoir stood at 88 ft. while the full-reservoir level is 124.8 ft. Water-level is expected to increase in the coming days as the catchment area of the Cauvery is getting copious rainfall, a CNNL official added. The reservoir’s live storage stood at 5.659 tmcft. Meanwhile, the decision of CNNL triggered protests across the district on Tuesday night. Members of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) staged flash protests in Srirangapatna, Mandya, Malavalli and other places. KRRS leaders Konasale Narasaraju and Shambhunahalli Suresh were among others who blocked traffic in front of M. Visvesvaraya statue on Bangalore-Mysore Highway and raised slogans. Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Suresh said: “Though the standing crops in the district are withering due to lack of water, CNNL is discharging a huge quantity of water to Tamil Nadu. We will intensify the protests from Wednesday.”

Vegetable sellers protest collection of excess fee

STAFF REPORTER



Vegetable sellers at a daily market in Kondalampatti in Salem on Tuesday.— PHOTO: E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

Condemning the excess collection of entry fee at the daily market in Kondalamapatti, more than 30 vegetable sellers closed their shops. Sellers said that though the entry fee for the market was fixed at Rs. 20, they said that Rs. 60 was forcefully been collected from them everyday. If they failed to pay the excess amount, they were denied entry, sellers said. They said that they cultivate vegetables, and sell in the market to earn a living. But collecting excess fee every day resulted in huge loss as they have to pay an additional sum of Rs. 800 every month. "Our earnings are meagre and we cannot afford to pay more," they added. Despite the officials concerned were informed many a times, no action has been taken so far. Sellers said that collection of entry fee should be monitored by the government.

Tobacco production in State likely to drop by around 50 p.c. this season

SHANKAR BENNUR

Tobacco production in the State is likely to drop by around 50 per cent this time owing to lack of sufficient rainfall. The rain in the last couple of days may not help the crop, which was cultivated in April–May, according to the Federation of Karnataka Virginia Tobacco Growers' Association. Association president Jaware Gowda told *The Hindu* that nearly half of the crop in the tobacco-growing belts of the State, predominantly Mysore and parts of Hassan districts, had been damaged. The association recently submitted a memorandum to the Tobacco Board to provide compensation for the loss. "The annual income from tobacco crop in the State is around Rs. 1,200 crore. If 50 per cent of the crop is damaged, the crop damage this year could cost around Rs. 600 crore," he claimed. Mr. Gowda said compensation of Rs. 20,000 an acre had been sought from the board. Last year, about 30 to 40 per cent of the crop was damaged owing to excess rainfall, but growers did not get relief despite submitting representations. Compensation of Rs. 2,000 an acre was released for damage reported four years ago, he informed.

Crop size

Mr. Gowda said the board had fixed the tobacco crop size at 104 million kg for the current year. Tobacco is cultivated on about one lakh hectares of land. VFC tobacco or cigarette tobacco produced in the State constitutes around one-third of the total VFC tobacco grown in the country. Efforts are being made to discourage growers from cultivating tobacco by offering some "incentives". India has to reduce tobacco cultivation by 2020 as it is a signatory to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and therefore it is under obligation to bring down production. India is among the 150 countries that are signatories to the FCTC, sponsored by the World Health Organisation. But, tobacco growers here argue that no suitable alternative crops have been suggested by the Centre.

Rain boosts sowing operations in Gulbarga

T.V. SIVANANDAN



Sowing has picked up in Bellary district following heavy rainfall during the second week of July.

Buoyed by heavy rainfall in the first and second weeks of this month, farmers have stepped up sowing operations in Gulbarga district. As per the latest details available, sowing operations of kharif crops have been completed in 42 per cent of the targeted area. Incidentally, till the beginning of July, farmers had completed sowing in only four per cent of the total targeted area. The Agriculture Department officials told *The Hindu* here on Tuesday that the sowing was proceeding at a brisk pace throughout the district, except for Jewargi and Aland taluks.

Jewargi, Aland trailing

While the farmers in Jewargi have completed sowing operations only in five per cent of the targeted area, Aland farmers have completed sowing only in 18 per cent of the targeted area. In contrast, the farmers in Chincholi have completed sowing operations in the 94 per cent of the targeted area and Sedam farmers have completed sowing in 81 per cent of the targeted area for the kharif season. In three other districts, the sowing has been moderate to heavy. While farmers in Gulbarga taluk have completed sowing in 54 per cent of the targeted area, farmers in Afsalpur have completed sowing operations in 43 per cent of the targeted area and those in Chitapur, in 31 per cent of the targeted area.

Gram cultivation

The farmers who could not take up the short duration green and black gram as a single crop due to the failure of the rains during July have now started cultivating the green and black grams as a mixed crop with the red gram. As per the official data available, sowing of green gram has been completed in 15,409 hectares (ha) and sowing of black gram in 13,176 ha. Agriculture Department officials said the farmers reiterated their trust in red gram, which is the mainstay of Gulbarga farmers, and sowing has been completed in 1,44,503 ha as against the target of around 3.70 lakh ha. The data and pace of sowing

indicated that the target fixed for red gram would be easily crossed and in all probability the farmers would take up red gram cultivation in more than 4 lakh ha this year, the officials said. Interestingly, although the late sowing of soya bean would deprive the farmers of a second crop in the season, the farmers in Gulbarga have decided to go ahead with soya bean cultivation. As per the latest figures, soya bean has been sown in a record 20,535 ha. Heavy rainfall in the second week of July enabled sowing operations for the current kharif season to pick up in the district. The rain also helped the withering germinated crops to recover. As on Tuesday, around 44.1 percent of sowing on the targeted area had been completed. As against the average rainfall of 85.5 mm during the month of July, the district recorded an average rainfall of 56.5 mm. Rainfall till July 9 was almost nil, affecting sowing operations and germinated crops, causing concern among the farmers. The sowing is expected to further pick up, with good rains likely during the week. The release of water into the canals of Tungabhadra reservoir would enable commencement of agricultural operations in non rain-fed irrigated tracts, having an area of more than 1.40 lakh hectares. The major crops cultivated during the kharif season in the district in a targeted area of 3.57 lakh hectares are paddy, jowar, ragi, maize, bajra tur, cowpea, green gram, horse gram, groundnut, sunflower, castor and cotton. While paddy sowing has been done in only about 2.8 per cent of the targeted area (2,097 ha out of 74,100 ha), jowar has been sown in around 71 per cent of the targeted area (19,641 ha out of 27,695 ha) and bajra in nearly 77 per cent area (10,794 ha out of 14,045 ha). Among other crops, maize has been sown in 61,857 ha out of 96,644 ha, groundnut in 18,860 ha out of 53,445 ha, and cotton in 25,167 ha out of 40,731 ha.

