

Naidu unveils plans to make agriculture profitable

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday announced a series of measures to make agriculture profitable, sustainable and climate-resilient in the State, including plans to spend Rs. 2,000 crore for water conservation through MGNREGA funds. Releasing a white paper on agriculture, the fourth in the series on different sectors, Mr. Naidu said the main goal was to transform agriculture from a 'way of life' into an 'enterprise' by increasing crop productivity. As part of it, the waiver of agricultural loans has provided a big relief to farmers. The other measures include appointing multi-purpose extension officers for every 1,000 hectares, providing comprehensive soil health cards to ensure proper balance of micro-nutrients. He said satellite imagery and remote sensing data would be used to advise farmers on crop selection and changing cropping patterns. It was also planned to develop Andhra Pradesh into a seed industry hub by increasing production in the districts of Prakasam, Chittoor, Anantapur, Kurnool and Kadapa. Farm mechanisation, organic farming, drought-proofing of rain-fed areas and improving marketing for the produce were among the measures. Pointing out that agriculture, on which 70 per cent people were dependent, was contributing only 20 per cent of GSDP, he stressed the need to increase it. Mr. Naidu announced that a separate agri-processing policy would be formulated to give support to the processing of agriculture produce for achieving value addition. Rythu Mitra Self-Help groups would be revived. The Chief Minister said the State would take up with the Centre the issue of implementing the recommendations of eminent scientist M.S. Swaminathan on providing MSP to farmers.

Farmers from Ariyalur on a study tour to Kerala

Horticulturists and plantation crop growers of Ariyalur district have been taken for an exposure visit to Kerala for on the spot study of various crafts in Tiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode. Led by Saranya, assistant director of horticulture, they would be imparted training on latest technology, value addition, post-harvest technique, and its implementation in their crop. E. Saravanelraj, District Collector, who saw them off on Wednesday, said the exposure visit was aimed at enhancing the area under horticulture crop in the district and step up the returns for the farmers. Joint Director of Agriculture Gunasekaran and Deputy Director of Horticulture Subbaiah were present.

Onion prices come down

The prices of small onions fell at the wholesale market here on Wednesday after heavy arrivals from Mysore. From Rs.30 to Rs.45 a kg during the last few weeks, the prices came down to Rs.20 a kg. Yield from the district had been massively hit this year owing to monsoon failure which had resulted in skyrocketing of onion prices. Traders said that the wholesale market received nearly 2,000 bags, each containing 80 kg of small onion on Wednesday alone. The market also received 15 loads, each 16 tonnes from

Maharashtra, on Wednesday. The wholesale prices of big onions hovered between Rs.20 and Rs.28, depending on the quality. During July, traders said that nearly 50 tonnes of high quality onions had been exported to Singapore, Malaysia and Sri Lanka from the wholesale market. In the retail market, small onions were being sold at Rs.35 while it was being sold at Rs.45 during the previous week. The prices of big onions too had dropped to Rs.40 from Rs.60, agents said.

Mettur level touches 60 feet mark



With heavy rains continuing in the Cauvery's catchments in Karnataka, the flow into the Stanley reservoir at Mettur has crossed the 60 feet mark, raising farmers' hopes for water release for cultivation in the delta areas. Officials said here on Wednesday that the inflow increased from 15,545 cubic feet per second (cusecs) on Tuesday to 28,417 cusecs at 8 a.m. Wednesday. This pushed up the level to 60.89 feet, against the Full Reservoir Level of 120 feet. The storage improved from 22.982 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) to 25.354 tmcft, against the full capacity of 93.470 tmcft. The discharge was 801 cusecs. Officials said the water level increased by three feet in a day and kept rising throughout the day. If the current quantum of inflow continued for the next 10 days, PWD officials said, the level could reach 100 feet, brightening the prospects of water release for irrigation. At Biligundlu, where the Cauvery enters Tamil Nadu, the flow in the river was 35,000 cusecs on Wednesday morning, but dropped to 28,000 cusecs in the evening, though excess flows continued to be released from the Kabini and KRS dams in Karnataka, a Revenue Department official said.

Ban continues

At the Hogenakkal Falls, the ban on bathing and coracle operations continued for the sixth day. Inflow in excess of 7,000 cusecs being recorded at Bhavani Sagar Dam for the last few days owing to good rainfall in parts of The Nilgiris district has ushered in hope among the farmers in the LBP (Lower Bhavani Project) ayacut for timely release of water. The usual date of water release is August 15, but last year, the release was delayed by about a week.

Farmers making the most of copra procurement centre

The copra procurement centre at Pattukottai has been attracting copra producers thanks to the sharp increase in its price this season. Officials have been anticipating a large quantity of copra to arrive at the procurement unit this season. The price per kg stands at Rs.110

against Rs. 61 to 62 last year. The price is likely to shoot up as there has been a growing demand for copra. The district accounts for about 45,000 acres under coconut cultivation and a majority of the area falls in Pattukottai, Madhukkur, Peravurani and Sethubavachathiram taluks. Referring to the advantages of the coconut market complex at Ponnaravayankottai village near Pattukottai, R. Kaliyaraj, Deputy Director of Agri Business, said that the hike in copra price has been a benefit to the farmers who have been making the most of the infrastructure at the market complex. He said that all the 12 drying yards at the complex are busy now with the farmers drying the produce. The complex has a row of 17 shops which would be let out to farmers on rental basis. A mini oil extraction unit with an installed daily capacity of 500 kg was yet another advantage to the copra producers.

Farmer shows the way in managing drought and labour shortage



Acute drought and shortage of labour and water for irrigation have forced progressive farmers to devise new strategies to raise crops. A farmer in Chinnamanur has successfully adopted a multi-cropping system blending one short-term and one long-term crop to improve his yield. R. Singaram of Seepalakottai has raised banana and small onion in the same field using limited water for irrigation. "I look at multi-cropping as a feasible strategy to overcome difficulties in farming. It helps me produce more in a limited area and avert risk of crop failure." He has formed a five-and-a-half-foot-wide pit around the banana tree to sow onion. "I need not irrigate separately for banana and small onions. Irrigation cost has come down by half now," he adds. Onion plants prevent development of stem borer and root borer in banana. Mr. Singaram has raised onion and banana on six acres and plans to expand it by four acres next month. "Before planting banana and onion, I had raised maize as single crop. After harvesting, I ploughed the land with maize plants and applied 100 loads of manure and goat droppings. It improved the health of plants and made them disease-resistant. Attack by pests like green worms and beetle is also reduced." "In 90 days, onion crop will be ready for harvesting. Banana will give long-term benefits and onion will meet the short-term expenses," he says. Since water yield in his well was not enough to irrigate the entire area, he had raised crops only in half of the land and left the other half barren. He cultivated only dry crops that did not fetch much income. Now, multi-cropping has enabled him to utilise the entire land to raise twin crops at a low cost and with less water. It helps to protect the soil from extreme erosion, improves soil structure, enhances fertility, conserves moisture and suppresses pests and pathogens. It also contributes towards improving overall health of ecosystem, he points out.