Farmers ask for increase in FRP for sugarcane

VIJAYKUMAR PATIL

Sugarcane farmers want the Centre to increase the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of Rs. 220 per quintal for 2014-15. They said that the government should consider factors like cost of cultivation and reasonable margin for the farmers. The FRP was recommended by the Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices appointed by the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation under the Union Ministry of Agriculture. National Farmers Association president and advocate B.P. Sheri said that the commission did not take the price input costs, such as prices of seeds, fertilizers, labour wages and maintenance, into consideration while recommending Rs.220. This amount is just Rs. 10 more than the FRP fixed for the year 2013-14. He added that the timing of the announcement of FRP was itself unscientific and untimely. These prices should be announced before December for the next ensuing season and not in February and March as is currently done. An early notice will give farmers a fair idea and help him decide on feasibility of cultivating sugarcane.

Government committed to farm loan waiver: KTR

The government of Telangana is committed to keep its pre-poll promise on farm loan waiver irrespective of the Reserve Bank of India's opposition to the scheme, Minister for IT and Panchayat Raj K.T. Rama Rao stated here on Tuesday. Speaking at a financial sector conclave here, he said the government was still continuing its talks with the RBI and State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) to find out ways and means to implement the scheme in one form or the other. Stating that their government was committed to implement the welfare agenda for the poorest of the poor, the Minister noted that the loan waiver would amount to uplift of farmers, a majority of whom were poor. "We are going to stand by the farmers in need and working out modalities for extending them succour," the Minister said.

Farmers stage demo demanding loan waiver

Farmers of Vallur, Veerapunayunipalle and Chintakommadinne mandals demonstrated before the Collectorate here on Tuesday demanding that the Chandrababu Naidu government issue orders waiving all types of loans of farmers and sanction fresh loans, as promised in the TDP manifesto. Farmers were steeped in debts as they lacked remunerative prices for their produce, A.P. Rythu Sangham district president T. Ramasubba Reddy said. Stating that farmers were hard-hit by nature's vagaries on one hand and bankers' refusing to sanction fresh loans, Mr. Reddy described that farmers were 'caught between the devil and the deep sea'.

CPI demands sanction of kharif loans

CPI State Council Assistant Secretary J.V. Satyanarayana Murthy has demanded that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu keep his election promise of sanctioning kharif loans and immediately sanction loans to farmers. Addressing the participants at a protest organised on the issue at the Collectorate here on Tuesday, he said that though the State government had announced waiver of loans, it had not happened till date.

Heavy losses

The farmers were unable to avail of new loans and were forced to depend on moneylenders at high rate of interest for their agricultural investment needs and incurring heavy losses. CPI District Council secretary A.J. Stalin, AP Mahila Samakhya State assistant secretary A. Vimala and city assistant secretary M. Pydiraju were among those who participated.

Getting ready for kharif



Tribal people planting paddy saplings on the hill slopes of Soova village in Dumbriguda mandal of Visakhapatnam district. In parts of Eastern Ghats, they depend on rainfed irrigation and prefer step cultivation to ensure optimum utilisation of available water.—

Photo: K.R. Deepak

Water level

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 47.42 feet on Tuesday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 941 cusecs and the discharge 800 cusecs.

hindustantimes

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Jul 16

Max Min
36° | 28°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 55

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:50

Sunset: 06:39

Barometer: 1006

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Thursday, Jul 17

Max Min
35° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

| Friday Jul 18 | Saturday Jul 19 | Sunday Jul 20 | Monday Jul 21 | Tuesday Jul 22 |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| | | | | |
| 34° 28° Cloudy | 34° 27° Cloudy | 34° 27° Cloudy | 33° 27° Cloudy | 35° 27° Partly Cloudy |

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 05:33
Humidity: 84 Sunset: 07:20
Wind: normal Barometer: 1001



THE  NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

Chaos in Council Over Dwindling Horticulture Land

The Legislative Council witnessed chaotic scenes on Tuesday after Horticulture Minister Shamanur Shivashankarappa answered a question on the fall in horticulture crop area. During question hour, C H Vijayashankar (BJP) sought information from the minister on smuggling in state forests. The minister said in the past 10 years about 7,732 hectares of horticulture land had been converted for non-agricultural purposes. Disputing this claim, the BJP member pointed out that in Mysore district alone over 25,000 acres of horticulture land had been converted for other purposes and demanded that the minister withdraw the reply. "I am ready to quit the House if my assessment is wrong," Vijayashankar said. Congress members said the previous BJP government is to be blamed for the dwindling horticulture crop land as the concept of setting up land banks was started then. Congress members got into heated arguments with the BJP members. Chairman D H Shankaramurthy had a tough time controlling the members. Order was restored after Cooperation Minister Mahadeva Prasad promised to provide a detailed reply. Smuggling Rampant in State: Bopaiah Senior BJP member K G Bopaiah in the Assembly on Tuesday came down heavily on the style of functioning of the Forest Department officials saying that smuggling was rampant in the state forests. He called the Forest Department officials 'white elephants' who are a burden on the state's exchequer as they have failed to protect the forest wealth. "Rosewood, sandalwood, teak and other precious trees are being felled and smuggled. What job do our Forest Department officials have sitting in Aranya Bhavan? Send them to forests and let them experience leech bite," Bopaiah said. In many cases forest guards and watchers themselves were helping smugglers, he said. He also raised suspicion about the cause for forest fires in Nagarhole Wild Life Sanctuary.

AP to Give Top Priority for Agriculture

The Andhra Pradesh state government will give first priority to agriculture and make every effort to improve the income levels of the farmer by making agriculture more profitable, Finance Minister Yanamala Ramakrishnu said. The Minister, who held a review meeting with Ministers and higher officials in his chambers at the secretariat here on Tuesday, said care will be taken to ensure that agriculture and allied sectors will be given their due share in the state budget without any cuts. He asked the officials and ministers concerned to draw out plans and schemes for improvement of prospects in

agriculture. Stating that development is only possible by strengthening agriculture and allied sector along with service and industrial sectors, the Finance Minister asked the officials to ensure that follies of the past administrations are not repeated. "We have to make every effort to see the slogan 'Rythe Raju' (farmer is supreme) is true," he said. Yanamala said equal priority will be given to education and health, with plans afoot to improve and strengthen PHCs at rural level and hospitals at urban level for providing better health care and medical facilities. He asked the officials to draft proposals accordingly.

Low Production Push Veggie Rates Up in Local Markets



The prices of vegetables have skyrocketed, following low production and reduced supply to the market here. The price of tomato, which was in the range of Rs 20 to Rs 30 per kg 10 days ago, has shot up to Rs 40 to Rs 50 in the Nethaji market here while in retail stores, it is priced in the range of Rs 60 per kg. Carrot, which was being sold for around Rs 40 per kg, is currently being sold for Rs 60 and beans is being sold for a price between Rs 80-Rs 100 per kg. "The prices of all vegetables have increased by 50 per cent in the past one week and it is higher when compared to the prices of last year," said Balu, president of the Vellore Vegetable Merchants Association. He said that the price of vegetables often soars during the onset of monsoon. But this year, it has doubled, surprising both the merchants and the consumers. Balu said that the tomatoes, grown largely in Andhra Pradesh, faced the problem of excessive rain in the past one month and the crops have been damaged due to this. The low production may not be sufficient to meet the needs of internal consumption. However, some farmers in Andhra Pradesh, who supply tomatoes to nearby States, quoted a higher price by including the transport cost as well. This had led to the doubling of price now, he said. Similar was the case with other vegetables such as beans, carrot, cabbage and cauliflower, mostly grown in Karnataka, which have been washed out in the recent rain. He expected the price hike of these vegetables to continue for the next couple of months, perhaps until the crop for the next season is ready. Balu attributed the hike in vegetable prices to the increasing number of big malls and uzhavar shandies in and around Vellore, which outsource vegetables directly from producers. They fixed their own prices unlike the merchants in the market, who decide on the price based on the State-level index, he added. The inflow of people to purchase vegetables in Nethaji market had come down due to this factor and this has

fuelled the price hike erratically as the difference between the whole sale price and the retail price had increased manifold, he said.

Cheap Vegetables to Rural Poor in State Soon

In a bid to make fresh vegetables available to low income groups, particularly slum dwellers and rural poor at affordable prices, eKutir, the makers of VeggieKart online retail store, is set to launch a VeggieLite initiative soon. VeggieLite hubs will be established in villages and urban slums to sell fresh vegetables to low income households at cheaper than market prices. The hubs would be managed by women serving a dual purpose of not only empowering the weaker sex but also enabling better services to the customers. VeggieLite hubs, targeted to commence operations in August 2014, will create a distribution channel for farmers to sell fresh vegetables directly to low income groups. It is an extension of eKutir's VeggieKart initiative which creates sustainable market linkages for rural farmers to sell their produce. This sustainable and holistic approach aims to improve the diet quality and enhance livelihoods of the poorest communities while creating jobs for women, founder KC Mishra said. The project will be implemented by eKutir in collaboration with Wholesome Wave, USA and McGill Center for the Convergence of Health and Economics (MCCHE), a recipient of Grand Challenges India, 2014 and supported by the Gates Foundation, USAID and Department of Biotechnology. An MoU was also signed between the three partnering organisations during the 'Convergent Innovation Workshop on calling up Agriculture-Nutrition linkage' here on Tuesday. The project has been awarded under the Grand Challenges programme 'Achieving Healthy Growth through Agriculture and Nutrition'. "We are quite excited to be associated with eKutir, which also believes in the principles of convergent innovation," said Prof Laureate from the Department of Convergent Innovation, McGill University after signing of the MoU. The Wholesome Wave is set to pump in innovative practices from the USA to the VeggieLite initiative to make it more successful in catering to the target population, Founder Daniel Ross said.

Healthy move

- VeggieLite hubs will be established in villages and urban slums to sell fresh vegetables to low income households at cheaper than market prices
- The hubs would be managed by women serving a dual purpose of not only empowering the weaker sex but also enabling better services to the customers

Turmeric gains colour on quality arrivals



Spot turmeric prices increased in Erode markets on Tuesday on improved quality arrivals. "After some days quality turmeric arrived for sale and the traders quoted higher price and procured the turmeric to fulfil their local orders. Still they are waiting for the upcountry orders. If they receive good orders from the North India, certainly the price of the commodity will go up," said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association. He said of the arrival of 3,200 bags, 1,720 were sold. The hybrid finger turmeric also increased by Rs. 150 due to quality. The buyers showed special interest in buying the hybrid and all the 200 bags of hybrid turmeric were sold. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger turmeric was sold at Rs. 4,539-6,685; the root variety Rs. 4,324-6,589 a quintal. Salem Hybrid: The finger turmeric ruled at Rs. 6,166-7,330 and the root variety Rs. 5,901-6,766 a quintal. Of the 602 bags that arrived, 231 were sold. At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger turmeric was sold at Rs. 5,709-6,639; the root variety Rs. 5,534-6,584. Of the 600 bags on offer, 570 were traded. At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, all the 1,100 bags found takers with the finger turmeric fetching Rs. 6,600 and the root variety Rs. 6,480.