Tea Board office in Kotagiri soon

The Tea Board will soon open a branch at Kotagiri. Stating this to *The Hindu* here on Wednesday, Executive Director, Tea Board (South) R.Ambalavanan said that a branch was opened at Gudalur on Tuesday. Pointing out that the opening of region-wise branches was in keeping with the decentralization policy of the Tea Board, he said that they have been facilitated by the Small Growers Directorate of the Board. The move will simplify the task of processing applications for subsidies and other benefits received from small tea growers' societies. The focus of the Tea Board is now on distribution of smart cards. Stating that the cards were being issued to the small tea growers, he said that so far 45,000 growers have registered their names with the Board. Another 10,000 are expected to join them. Pointing out that 6,000 small growers have received their cards, he said that the process is expected to be completed by the end of the year or early next year. The cards which contain details pertaining to the farmers will make them eligible for various benefits of the Tea Board. The cards will also save them the trouble of going to various sections of the Revenue department for records.

Fresh spell of rain boosts farm activity

Even as the renewed monsoon improved green fodder availability in the rural hinterland, over 40,000 mini-kits of fodder seeds are expected to reach the district shortly for free distribution among interested farmers to take up sowing of seeds. The fresh spell of rain after a long lull in the district has triggered farm activities and sowing is almost complete. Thanks to ample moisture in the soil, fodder can be grown in small portions of fields to ensure availability for the coming months. Despite stocking sufficient fodder during the lean period of the monsoon, the Department of Animal Husbandry was worried about meeting demand in case of failure of rain this month. But, the recent showers have given wings to its plan of distributing mini-kits of fodder seeds. Animal Husbandry Department Deputy Director Devadas told *The Hindu* that each kit — containing 5 kgs of fodder seeds — would be distributed free to farmers through veterinary hospitals in the district upon showing RTCs in their names. "Fodder can be cultivated until October. This year, more number of kits will be distributed. In 2013, over 2,000 kits were distributed in each taluk," he said. Mr. Devadas said the Deputy Commissioner's permission had been sought for an action plan on growing fodder through the Departments of Agriculture and Horticulture and the centre run by the Suttur Math. "We had proposed to grow fodder in 100 acres making use of the Calamity Relief Fund. Now that monsoon has revived, we need to rethink the proposal. But the decision rests with the Deputy Commissioner," he said. Mr. Devadas said the College of Horticulture was consulted on whether fodder could be grown in a 70-acre area on its campus. "However, the college expressed its inability to take it up. Otherwise, our idea was to grow fodder in 170 acres to meet the demand till early next year," he said.

Goat farms planned under NLM



The Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences in Mysore has proposed to establish ten goat farms in each taluk of the district to perk up the rural economy as the concept is catching up among private entrepreneurs. If the office of the Commissioner of Animal Husbandry, Government of Karnataka, feels the proposal was viable and gives its nod, the goat farms founded with Central funds may become a reality by this year-end, according to Devadas, Deputy Director, Animal Husbandry, Mysore. Speaking to *The Hindu*, he said goat farms had been proposed under the National Livestock Mission (NLM). Goat meat is said to have lower cholesterol levels compared to sheep. “Moreover, goat milk has health benefits. These factors may encourage people in rural areas to take up goat rearing to augment their income,” he said. Subsidy up to 25 per cent of the cost involved in setting up a farm can be availed after fulfilling the necessary formalities. The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) can fund goat farms on getting approval from the respective agencies, Mr. Devadas said. He said goat farms were being started in some parts of the district by private entrepreneurs. One such farm that can rear about 500–800 goats is being opened in Nanjangud, he added. Mr. Devadas said the proposal to open 10 goat farms in each taluk had been discussed with the Commissioner. The proposals, if any, from other districts would be compiled and sent for approval under the NLM. Since it will be a bank-linked scheme, the approval may take time but we are hopeful of starting at least some farms by the end of this year, he added. Responding to a question, Mr. Devadas said subsidy in the case of goat farms would be calculated on the total cost of the farm and not on the number of animals. He said goat rearing had gained popularity in the neighbouring State of Tamil Nadu. Mr. Devadas said: “Entrepreneurs wishing to launch goat farms in that State get 75 per cent subsidy from the government. This has led to an increase in goat farms.”

Relief for crop loss in raids by wild animals set to go up

The loss of one coffee plant caused by a herd of elephants or any wild animal would get the farmer a compensation of Rs. 30. The loss of an arecaut or a coconut palm would get him or her Rs. 250 if the Responding to a question by BJP MLC Ashwathnarayan in the Legislative Council on Wednesday, Minister for Forests B. Ramanath Rai promised to enhance the compensation paid for crop loss in animal raids. He also said that the money would be paid within a stipulated time under the Sakala scheme. A proposal on enhancing the sum has been sent to the Finance Department. The maximum compensation would soon be raised from Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 75,000, he added. Over the last three years Rs.

997.97 lakh had been paid by way of compensation. The MLC demanded that compensation should be on a par with the rates given during acquisitions by the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board or any other agency for projects. He said that one farmer in Heggadadevanakote was paid Rs. 2,800 for the loss of a cow in a wild animal attack two years after the incident.

Farmers happy as tomato prices shoot up

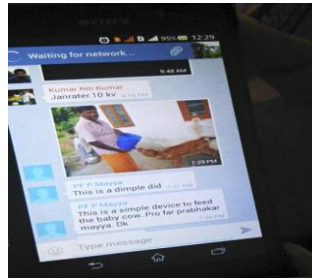


Farmers in Mandya district have got a bumper yield and expect to produce at least four lakh quintals of tomato this year. Tomato growers in Mandya district are cheerful as their produce continues to fetch remunerative price for the last two weeks. Department of Horticulture officials say that tomato price has been on an upswing since the beginning of this month and has shot up by three fold. The trend is expected to continue in the next two weeks. Though Mandya is not a traditional tomato-growing district, a good number of farmers have raised tomatoes this year, a senior officer said.