Vegoil imports down 4% on weak demand



Vegetable oil imports dipped four per cent in June to 883,679 tonnes compared with 947,591 tonnes recorded in the same period last year. The weak demand coupled with inverted duty structure followed by exporting countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia led to the drop in imports. Edible oil imports were down five per cent at 860,736 tonnes (911,091 tonnes), while that of non-edible oils were down 37 per cent at 22,943 tonnes (36,500 tonnes). The overall imports in the first eight months of the oil year (November-June) were down at 7,082,220 tonnes (7,145,060 tonnes). Edible oil, as on July 1, at various ports is estimated at 525,000 tonnes and it consists of 260,000 tonnes of crude palmolein, 60,000 tonnes of refined palmolein, 65,000 tonnes of degummed soyabean oil and 140,000 tonnes of crude sunflower oil. Another 960,000 tonnes of edible oil is in the pipeline. Total stock, both at ports and in pipelines increased to 1,485,000 tonnes from 1,420,000 tonnes in the previous months. Refined palmolein prices were down in June at \$833 a tonne against \$866 in May, while crude soyabean oil increased to \$951 from \$934 in the same period. Crude palmolein and sunflower oil prices dipped to \$841 (\$876) and \$936 (\$942), respectively. The rupee depreciated against the dollar to 59.74 in June against 59.28 in May. Import of non-edible oil in June was at 22,943 tonnes (36,500 tonnes). The overall import of non-edible oil between November 2013 and June were at 126,388 tonnes (203,140 tonnes), down by 38 per cent. Major non-edible oils that were shipped include palm fatty acid distillate and crude palm kernel oil.

As monsoon advances, soyabean planting begins in MP



With the monsoon finally advancing to Central heartland, the sowing of soyabean – a major kharif oilseed crop – has formally commenced in the key producing State of Madhya Pradesh. “Sowing has begun, though certain areas are yet to receive showers. If it rains over the next few days across the State, we expect farmers to complete sowing by July 25,” said Rajesh Agarwal, spokesperson for the Indore-based Soyabean Processors Association of India. Madhya Pradesh is the largest soyabean growing State followed by Maharashtra. Delayed arrival of monsoon and deficient rains so far this year have pushed back sowing of the oilseed crop by about three weeks in these States.

Shortfall in acreage

Agarwal said the follow-up rains during the rest of monsoon period be crucial to determine the yields and output, though there’s likely to be a marginal shortfall in overall acreage. So far, soyabean has been planted on about close to 9 lakh hectares (lh) against

over 83 lh in the corresponding last year. Last year soyabean was planted on about 120 lh across the country. The sharp decline in acreage this year is mainly due to scanty rains. So far, the rainfall deficit across the country since the beginning of monsoon stood at 41 per cent. The country has received actual rainfall of 170.4 mm against the normal of 289.2 mm during the June 1-July 14 period. The rain deficit in the key soyabean growing regions of Western MP stood at 63 per cent, East MP at 52 per cent and Vidarbha at 66 per cent. In east Rajasthan, the rain deficit stood at 63 per cent, while in Gujarat it was 91 per cent.

Seed quality

Also, the quality of seeds remain a concern this year as excess rains last year had damaged the crop impacting the quality and triggering a shortage of certified seed. To overcome the shortfall, the Agriculture Ministry had relaxed the germination standards to 60 per cent from the earlier 70 per cent. The farmers are also advised to plant more seeds per hectare to ensure there is higher germination. Soyabean output last year stood at 11.94 million tonnes over previous year's 14.66 million tonnes.

Slack trading holds rubber steady



Spot rubber prices were almost steady on Tuesday. Sentiments remained neutral in the absence of genuine buyers and sellers following a weak closing in domestic futures on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. The trend was partially mixed as ungraded rubber lost ground amidst scattered transactions. Sheet rubber closed unchanged at Rs. 142 a kg, according to traders. The grade dropped to Rs. 142 (Rs. 142.50) and Rs. 139 (Rs. 139.50) respectively, as reported by the Rubber Board and dealers. July futures declined to Rs. 140 (Rs. 141.38), August to Rs. 141.40 (Rs. 141.52), September to Rs. 139.89 (Rs. 140.81) and October to Rs. 139.53 (Rs. 140.78) per kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) improved to Rs. 119.96 (Rs. 119.20) at Bangkok. July futures closed at ¥187.8 (Rs. 111.15) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg): RSS-4: 142 (142); RSS-5: 134 (134); ungraded: 130 (131); ISNR 20: 124 (124) and Latex 60%: 108.50 (108.50).

Why FCI needs professionals to sell its foodgrains



The primary mandate of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) acting under directions of Food Ministry is to service requirements of the public distribution system (PDS) in association with State Government Agencies (SGAs). But over the years, FCI has also been called upon to intervene in managing market prices, albeit with little success. FCI efficiently procures wheat, paddy/milled rice but faces odds while selling surplus grains in the market. Similarly, it lacks expertise in export marketing, which is outsourced for contracting and shipping operations to trading PSUs. In less than three months from the time of harvest, an inventory of some 28 million tonnes (mt) of wheat and 31 mt of rice are built up by FCI and SGAs. No eyebrows are raised when these agencies incur thousands of crores as expenditure in a short span. Efficient purchasing operations are attributed to MSP (Minimum Support Price) decreed by the Government on the recommendation of an expert body such as CACP (Commission for Agricultural Cost & Prices). MSP is premised on rational criteria and national priorities, while political considerations are generally minimal. However, for disposal of surplus grains generated through excessive procurement in last 4-5 years there is a lack of professionalism. For example, the Government on June 17 decided to offload five mt of rice to cool food inflation. Surprisingly, a week thereafter, policymakers simply allocated this tonnage to families below and above poverty line (APL/BPL) at a price of Rs. 6-8/kg. The right way forward was to sell the extra rice in marketing outlets to suppress inflationary pressures. But the predicament is how to discover market price and how to sell? Discovering “right” price cannot be a convenience of financial and accounting adjustments but demands professionalism to target matrix of supply and demand. At current economic cost of rice of about Rs. 28/kg, additional releases to APL/BPL entail a loss of about Rs. 20/kg or Rs. 10,000 crore. However, if these very 5 mt is released in the market, where the Government can fetch around Rs. 18-20 a kg, direct debit will be Rs. 10/kg or about Rs. 5,000 crore or 50 per cent of what is actually foreseen under APL/BPL. Incredible indeed it is that higher implied loss figure is acceptable to the Ministry than lower ones. Notifying additional allocation to APL/BPL families is just an eye wash, wherein, the Government is projecting a mirage of marketing devoid of real objective of inflation control. On the contrary, this incentivizes round tripping and pilferage that will generate black economy of Rs. 5,000-6,000 crore and higher inflation while it is the black money