Farmers advised

The Irrigation Department had requested farmers not to cultivate paddy, sugarcane and other water-intensive crops as the water-level in Krishnaraja Sagar reservoir (KRS) was plummeting. Hence, hundreds of farmers in district have switched over to various tomato breeds, he explained. Farmers in the district have got bumper yields and expect to produce at least four lakh quintals of tomato this year. A majority of their produce goes to markets in Bangalore, Ramanagaram, Mandya, Hosur, and Krishnagiri, the officer said. Farmers have cultivated tomatoes in Nagamangala, Malavalli, K.R. Pet, Mandya, Pandavapura and some parts of Mandya taluks. In Nagamangala, they raised tomato crops in more than 520 hectares of land, M. Shantha, Senior Assistant Director, Department of Horticulture (Nagamangala taluk), told *The Hindu*. "The price of tomato was Rs. 45 a kg in Mandya market on Wednesday. It was Rs. 8 in the first week of July. The farmers are getting between Rs. 28 and Rs. 30 per kg," Maranna, a *naati* tomato grower from Thimmana Hosuru, said. However, according to growers, the price is expected to crash in August. A large number of farmers have raised tomatoes this season anticipating good returns. Hence, within three weeks the price will come down to Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 a kg, said Maranna, who has been growing tomatoes for the last 10 years. He has grown tomatoes on three acres of land.

A social networking app for farmers



Prabhakara Mayya, a progressive farmer from Ujire, sharing his method of feeding milk to a calf through a social networking application Telegram with his mobile phone. Prabhakar Mayya, a farmer from Ujire, uploads a photograph and writes on a social networking application: “This is a simple device to feed baby cow.” The photograph shows an artificial teat fixed to a plastic bucket for feeding calves. By feeding in this manner, any injury to the hybrid cow’s udder could be avoided, says Mr. Mayya. He is one among a group of 122 members, including farmers and agriculture department officials, on the social network application Telegram used by the State Department of Agriculture for communication with farmers. The department has named the group, launched about three months ago, as ‘progressive farmers’. This initiative is the brainchild of the Commissioner of Agriculture Subodh Yadav who was also the former Deputy Commissioner of Dakshina Kannada. All Joint Directors of Agriculture in districts are its members. “Rain is around 20 per cent less in July and it was 41 per cent less in June on an average for Karnataka,” wrote the Commissioner of Agriculture on July 20. Farmer members of this group could directly interact with the Commissioner of Agriculture and agriculture scientists for solutions on crop diseases or to know about some department schemes, Mr. Mayya told *The Hindu*. Mr. Mayya said that once he faced some problem in the mechanised paddy transplantation method. When he uploaded the problem on the group, a member from Davangere replied and suggested a remedy which worked out. H. Kempe Gowda, the Joint Director of Agriculture, Dakshina Kannada, told *The Hindu* that the group and the technology helped in sharing knowledge among officials about the government’s schemes to farmers. The group members also share information on weather, rain, seeds, crops and the like. On Wednesday a member shared some information about availability of self-sharpening sickle for cereal crop harvesting. A member should have a smart phone and internet connectivity to join the group. The mode of admission to the group is through joint directors of agriculture or assistant directors of agriculture. Farmers interested to join the group could contact it, Mr. Gowda said.

Rubber Board chairman in city today

Sheela Thomas, chairman of Rubber Board, will be here on Thursday to attend a meeting of representatives of rubber producers’ societies in the State. According to N.S. Bhandary, president of Regional Rubber Planters’ Association, Mangalore, the meeting will be held at Sahodaya Hall, near Rubber Board regional office in Balmatta from 11 a.m. Besides

Ms. Thomas, Rubber Production Commissioner of the Board J. Thomas would also participate in the meeting, he said. The meeting would discuss issues on fair and remunerative price for rubber and address other problems being faced by rubber growers in Karnataka.

Monsoon revival boosts paddy cultivation in Udupi

Targeted area of cultivation	45,000 ha
Area covered till July 19, 2014	25,000 ha
75% of the targeted area is expected to be covered by this weekend	

Paddy cultivation has picked up pace in the district owing to revival of monsoon in July. Last month the district received just a little over half the rainfall it normally got in June. According to the figures provided by the Rain Monitoring Cell at the Deputy Commissioner's Office, the normal rainfall in Udupi district in June is 1,055 mm.

Deficit

But in June, 2014, the district got just 575 mm of rainfall, which is a deficit of 480 mm. In June, 2013, the district had received an average rainfall of 1,264 mm. But the rains gods, who had sulked in June, have smiled on the district in July. The average rainfall received in Udupi district as on July 22, 2014, is 925.9 mm. The normal rainfall in the district in July is 1,381 mm. But in July, 2013, the district had got above normal rainfall of 1,613 mm. Improved rainfall has led to an increase in sowing and transplanting of paddy by the farmers in the district. According to Anthony Maria Immanuel, Joint Director of Agriculture, agricultural activities had picked up considerably in the district. The department has a target of bringing 45,000 hectares (ha) of land under paddy cultivation in the district. Till July 19, 2014, paddy cultivation had been taken up in 25,000 ha. "By this weekend, we expect 75 per cent of land to be under paddy cultivation," he said.

Seeds

Those who had taken up sowing last month had used the traditional MO4 variety of paddy seeds. Those who have taken up cultivation late are going into direct sowing of paddy seeds in their fields. "Most of these farmers are sowing the Jyoti variety of paddy seeds," Mr. Immanuel said.

Farmers happy

Srinivas Bhat, a farmer from Kudi village, said that the paddy farmers were worried as the district had received just half the rainfall in June. “Now all paddy farmers are happy. Everyone is sowing,” he said. However, another paddy farmer Ramachandra B. from Punchur village, said that some farmers were not aware of the short-duration Jyoti paddy seeds and some others faced labour problem. “How much this late revival of rains is of help to farmers is difficult to say,” he said. Last year, the Agriculture Department had the target of bringing 45,000 ha of land under paddy cultivation. But the farmers had grown paddy on 44,663 ha of land and produced 1.36 lakh tonnes of rice.

Call to control vegetable prices

The district administration has called for intervention by Civil Supplies Department officials to check the spiralling prices of vegetables in the district. At the district-level Food Advisory Committee meeting held here on Wednesday, Additional District Magistrate O. Muhammad Aslam, who presided, directed the officials to intervene in view public complaints that vendors were selling vegetables at arbitrarily fixed prices. Members of the committee complained that the prices are likely to go up in the coming festive season. District Civil Supplies Officer K. Sujatha said that preparations were under way for opening district-level and Assembly constituency-level Onam fairs during the Onam season. The Onam fairs here will be started in the first week of August, she told the meeting.

Tomato makes big strides, in price

It is a vegetable that is usually kind on the customer’s pocket. But these days, the price of a kilogram of tomato in most retail markets here hovers around Rs.80. It usually costs less than Rs.25. In fact, the vegetable could be bought for as low as Rs.17 barely two months ago. B. Chandran, a veteran vendor at Connemara Market, Palayam, is not surprised at the quadrupling of rates this monsoon, stating matter-of-factly that poor production in Tamil Nadu is bound to have such repercussions on the Kerala market. “Tomorrow we may get a better load. Then the price will come down again. Maybe it will dip to Rs.50 mark even but for it to return to the Rs.20, we’ll have to wait for a couple of months,” he said. Customers at his store wore resigned expressions as they filled their bags with necessities they cannot compromise on. Regina, from Vattiyurkavu, a regular at Chandran’s store, was persistent in her demand for a discount. Chandran relented finally. “I have to haggle. I have three daughters to feed. My budget is already strained,” she said. However, Chandran is optimistic since prices of other vegetables have “not spiralled out of control like last year.” Ginger, for instance, costs Rs.100 a kilogram now, as against the Rs.180 in July last year. Onions remain around Rs.40, half of what it was a few months ago. The prices of green chilli and beans too have been fluctuating with the former touching Rs.70 in retail markets on Tuesday, compared to Rs.50 a few weeks ago.

Tomato prices treble, no respite in sight



Tomatoes being sold at the Erragadda Rythu Bazaar on Wednesday.— Photo: Nagara Gopal

Whether vegetarian or non-vegetarian food, tomatoes go well with many curries. Many cannot do without it daily but trebling of tomato prices within the past two weeks is forcing them to minimise their use in food. Till a fortnight ago, tomatoes were priced between Rs.15 and 20 a kilo. The prices began going up leaving onions way behind. On Wednesday, the hybrid tomato was Rs.55 a kilo while the local variety was Rs.60 in Rythu Bazaars in the State capital. “Earlier traders looted us by jacking up prices of onions. Our prolonged protests and condemnations didn’t move the government. Now it is turn of tomato prices. Is there a government here?” asks housewife Sudha from Somajiguda. For her family of six, tomatoes are daily requirement. Many use tomato in salad as well. Do people have to cut down on their salads also because the government fails to control prices, question frustrated families. Though the price board at Rythu Bazaars mention Rs.55 as price of kilo tomatoes, the vendors inside are bluntly telling the customers five rupees higher. “When we ask them why they charge extra, vendors ask us not to bargain because of the high demand,” says Chandrashekhar of Alwal. Most customers seem to have reconciled and are making quiet purchases without haggling. And there is no hope of prices coming down soon. “We checked with the surrounding districts where tomato is grown. There too, the price is around Rs.60-65 a kilo, forcing us to drop plans of purchasing from there and supplying to the city,” Hyderabad Assistant Director of Marketing department, Chaya Devi, said.

Pushkara water released for kharif season

Irrigation water to be provided to 1.45 lakh acres in upland areas

PUSHKARA LIFT IRRIGATION SCHEME

- ▶ Project started with an estimated cost of **Rs. 600 crore**
- ▶ **Rs. 583** crore has already been spent on the project

POLAVARAM PROMISE

- ▶ Polavaram project to meet the water needs of East, WG and Krishna

Deputy Chief Minister N. Chinarajappa on Wednesday released water through Pushkara Lift Irrigation scheme at Purushottapatnam village in Seethanagaram mandal in East

Godavari District. He said that through the scheme, irrigation water would be provided to 1.45 lakh acres in the upland areas for the kharif season. The project started with an estimated cost of Rs. 600 crore and an amount of Rs. 583 crore were spent while the remaining works would be completed soon. On Polavaram project, he said all clearances were obtained for the project, and it would meet the water needs of East, West Godavari and Krishna districts. ZP chairperson Namana Rambabu, MLAs Pendurthi Venkatesh, Jyothula Nehru and Varupula Subba Rao attended.

Horticulture official held, assets worth 4 cr. unearthed

ACB officials on Wednesday unearthed disproportionate assets worth over Rs. 4 crore from the houses of R.V.V. Prasada Rao, assistant director of Horticulture Department. He is also in-charge of Micro Irrigation Department. Seven ACB teams headed by DSPs Ch. Lakshmi pati, I. Venkateswarulu, and Circle Inspector Ghouse Azad conducted raids simultaneously in Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam, Mamidipalli of Sompeta based on concrete information. According to the officials, Prasada Rao and his family members owned four apartments and 30 sites in various places. ACB officials also raided the house of Deputy Commercial Tax Officer Anasuya, sister of Prasada Rao but could not find anything. Inspection of the bank lockers would continue over the next two days, officials said, adding that Prasada Rao had been arrested and would be produced in the ACB court on Thursday.

Delta farmers losing hope of cultivation during kharif

TOUGH TIMES AHEAD

- In the absence of a heavy downpour in the Western Ghats, the reservoirs of River Krishna – Alamatti and Tungabhadra – are unlikely to get filled
- Telangana govt. is monitoring the release of water from Nagarjuna Sagar Project insisting that water be released only for drinking water purposes
- A little rainfall in the catchment of Krishna River below NSP will help in filling of drinking water tanks and provide some water for raising of seed beds
- Krishna Delta Protection Committee has declared it will ask farmers to agitate if water was not released for irrigation from the dead storage of NSP

The worst nightmares of the Krishna Delta farmers seem to be coming true with the passing of each day. If the percentage of plantation is any indication, most farmers seem to have given up hope of cultivation during this kharif. Unless there is heavy downpour in the Western Ghats, the two major reservoirs of River Krishna located in Karnataka – Alamatti and Tungabhadra – are unlikely to get filled. Water seems to be trickling into these reservoirs which are less than 50 per cent full. According to records, Alamatti is holding 83 tmcft on Tuesday compared to 106 tmcft on the corresponding date last year. Similarly Tungabhadra reservoir is holding 45 tmcft on Tuesday compared to the 99 tmcft on the correspondent date last year. The Telangana Government is closely monitoring the release of water from Nagarjuna Sagar Project (NSP) insisting that water be released only for drinking water purposes. A little rainfall in the catchment of Krishna

River below NSP would help in filling of drinking water tanks and provide some water for raising of seed beds. The discharge from the tributaries, Muniyeru, Wyra and Katleru has subsequently dropped. The Krishna River Management Board came to the rescue of the people and farmers of Krishna Delta by ordering the release of 4,000 cusecs from Monday only to fill drinking water tanks. It has also permitted the release of water to the Alimenati Madhava Reddy Project (AMRP). Beginning with 300 cusecs on Monday the releases to the project were increased to 900 cusecs on Tuesday. About 140 tmcft of water is required for filling of the major reservoirs – Alamatti and Tungabhadra – of Karnataka. The chances of this happening in this monsoon seasons seem remote considering the meagre rainfall. Meanwhile, the Krishna Delta Protection Committee (Parirakshana Samithi) has declared that it would ask farmers to agitate if water was not released for irrigation from the dead storage of NSP. Committee chairman Kolanukonda Sivaji said that farmers would be mobilised to agitate on Prakasam Barrage laying siege to it demanding release of water from NSP. He asked why Minister for Major Irrigation Devineni Umamaheswara Rao was not convening the Krishna district Irrigation Advisory Board (IAB) till now. The meeting should have been conducted at least a month ago. The attitude of the government to farmers continued to be as “negligent as ever.”