and black economy that this Government is fighting for. Media reports indicate that Food Ministry has initiated consultation within the Government for injecting 10 mt of wheat in open market from September 2014 onwards for price stabilisation. Authorities need to take a realistic call by not repeating additional allocations/releases to BPL/APL families at Rs. 4-5/kg. Disposal prices in market could be based upon MSP of Rs. 13.50 or 14/kg plus freight rather than Rs. 15-15.50 plus freight. Savings in freight can be done, through logistical optimisation to the extent possible, for southern States, by transporting wheat from MP/Bihar or other central States rather than from Punjab/Haryana. Considering inherent complexity and volatility in grain markets, selling price has to be responsive especially when objective is to restrain higher prices. Surely there is a need for complimenting the system of discovering the selling price in open market through expertise of an agency such as CACP or a formal committee of reputed agricultural economists, FCI and traders, who like MSP, assess real time dynamics of domestic and overseas markets and decide the modalities of intervention – including exports strategies whenever deemed necessary. Even the differential pricing for old/new/damaged crop can also be recommended for intervention or exports. The Cabinet/CCEA can endorse such recommendations for implementation by Food Ministry. This will not only tame the inflation but also reduce overall inventory and make available additional storage space. It is a win-win situation for all

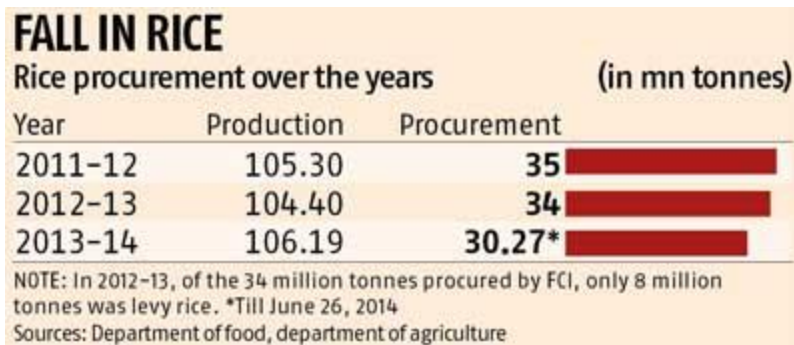
Business Standard

Govt asks states to cut levy rice purchase



The Centre has directed states to cut the procurement of levy rice from 30-75 per cent of the overall purchase from mills to 25 per cent, from the procurement season beginning October. It is also considering doing away with the levy purchase mechanism in 2015-16. Through this mechanism, states buy paddy from millers for selling it through ration shops, the subsidy burden of which falls on the Centre. The government's directive follows its order to limit procurement of grains in states that announce a bonus over and above the minimum support price (MSP) fixed by the Centre from the coming rice procurement season (2014-15) and wheat procurement season (2015-16). The move has been opposed by Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, which, in the past few years, have

announced hefty bonuses over and above the MSP. Officials said the directive on levy rice would immediately release about 15 million tonnes (mt) of rice in the open market and help cut rising food subsidies. Union Budget 2014-15 has estimated food subsidy for this financial year at Rs 115,000 crore, about 25 per cent more than in 2013-14. “The order was issued last year, but could not be implemented properly due to objections from Andhra Pradesh. However, from the 2014-15 rice procurement season, we have decided to strictly implement this. We might do away with the entire mechanism from the 2015-16 procurement season,” said a senior government official directly involved in the matter. He added the government’s recent moves to cut procurement of wheat and rice weren’t meant to hurt the interest of farmers, but help them in the long run, as the step would bring efficiency in operations and give farmers the freedom to sell their produce to those who paid more.



The order on levy rice order, officials said, was also an attempt to caution states against transferring their liabilities to the Centre. After the government secures rice for its central pool, it is distributed through the Public Distribution

System through two mechanisms---custom-milled rice (CMR) and levy rice. Through CMR, the government purchases paddy (husked rice) from farmers and allocates this to mills for processing, for a fixed charge, before buying it back from them. Through the levy rice system, millers are allowed to sell a certain percentage (25-50 per cent in major rice-producing states) of the rice procured in the open market, while the rest (75-50 per cent, called levy rice) is bought by government agencies at the MSP.