Waive all farm loans: TPCC



Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee chief Ponnala Lakshmaiah wants the government to waive all agricultural loans and ensure fresh loans to the farming community.

Efficient, labour-saving machine for harvesting and cleaning turmeric



Among various cash crops, turmeric has a potential market value all through the year since it is mainly used as a value added product. Erode is a turmeric cultivating hub in Tamil Nadu and almost all farmers in the region are growing this crop. But the main issue with this crop is that like paddy, it is labour intensive. A huge labour force is required for weeding, earthing, fertilizer application, harvesting and polishing. "If not harvested on time the crop gets affected by fungal infestation. And in many villages today sourcing manual labour remains a problem. For an acre, about 300 (110 male and 190 female) labourers are required. In engaging them, a farmer gets drained physically and economically," says Dr. S. Saravanakumar, Agronomist, Myrada, Gobichettypalayam.

One year idea

While this is the current scenario in the region, a small turmeric farmer Mr. P. Ramaraju, has developed a machine to harvest the crop on time. He worked on the idea for a year to design an efficient harvester. "In the past I suffered huge losses because I was not able to source labour on time. Determined to find a solution I thought of working on a machine which could harvest the rhizomes so that a large labour would not be required," says Mr. Ramaraju. Accordingly, he designed a power tiller that requires 13 HP power to run it. The machine consists of a shaft connected to small diggers, arm and shaker. While operating this machinery, the diggers pull out the turmeric clumps from the soil and loosen the earth with the help of the shaker.

Capacity

The field capacity of this harvester was tested in different soil conditions and it was found that seven hours are required for harvesting one acre of turmeric. However, some preconditions are required such as the space between the rows must be 1.5 – 2 feet, the furrows must be lengthy and broad. It is best suited for fields installed with a drip irrigation system. "Since turmeric is cultivated under a raised bed system, we thought some refinement is needed in order to deploy this machinery in different types of soil and methods of cultivation. Based on the farmer's feedback, we modified the machine with some more ideas from the farmer. This intervention has proved the efficiency of the harvester to the farmers through demonstrations and is documented," says Dr. Saravanakumar. "It is a labour-saving equipment and requires only one male and 15-20 women labourers to collect the harvested rhizomes from an acre whereas in manual harvesting 40 pairs of labourers may be required costing Rs.14,000 – 16,000. By using this harvester one can save upto Rs 7,000 – 9,000 per acre," says Mr. Ramaraju.

One litre of diesel

The machine consumes one litre of diesel an hour which a small farmer can easily afford. A special attachment also shakes the harvested rhizomes so that the soil on them drops to the field, leaving the rhizomes clear for collection. The innovator has demonstrated the

performance of his machine in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and till date has been able to sell about 172 harvesters priced at Rs.30,000 each.

Servicing

Like all machines, this harvester also needs to be serviced regularly. Unlike tractors, machines like these developed by small innovators face servicing problems. But Mr. Ramaraju has been offering suggestions and also visiting the places to service his machine. Farmers from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have visited his farm to know about the field suitability of the machine. His innovation was recognised by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi and he was honoured as a 'Best Farmer Innovator' in 2010 during the national farm innovators meet. For more details interested farmers can contact Mr. P. Ramaraju, Puthupalayam, Gettisamudram post, Anthiyur Taluk, Erode district – 638 501, Tamil Nadu, mobile: 9865171790.

New early maturing garlic variety

Generally garlic varieties developed by different organizations take about 130-270 days to attain physiological maturity. There is no variety available for growing during Kharif season having early maturity in India. The National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF) has recently identified a new garlic genotype "G-389" which can be harvested within 72-80 days during Kharif, late Kharif and 85-95 days in the Rabi season, about 40-50 days earlier than other garlic varieties grown in India.

Yield

The new variety gives an average yield of 6-7 tonnes per hectare with good storage capacity. The variety is registered with National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources, New Delhi. The day length for bulbing is 10-12 hours and it can be grown on any soil, but thrives better in fertile, well drained loam soils. About 500-700 kg of planting materials are required for planting in one hectare. Because of small cloves it is advisable to plant it at a spacing of 10 x 7.5 cm to get optimum bulb yield. About 25 tonnes of well decomposed organic manures, 100 kg N, 50 kg phosphate and 50 kg potash per hectare through chemical fertilizers have been recommended. Use of zinc and boron and application of sulphur at 30-50 kg/ha also helps to improve yield and quality of bulbs. Drip irrigation can be used for high yield and quality bulbs.

Irrigation

Pendimethalin at 3.5 litre or oxiflufen (goal) at 2.5 litre/ha + one hand weeding help control of broad leaves weeds. Irrigation should be stopped 15-20 days before harvesting as otherwise it can re-sprout and decrease yield. The crop is ready for harvesting when it turns light yellow or brown and shows signs of drying. Curing is an additional process of drying to remove excess moisture. (R. K. Singh, Assistant Director (Horticulture) E-mail:

singhrknbpgr@yahoo.com, rks@nhrdf.com Mob: 09881303443 &. R. P. Gupta, Director
E-mail: nhrdf_nsk@sanchrnet.in, Mob: 9850880668, National Horticultural Research and
Development Foundation, Chitegaon Phata, Post-Darna Sangavi, Taluka-Niphad, Nashik,
Maharashtra.)

As India consumes more and more maize, search on for better varieties



Scientists are trying to develop heat stress resilient, high-yielding and nutritionally enriched maize varieties to face the challenges of global warming

The Global Maize Programme, an initiative of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre, is intensively pursuing the development of heat-stress resilient, high-yielding and nutritionally enriched maize varieties in order to face the challenges of global warming and meet the global demand for maize, the agency's director Prasanna B.M. has said. "With the financial assistance of United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the CIMMYT has undertaken 'Heat Stress Resilient Maize' for South Asia, a five-year project, for developing heat tolerant and high-yielding maize varieties specifically suitable for South Asian climatic conditions. The project has commenced in 2012 and will end in 2017," Mr. Prasanna said at a press conference at the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) here on Monday. Various public institutions from South Asia, he said, had collaborated in the project. The UAS, Purdue University in the U.S., the Bihar Agriculture University in Sabour, Bhagalpur, the Maize and Millets Research Institute of Pakistan, the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute, and National Maize Research Institute of Nepal were involved in the project. Four Indian private seed companies too collaborated. Terming maize a crop for the future, Mr. Prasanna said the area under maize cultivation was expanding globally. "A two degree Celsius increase in temperature reduces the maize yields by 13 per cent. Changes in global climatic conditions have led to increased temperatures and increased frequency of droughts. These objective conditions have prompted us to take up development of new heat stress tolerant varieties of maize through advanced genomic approaches." The increasing gap between increase in yield and consumption, he added, was widening the demand-supply gap. "While the growth of maize yield is just 28 per cent, the growth of its consumption is 70 per cent. The gap is triggering a great demand for maize globally. In China, with 32 million hectares of maize cultivation, the maize production and consumption has crossed that of rice," Mr. Prasanna said. In India, 80 per cent of the crop is used for feed and 20 per cent is for consumption, but in Africa it is other way around.

“The production of maize needs to be doubled by 2050 to meet growing global demand,” he added.

Farmers happy as tomato prices shoot up



Tomato growers in Mandya district are cheerful as their produce continues to fetch remunerative price for the last two weeks. Department of Horticulture officials say that tomato price has been on an upswing since the beginning of this month and has shot up by three fold. The trend is expected to continue in the next two weeks. Though Mandya is not a traditional tomato-growing district, a good number of farmers have raised tomatoes this year, a senior officer said. The Irrigation Department had requested farmers not to cultivate paddy, sugarcane and other water-intensive crops as the water-level in Krishnaraja Sagar reservoir (KRS) was plummeting. Hence, hundreds of farmers in district have switched over to various tomato breeds, he explained. Farmers in the district have got bumper yields and expect to produce at least four lakh quintals of tomato this year. A majority of their produce goes to markets in Bangalore, Ramanagaram, Mandya, Hosur, and Krishnagiri, the officer said. Farmers have cultivated tomatoes in Nagamangala, Malavalli, K.R. Pet, Mandya, Pandavapura and some parts of Mandya taluks. In Nagamangala, they raised tomato crops in more than 520 hectares of land, M. Shantha, Senior Assistant Director, Department of Horticulture (Nagamangala taluk), told *The Hindu*. “The price of tomato was Rs. 45 a kg in Mandya market on Wednesday. It was Rs. 8 in the first week of July. The farmers are getting between Rs. 28 and Rs. 30 per kg,” Maranna, a *naati* tomato grower from Thimmana Hosuru, said.

Crash expected

However, according to growers, the price is expected to crash in August. A large number of farmers have raised tomatoes this season anticipating good returns. Hence, within three weeks the price will come down to Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 a kg, said Maranna, who has been growing tomatoes for the last 10 years. He has grown tomatoes on three acres of land.

Phailin-hit mushroom farmers unlikely to get compensation



Mushroom growers of Ganjam district fear that they may not get any compensation for their losses during cyclone Phailin in October 2013. Their fear is based on information they got from the office of the deputy director of horticulture in Berhampur through an application filed under Right to Information (RTI) Act. A mushroom grower of the district, B.Narasinga Rao had filed this RTI application to know the number of mushroom cultivators, who had been affected by Phailin. In its submission of information under RTI Act, the office of the deputy director of horticulture mentioned that number mushroom cultivators affected during the cyclone was not available in their office. Mr. Rao said it was ironical that the very department which should have kept track of mushroom cultivation and the farmers involved in it has not kept track of their losses during the cyclone. According to him, during disbursement of compensation for agricultural losses during Phailin, mushroom growers may not get any succour. Members of Ganjam district unit of Odisha Mushroom Growers' Federation (OMGF) had met Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at Chatrapur during his visit to the district in December 2013 and handed over a memorandum. Through the memorandum they had alleged that although they were involved in agricultural production they were unable to avail agricultural loans at low interests. They had added that although mushroom growers had suffered immense loss due to Phailin, they had not received any support from the government for restoration of their cultivation. The mushroom growers say Ganjam district is in second place in mushroom production in the State. Before Phailin there were hundreds of mushroom cultivation units as well as 30 mushroom seed production centres in the district. They claim that around 4,000 youths of the district were involved in mushroom cultivation. Phailin had completely devastated the infrastructure of mushroom cultivation in the district. The mushroom growers alleged that after the cyclone they faced a financial crunch to restart cultivation. They were unable to avail any government assistance or loans at low interest from authorised financial institutions and were compelled to opt for personal investment or loans at high interest from private sources. They continue to demand that they should also be eligible for agricultural loans and other benefits provided to peasants by the government. They had demanded State government to declare some special package for Phailin cyclone hit mushroom growers.

Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 62.07 feet on Wednesday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 32,150 cusecs and the discharge 800 cusecs.



Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Jul 24

Max Min
38° | 28°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 62

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:52

Sunset: 06:38

Barometer: 1007

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Friday, Jul 25

Max Min
35° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday
Jul 26



36° | 28°
Cloudy

Sunday
Jul 27



35° | 29°
Cloudy

Monday
Jul 28



34° | 29°
Cloudy

Tuesday
Jul 29



34° | 29°
Cloudy

Wednesday
Jul 30



35° | 28°
Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Chennai

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:51

Sunset: 06:38

Barometer: 1005



AP Agriculture Minister Terms Jagan Anti-farmer

Describing YSRC chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy as anti-farmer, Andhra Pradesh agriculture minister P Pulla Rao alleged that by criticising chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on loan waiver issue, he had proved that he was not for the welfare of farmers. Speaking at the Secretariat on Tuesday with forest minister Bojja Gopalakrishna Reddy, Pulla Rao said Jagan has been claiming that waiving crop loans was an impossible task and Naidu would never be able to do it and would be forced to tender apology to the farmers. However, Naidu proved Jagan wrong and kept his promise and waived all the crop loans, he said and added that instead of appreciating his effort Jagan was still criticising him. “Despite the state having a deficit budget of Rs 16,000 crore the government was waiving the entire loan amount of the farmers and Dwacra women groups. However the YSRC chief was criticising Naidu for political gain,” he remarked. He said for the first time the government had even waived the crop loans taken against gold. The state government had waived Rs 39,700 crore worth crop loans, Rs 7,640 crore gold loans and Rs 800 crore worth loans taken by SC, ST and weavers, he said. “We have even extended the loan waiver benefit to those farmers who have repaid the loans,” the minister pointed out. He said that the state government would soon constitute a “loan waiver resource committee” to find resources to pay the loan amount. He said that the need to include the loan amount in the budget would not arise and the government would mobilise the funds from other sources.