UP sugar mills put Akhilesh govt on notice



With the spectre of a drought looming large, Uttar Pradesh's sugar cane farmers are set to suffer in a possible showdown between private sugar mills and the state government over cane arrears and cane price for the coming season. The mills have put the Akhilesh Yadav government on notice forewarning of suspending crushing operations in the coming 2014-15 season, if their long demands were not met within the stipulated timeframe. The mills have asked the government to announce the subsidy of Rs 9 a quintal of cane by July 23, as promised last year, would be given to them against the cane price of the 2013-14 season. Interestingly, the Allahabad High Court is slated to hear a case pertaining to cane arrears on July 24. Besides, the mills want UP to adopt by July 31 the 'linkage formula', which would determine future cane price at 75 per cent of the revenue realised from sugar. Since, over Rs 6,000 crore are pending on private mills as arrears and the state government had so far registered about 57 First Information Reports and issued recovery certificates against them, they want such "coercive" measures to stop. A delegation of UP Sugar Mills Association (UPSMA) had met state chief secretary Alok Ranjan last week and submitted a letter, which said if their demands were not met, the mills would be constrained to formally serve a notice to the government to discontinue manufacturing operations and stop repair/maintenance activities of mills. UP sugar sector is estimated at Rs 30,000 crore and represents the largest organised industry in the state. Sugarcane farming supports the livelihood of over 4 million farmers. According to Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), the UP cane acreage in 2014-15 is estimated to dip by 9 per cent, while sparse rainfall would only affect the quality of standing crop. Sugar industry lamented that while sugar mills in states such as Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat followed a revenue sharing system for cane pricing, UP had only dragged its feet so far, putting private mills in severe operating losses over successive seasons. The higher cane price coupled with lower realisation resulted in the higher cost of sugar production in UP by Rs 700-800/quintal as compared to the three states. UP produced 30 per cent of country's sugar, it accounted for 60 per cent of total cane arrears due to unviable cane pricing. While, UP sugar industry and cane development principal secretary Deepak Trivedi is currently on leave, the chief secretary could not be reached for comments. During 2013-14, UP had retained the state cane price at Rs 280/quintal for common variety, while the mills claimed their paying capacity stood at around Rs 225/quintal and any price beyond it would result in arrears and losses to industry. The deadlock ended in December 2013 when millers agreed to pay the cane price of Rs 280/quintal in two tranches of Rs 260 and Rs 20. The government also announced to waive entry tax, purchase tax and society commission on sugar/sugarcane for the season, which translated into a benefit of around Rs 11/quintal to millers. The state also announced to set up a high-level committee to analyse the sugarcane price linkage

issue, which is yet to submit its report. The mills complained that they had started their mills last year on the assurances given by the state, which have not been honoured.

Cardamom up 1.2% on spot demand



Cardamom prices rose by Rs 12.10 to Rs 1,000 per kg in futures trade today, largely in tandem with a firming trend in spot markets on pick-up in demand amid restricted arrivals. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for July delivery surged Rs 12.10, or 1.22%, to Rs 1,000 per kg in a business volume of 12 lots. August cardamom gained Rs 7, or 0.75%, to Rs 935 per kg in a business volume of 135 lots. Traders said pick-up in demand in the spot markets against restricted arrivals from producing regions influenced cardamom prices in the futures market.



Govt to sell 10 mt of wheat in open market

In a bid to curb price rise, the government has decided to sell wheat from Food Corporation of India (FCI) stocks in the open market. Sources told FE the food ministry has already moved a cabinet note to sell about 10 million tonne (mt) of wheat through the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) to bulk buyers. The cabinet in its next meeting is slated to take up the issue of selling wheat to traders and flour millers. At the start of the month, FCI had wheat stock of close to 40 mt against the strategic reserve and buffer stock norms of 19.1 mt. "As the prices have started to move up in the last few days, we will sell wheat in the open market through weekly tendering to bulk buyers after cabinet approval," a senior official said. Food secretary Sudhir Kumar on Tuesday tweeted 'the government will offer wheat for open market sale from central pool'. Sources said the wheat will be offered under OMSS at a price consisting of minimum support price and freight to the destinations. According to Agricultural Marketing Information Network data, wholesale wheat prices at Khanna market moved to R1,435 per quintal on Tuesday from R1,402 per quintal reported just a week ago. Wheat wholesale prices have seen a

rise in the last few days. The OMSS for the current year would be in operation after getting the cabinet note. FCI has offered wheat to traders from September 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 deficient monsoon likely impacting foodgrain production. The government has been selling wheat through OMSS in the last few years in a bid to reduce excess grain stock.

Poor monsoon reduces cotton sowing by half

Delayed and scanty rainfall across cotton growing regions of the country is causing anxious moments for farmers. They have completed sowing on some 45.2 lakh hectares as opposed to 92 lakh hectares last year, which is the worst situation ever for the cotton crop in the last five-six years, SM Kolhatkar, director, Cotton Development Board, Mumbai, and Directorate of Cotton Development told FE. Dhiren Sheth, president of Cotton Association of India (CII) who also gave out the same estimates, said this is a matter of serious concern although there is still hope for a good crop. "This is almost half of the normal sowing which was done last year. In 2011 there was a slight delay and even then sowing was completed on around 60 lakh hectares by this time. Farmers still have time till July-August. But this will again impact the lifespan of the crop and productivity. Sowing has been abnormal and therefore production is also likely to be reduced," Kolhatkar said. "Even if we have normal rains at a later point and farmers do catch up with sowing, how far we are able to match up to the previous year's production remains to be seen. Cotton is more resistant to drought and requires little water but this can impact the crop ultimately," Kolhatkar added. According to Sheth, delay in the monsoon could see farmers opt for shorter duration crops since cotton is a long duration crop. Kolhatkar, however, said farmers have no other option but to plant cotton since it is a sturdy crop and those in cotton-growing regions would plant cotton. Cotton sowing can be taken up in Maharashtra till July-end though it can go up to the first week of August in Andhra Pradesh. So far only about 5% of the cotton area of 40 lakh hectares has been covered in Maharashtra. According to the June estimate for the 2013-14 season released by the Cotton Association of India (CAI), the crop is placed at 395.5 lakh bales as against 356.75 lakh bales in the last season. The opening stock for 2013-14 is estimated at 43.25 lakh bales (54.75 lakh bales), import at 15 lakh bales (14.75 lakh bales) and domestic consumption at 255 lakh bales, as opposed to 252 lakh bales last year. Arrivals as on June 30 are placed at 382.30 lakh bales.