Naidu Wants ‘Hi-tech’ Touch to Farm Sector

Tech-savvy Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu wants to give ‘hitech’ touch to farm sector to make agriculture a profitable profession. He wants to take the assistance of remote sensing technology to map the soil health across the state to guide the farmers to apply balanced fertilisers suitable to the respective soil so as to reduce the cost of cultivation and also to get quality agricultural production. At the same time, focus will also be laid on ‘mechanised-farming’ and ‘drought-proofing of rainfed areas’. While releasing white paper on the situation of agriculture sector in the reorganised state on Wednesday here, Naidu unveiled his vision for farm sector with objectives of increasing the productivity of crops and lessening the financial burden on farmers by adopting scientific methods. “Our main goal is to make agriculture in AP, climate resilient, sustainable, productive and profitable one. We want to transform agriculture from a way of life into an enterprise,” said Naidu while releasing the white paper. The AP chief minister claimed that his government was planning to achieve these objectives by using advanced tools like soil health mapping and remote sensing to increase agricultural production. “Our government accords highest priority to the agriculture sector and the welfare of farmers. The primary focus is on cost reduction. We want to increase

productivity by strengthening the extension system and introducing new seed varieties,” Naidu said. He further went on adding to say, “We want to adopt appropriate farm mechanisation techniques. Our focus will be on optimum use of fertilisers to maintain sustainable soil health”. According to Naidu to get more income from agriculture sector, the government wants to encourage agri-based industries in each district. For this, the government is planning to announce a separate policy. Naidu further disclosed that to enhance the agriculture production across the state, the government had decided to take the help of ongoing research in various agricultural universities. “Focus will be for the development of suitable high yielding varieties in paddy, ground nut, pulses and other crops which are resistant to pests and diseases with tolerance to floods,” he remarked. The AP chief minister said the government would also lay equal stress on developing various agriculture-related sectors such as horticulture, livestock, forestry and fisheries in the state. The government wants to integrate all the allied departments of agriculture such as horticulture, animal husbandry, irrigation, sericulture, fisheries etc to reduce cultivation cost.

Vision for Agriculture

Stress on soil health mapping and balanced use of fertilisers | A comprehensive soil health card to be given to each farmer | Satellite imagery and remote sensing data to be used for advising farmers to select suitable crops | Farmers will be encouraged to produce their own seeds through ‘Seed Village Programme’ to make quality seed available at an affordable price. | Prakasam, Chittoor, Anantapur, Kurnool and Kadapa districts to be made ‘seed production hubs’. | Focus on mechanised and organic farming. | To strengthen agriculture marketing, market price information will be made available to farmers in the form of KIOSKS. Agricultural market committees will be computerised to facilitate e-trading.

Naidu ACC uses Cong of Ruining Sector

Alleging that the 10-year regime of the previous Congress government in united AP had ruined the agriculture sector completely, Naidu said the failure of the previous government in addressing the sufferings of farmers had forced 1,943 farmers to end their lives. “The number of farmers’ suicides from 1994 to 2003 was just 310. The then Congress leadership tried to politicise this by bringing AICC chief Sonia Gandhi to Anantapur at that time. But, in the past ten years, as many as 1,943 farmers had committed suicides,” he remarked.

Spurt in Vegetable Prices Leaves the Common Man High and Dry

With the prices of vegetables skyrocketing, the common man is struggling hard to prevent the family budget from going haywire. When the vegetables cross the Walayar checkpost, the prices of tomato and carrot were ₹60 and ₹70 per kg compared to ₹15 and ₹28 respectively in the last week of May. By the time the commodities reach Kochi, the prices increase steeply. The price of potato ruled at ₹38 in the retail market here while it was just ₹28 around one and a half months ago. Beans now cost ₹60-70, as against ₹32 in

May. Onion was priced around `38-40, beetroot at `46 and chilli at `65 per kg, all of which cost 30-40 percent lesser two months ago. Only the price of drumstick has declined. It has come down to `38 from `50 per kilogram. Said P Ganeshan, one of the largest wholesalers in the Malabar region: "The production was limited in Tamil Nadu due to the weak monsoon. The produce from Tamil Nadu was also being transported to neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and north Indian states such as Rajasthan and Maharashtra. Chittoor and Tirupati were the largest suppliers of chilli. After a severe drought affected production in these areas, the chilli market in the state depends on supplies from Chickmangalur and Dharmasthala in Karnataka. And the transportation charges have increased by 10 percent. "Even the native varieties of vegetables such as bitter gourd and cow pea were being sold for `42 and `52 per kg while it was `24 and `30 in May. S Sivaprasad, chairman of the Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council, Keralam (VFPCCK), said: "We are both happy and saddened by the spurt in prices. While the farmer is getting a remunerative price, the consumer is at the receiving end." "Except in Palakkad district, there is no production at all. This leaves consumers at the mercy of the traders from the neighbouring states. The farmers of Palakkad were getting a wholesale rate of 44 per kg for tomato, `31 for bitter gourd, `45 for cow pea from the VFPCCK. These vegetables are transported up to Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur which increases the prices by 80 to 100 percent as per the demand," said T V Arun Kumar, Palakkad district manager of the VFPCCK. HortiCorp MD V V Pushpangadhan said: "Chief Minister Oommen Chandy has called a meeting of officials of Supplyco, HortiCorp and other agencies on Wednesday to discuss inflation and remedial measures. We are offering a 30 percent discount on vegetables at our outlets till July 29". Pushpangadhan said that except in Kasaragod, Wayanad and Malappuram districts, HortiCorp had outlets across the state.

July Downpour Revives Chances of Good Harvest

Two weeks of incessant showers have completely wiped out rainfall deficit of first two months of the monsoon, reviving the prospects of a good agricultural season in Odisha. The State Agriculture department said the farm sector is back on track following incessant rains. "Preliminary estimate says farmers have recovered 90 to 95 per cent of their crops while the overall crop coverage is fast catching up," Director, Agriculture, R Santh Gopalan told this paper. As on Wednesday, the State has received 376.3 mm rain, a whopping 49 per cent jump over the normal rainfall of 252.2 mm during the period. This is in stark contrast to June when the rainfall situation was extremely grim. Against the normal rainfall of 216.5 mm, the State had received just 98.4 mm, registering 54.5 per cent deficit. As many as 29 districts had recorded highly deficient rainfall last month. However, the second and third weeks of the current month have proved to be the game-changer with at least 300 mm rain recorded by the State during the period July 10-23. The back-to-back low-pressure systems off the Odisha coast saw almost all districts receive over 400 mm rain except Koraput, Ganjam and Bhadrak, which recorded sub-300 mm showers. Jagatsinghpur district received 107 per cent excess rain, the highest during the month. Thanks to the rains, the crop coverage now stands at 15 lakh hectare for paddy and non-paddy crops against the kharif target of 61.5 lakh hectare. Santh Gopalan said

one more spell of rain before August 5 will leave the farm sector in normal condition. “Barring Padampur (Bargarh), Sinapali (Nuapada) and Dasamantpur (Koraput) blocks, there is no major rainfall deficit in other blocks of the State. We are hopeful of another round of showers later this month,” he said. The Met department said model prediction shows formation of another system by July 25 off the coast. This means rainfall activity will resume by July 28 and may continue for two or three days. The predicted system may not be very active, rather it will be stationary for a while, the weather office said.