DECCAN Chronicle

Water flows to Tamil Nadu, farmers protest



Every government in the past did it and the current Congress government is no different. The State government began releasing water to Tamil Nadu from Krishnaraja Sagar reservoir on Tuesday evening triggering instant protests by the farming community in Mandya. The KRS dam, the lifeline for people of Mandya, Mysore and Bengaluru for irrigation and drinking purposes, has hardly touched 87 ft as against the maximum level of 124.80 ft. Dam officials have started discharging 8,050 cusecs of water into the river leading to Tamil Nadu on Tuesday late evening. The inflow is around 20,000 cusecs. The strategy of the government is it plans to cover the maximum deficit when the monsoon is at its peak. With Kodagu district, which is the catchment areas for KRS, continues to receive good rainfall and the forecast showing more rains, the government has opened KRS gates. The danger is if the monsoon doesn't bring enough rain on expected rains, the decision would spell disaster for the region. Just to avoid full-fledged Cauvery agitation like seen in the past, the government has taken the unprecedented decision to open KRS gates to Tamil Nadu so early. The water level at KRS stood at 112 ft in 2013 at this time.

THE NUMBS OF INDIA

Tomato prices shoot up to Rs 80 per kg

After onion and potato prices went through the roof, it's the turn of tomatoes, whose wholesale price touched Rs 46 per kg and retail price skyrocketed to around Rs 80 per kg on Tuesday, both the highest in the year. The reason is said to be scanty supply since last Thursday owing to scarce rain that led to poor harvest. Traders pointed out that among vegetables, tomatoes required maximum water and areas that produced the vegetable had been witnessing a dry spell. "Due to late monsoon in Narayangaon and its vicinity, where most tomatoes are cultivated, production has dropped substantially as there is not enough water owing to the inordinate delay in rainfall." said a farmer Manohar Gaikwad. Vendors have now pinned their hope on Bangalore produce. Owing to the drop in supply from Narayangaon to APMC market in Vashi, the wholesale cost jumped to Rs 46 per kg on Tuesday. Looking at the short supply and high demand, retailers enforced new rate

structure on Tuesday, pushing the price range from Rs 60 to 80. This change in market trend has affected the end-users. "Supply has been exhausted due to poor production. The prices started climbing up since Thursday when it was Rs 18 per kg in the wholesale market. On Tuesday, it touched an all-time high with Rs 46," said Shankar Pingle, a wholesaler at Vashi. Discontent is brewing among consumers. "Despite it being an essential staple, I have curtailed the consumption of tomatoes since Friday when I sensed a spiral in prices. The budget is getting disturbed with a single kg costing Rs 75," said Bhandup's Asha Puthran.

Tomato at Rs 60/kg as vegetable prices surge in Delhi

Last week it was onions, now it's tomatoes that are making Delhiites see red. In the last fortnight, vegetable prices have skyrocketed in the national capital and almost doubled in some cases in the retail market. Tomatoes have seen the sharpest hike in prices, touching Rs 60/kg in some parts of the city, followed by onions, capsicum and cauliflowers. Potato prices have also surged. The overall rise in vegetable prices has sent households in a tizzy as they struggle to meet their daily expenses. In Kailash Colony, resident Mihir Sharma said: "When I went to buy vegetables in the morning, I was shocked to hear the prices. Okra and parwal both were Rs 80 per kg. Finally, I ended up buying only half a kg tomato and onion." He added: "I live alone and don't really have to spend a lot on vegetables. But I wonder what people who have big families must be going through with even basic food items costing so much." Patparganj resident Niti Aggarwal was shocked when her local vegetable vendor charged Rs 50 for one kilo tomatoes. "He told me there was another variety which was cheaper but that pile of tomatoes looked soggy and inedible, so I was forced to shell out what he demanded. Just last week I paid about Rs 30 for the same thing." The situation isn't much different in NCR regions of Noida, Ghaziabad and Gurgaon either. "When I visited the Tuesday vegetable market and found out the rates for cauliflowers, I opted not to buy. But with vegetables like onions and tomatoes, you cannot really compromise. It appears that every week the prices of vegetables keeps increasing," said Niharika, a resident of sector 100. If you go by the Azadpur subzi mandi officials, the capital is facing a shortage of vegetables like tomato, onion and potato because of the delayed monsoon in northern India and unrelenting heatwave. "A lot of crops were ruined during heavy rains in February and March this year during excessive rains and we are still facing repercussions because of that. At least 20% crops could not be salvaged and a large percentage of produce was being imported," said Raj Kumar Bhatia, general secretary, chamber of Azadpur fruit and vegetable traders association. Tomatoes in particular have taken a hit lately. "Delhi gets tomato produce from Himachal, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Each state has been badly hit by delayed

rainfall and a large percentage of the crops have failed. Because rains have been delayed, the tomatoes are still green and have not turned red and ripe enough. In fact, the produce from Karnataka has stopped coming to Delhi because tomatoes are a perishable item and could not last a four day truck journey to Delhi. We are getting only a limited supply from Himachal and Maharashtra," said Sanjay Chugh, tomatoes traders association, Azadpur mandi. Officials said the wholesale price of tomatoes was about Rs 30-35/kilo. Delhi government, however, vehemently denied there was any shortage in vegetables in Delhi. Senior officials insisted that wholesale traders were just trying to create a panic situation. "In fact, the current rate of vegetables like tomatoes and onions is actually lower than what it was last year in the corresponding period. The average price of tomatoes last year was Rs 42/kg and this time it is Rs 35/kg in retail according to rates we have compiled across the city. Prices of green vegetables fluctuate in rainy season and this is a seasonal issue. There is no shortage in Delhi and no decline in arrival," said a senior official from the department of food supplies. Delhi government officials added that they were making vegetables like onions and tomatoes available at subsidized rates across Delhi. "There is no way to keep check in the retail market but we are trying our best to make people aware of real prices. We send out sixteen lakh SMSes daily and also take regular action against black marketers," said an official.

Potatoes from Bengal arrive, Guwahati relieved

Over the last three days, the city faced a scarcity of potatoes which came to an end on Tuesday, when trucks loaded with potatoes reached the state from the Assam-West Bengal border after being stranded there for days. The West Bengal government had stopped export of potatoes from outside the state boundary after suffering a scarcity of the crop in its home markets. On Tuesday morning, as many as 12 trucks carrying over 4,800 packets of potatoes reached Fancy Bazar, the commercial hub of the state, after which potatoes became available in most markets in the city. Over the last few days, the market retail price of Bengal potatoes climbed from Rs 20 per kg to Rs 40 per kg. On Tuesday, the food and civil supplies department fixed the heavily inflated price of this variety of potatoes, which is most widely consumed, at Rs 22 to Rs 25 per kg. The price of the less popular kind from Agra has been fixed at Rs 30 to Rs 32 per kg, while the Patna variety of potatoes will be sold at Rs 38 to Rs 40 per kg. Nazrul Islam, the food and civil supplies minister of Assam, said there is enough stock of potatoes in the state and consumers should not worry about their shortage in the marketplace. "There are more than 40,000 metric tons of potatoes stocked in the state as of today. Even in cases of prohibition of trucks in West Bengal, there is no possibility of a potato crisis in the state," said Islam. He claimed that although Guwahati has been witnessing a rise in the price of

potatoes over the last few days, there is no shortage of potatoes in the market. Officials in the food and civil supplies department said people should immediately inform the authorities if retail traders charge higher than the price fixed by the department daily. The food and civil supplies department has started maintaining strict vigilance over the wholesale and retail markets in the city to prevent a rise in the price of potatoes, read a government statement. The statement further noted that after the state government classified potatoes and onions as essential commodities, provisions have been made for strict action against unscrupulous traders who hoodwink the public with illegal potato and onion trade activities. Vinod Surana, secretary of the Guwahati Potato and Onion Merchants' Association, said a section of people with vested interests caused panic by claiming that the shortage of potatoes in the state was because of a blockade of trucks in the inter-state border.

Farmers rejoice in rain bounty

The continuing heavy showers in parts of Saurashtra have partially removed the worries of the farmers across the region. The showers have provided much sought relief in the face of the region staring at water scarcity a few days ago. Flood control room officials said heavy rain was recorded in Gir-Somnath, Junagadh and Amreli districts on Tuesday. Sources said maximum rainfall was reported in villages of Dhari taluka of Amreli district. Villages like Govindpar, Sarsiya and some others received over 100mm of rainfall within two hours on Tuesday, resulting in flash floods in Futli and Nani Shetrunji rivers. The rain water entered the houses in low-lying area in Dhari town, where the streets were water-logged. Heavy rain was also recorded at Manavadar (75mm), Vanthali (72mm) and Maliya-Hatina (37mm) in Junagadh district. In Gir-Somnath district, Una received 50mm of rainfall, while Gir-Gadhda received 48mm. Gondal in Rajkot district received 52mm precipitation within a couple of hours on Tuesday which saw commuters finding it difficult to wade through water-logged areas of Gondal town. Sporadic rainfall was received across Saurashtra region during the day. Rainfall has continued in the region for the last four days and has injected a new hope among farmers. Sources said Saurashtra has received 13.11 per cent of its average annual rainfall till now. Though, the region is still rain deficient as compared to previous years, yet it is the area that has received highest rainfall in the state. Gujarat as a whole has just received 5.81 per cent of its annual average rainfall. The fresh rainfall has further increased the inflow of rain water in the dams. "These showers will help farmers irrigate their land as check dams will be filled," a farmer from Gondal Mansukh Vaghashiya said. Meanwhile, India Meteorological Department (IMD) officials said moderate to rather heavy rainfall would be received at isolated places in Saurashtra during the next 24 hours.

Tomato at Rs 60/kg as vegetable prices surge in Delhi



Last week it was onions, now it's tomatoes that are making Delhiites see red. In the last fortnight, vegetable prices have skyrocketed in the national capital and almost doubled in some cases in the retail market. Tomatoes have seen the sharpest hike in prices, touching Rs 60/kg in some parts of the city, followed by onions, capsicum and cauliflowers. Potato prices have also surged. The overall rise in vegetable prices has sent households in a tizzy as they struggle to meet their daily expenses. In Kailash Colony, resident Mihir Sharma said: "When I went to buy vegetables in the morning, I was shocked to hear the prices. Okra and parwal both were Rs 80 per kg. Finally, I ended up buying only half a kg tomato and onion." In Kailash Colony, resident Mihir Sharma said: "When I went to buy vegetables in the morning, I was shocked to hear the prices. Okra and parwal both were Rs 80 per kg. Finally, I ended up buying only half a kg tomato and onion." He added: "I live alone and don't really have to spend a lot on vegetables. But I wonder what people who have big families must be going through with even basic food items costing so much." Patparganj resident Niti Aggarwal was shocked when her local vegetable vendor charged Rs 50 for one kilo tomatoes. "He told me there was another variety which was cheaper but that pile of tomatoes looked soggy and inedible, so I was forced to shell out what he demanded. Just last week I paid about Rs 30 for the same thing." The situation isn't much different in NCR regions of Noida, Ghaziabad and Gurgaon either. "When I visited the Tuesday vegetable market and found out the rates for cauliflowers, I opted not to buy. But with vegetables like onions and tomatoes, you cannot really compromise. It appears that every week the prices of vegetables keeps increasing," said Niharika, a resident of sector 100. If you go by the Azadpur subzi mandi officials, the capital is facing a shortage of vegetables like tomato, onion and potato because of the delayed

monsoon in northern India and unrelenting heatwave. "A lot of crops were ruined during heavy rains in February and March this year during excessive rains and we are still facing repercussions because of that. At least 20 per cent crops could not be salvaged and a large percentage of produce was being imported," said Raj Kumar Bhatia, general secretary, chamber of Azadpur fruit and vegetable traders association. Tomatoes in particular have taken a hit lately. "Delhi gets tomato produce from Himachal, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Each state has been badly hit by delayed rainfall and a large percentage of the crops have failed. "Because rains have been delayed, the tomatoes are still green and have not turned red and ripe enough. In fact, the produce from Karnataka has stopped coming to Delhi because tomatoes are a perishable item and could not last a four day truck journey to Delhi. We are getting only a limited supply from Himachal and Maharashtra," said Sanjay Chugh, tomatoes traders association, Azadpur mandi. Officials said the wholesale price of tomatoes was about Rs 30-35/kilo