These keerai farmers use cars, Facebook to sell their produce

When farmers are quite reluctant to encourage their kids to pursue agriculture, who head to cities for new jobs, a group of men have turned farmers, leaving their corporate jobs behind. Yes, you read that right! How many of us would give up high-paying jobs to be the change we want to see? Nallakeerai, a farming initiative, which was started by R Jagannathan, formerly a business manager with a city-based firm, and his friend, in 2011, aims to influence people to switch to organic farming. Inspired by organic farmers in the State, including popular organic farming scientist who passed away last year G Nammalvar, this experimental cultivational venture has made many farmers in the Melappedu village take up organic farming, besides attracting more takers with their door delivery services of the organic produce. Currently, Nallakeerai cultivates 30 varieties of spinach and sells 10 lakh bundles within the city per month. “Organic greens have a huge market. Even in half an acre of land, we can cultivate greens. I was able to produce 45 varieties of greens in one cycle,” says Jagannathan. “The biggest challenge was to create a customer base. That’s where agriculture marketing consultants come in. We use Facebook to promote Nallakeerai and have volunteers who pick them up from certain localities and sell them. About 15 people have invested on their land for their yearly produce,” he says. What started as a team of two in 2011, has now grown into a group of 30 metropolitan farmers ranging from an IIT graduate, management consultant, software architect, and so on. And they their keerai in a koodai just as easily as they do off the backseat of a car! So it didn’t surprise us when we discovered that the Nallakeerai Facebook page — <https://www.facebook.com/NallaKeerai> — has a massive 10,000 followers. Ask Jagannathan why his choice of crop is spinach and he responds, “It requires a very short growth period and gives quicker returns, which eases the transition to organic farming.” He goes on, people who produce food for the country, go to bed hungry and that’s the plight of today’s farmers. The idea struck me when I conducted a survey in my native, near Thirunindravur. I decided to do something about it and started to study the economy of farmers in my village. I found that the 240 farmer households in the village spent about `40 lakh investing in fertilisers and pesticides. If this money was properly channelised within the farm, they would lead more comfortable lives. So what does Nallakeerai do differently? “We help organic farmers by eliminating middle men, and connecting them to a direct consumer base in the city,” explains this farmer-preneur. This is apart from supplying to some of the biggest organic retail stores in the city and also renting out store space within the premises of large companies to sell

the veggie. In order to get youngster interested, Jagannathan conducts weekend workshops on organic farming and eco-friendly lifestyles, assisting a community of Irula farmers to market their produce. "Organic spinach farms are profitable through weekly door-delivery of organic greens to residences and apartment complexes in the city. We want people to emulate our model," says Jagannathan, explaining how he spread cow-dung on his planting beds once and harvested three bundles of spinach from tiny one sq ft area. "Today, if I am doing this with spinach, somebody will come up with organic milk and organic potatoes tomorrow. If the pricing of organic food is feasible, organic farming can make it big," he assures us. Priced at `25 to 30, Nallakeerai's organic greens are available in T Nagar, Virugambakkam, Vadapalani, Anna Nagar, Adyar, Thiruvanmiyur, Ambattur, Velachery, and Kodambakkam, and can be reached on 99626 11767/9840614128.

Mechanised transplanter to boost pokkali farming



Cultivation through the mechanised transplanter is becoming a reality in pokkali paddy fields, owing to the efforts of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU). As trained hands are required Agricultural Research Station (ARS), Mannuthy, and Rice Research Station (RRS), Vyttila are envisaging a Pokkali Green Army on the lines of Food Security Army (FSA) concept to ensure sustenance of mechanised agriculture in pokkali lands. So far, people had doubts whether mechanised agricultural operations would be possible in marshy pokkali fields. KAU Vice-Chancellor Dr P Rajendran said, "mechanisation is a powerful tool to revive pokkali farming. The joint efforts launched in 2013 by RRS and ARS have yielded fruits. A combined harvester for Pokkali fields has also been developed at our Agricultural Engineering College at Tavanur. It is being fine-tuned after on-field trials." The search for a Pokklai rice transplanter ended with the ARS suggesting walk behind mechanical transplanter and its successful operation in 25 cents in the pokkali fields under RRS Vyttila last year. Its head Dr V Sreekumar said, "since crop performance was encouraging, mechanized transplanting was extended to two acres using seedlings raised in pro-trays this year," he said. Dr U Jaikumaran, Head, ARS, Mannuthy said that transplanting operation using walk behind transplanter was completed in two acres within five hours. "There's scope for large-scale mechanized transplanting in pokkali fields. The channels and bunds in pokkali fields will have to be designed so as to facilitate easy movement of machinery." The ARS, which pilots and propagates FSA concept and aims at establishing Agro Service Centres in all districts with state funding, has been promoting mechanization of all farming operations. RRS, Vyttila, has been providing scientific backup for sustaining Pokkali system through exclusive technologies and a series of high-yielding varieties. It played a key role in obtaining GI tag for Pokkali rice and has been providing experimental facility for developing ideal machinery for this unique system. Pokkali is a method of rearing rice and prawns alternately in the

fields spread out in Ernakulam, Thrissur and Alappuzha districts. The over 25,000 hectares of fields have now dwindled to 10,000 hectares. Of this, paddy cultivation is now being restricted to a mere 1,000 hectares because of the labour shortage and non-availability of suitable machinery.

Global Agro Meet to Showcase State's Farm Produce

Global Agro Meet is being organised to showcase the wide agricultural varieties of the state to the world, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy has said. He was speaking after releasing the logo of Global Agro Meet, an international conference and exposition on hi-tech agriculture and food processing organised by the state on November 6 and 7 at Kochi, here on Wednesday. "Kerala has rare varieties of farm produce like Malabar pepper, cardamom, Matta and Njavara rice and Vazhakkulam pineapple. The rest of the world will get an opportunity to know about the different agricultural produce of Kerala and on the state's culture. "It is the beginning of a joint effort which would also help the farmers of the state to know about new farming methods," the Chief Minister said. The agro meet is being planned at the Emerging Kerala investors meet and it was also announced in the Budget. 'Made in Kerala- Safe to Eat', another initiative announced in the Budget, will also be launched at the Meet. The Agro Meet will be held along with the Biofach India-2014 scheduled to be held at the same venue on November 6, 7 and 8. Biofach India is an event which will offer the organic farming industry in the world to invest in Indian organic farming market and to promote the organic farming produce. The website of the Agro Meet was launched by Industries Minister P K Kunhalikutty. Ministers K P Mohanan, K M Mani, P J Joseph, Ramesh Chennithala, V K Ibrahim Kunju and top officials took part.

Vegetable Development Programme Starts



K Muraleedharan MLA inaugurated the distribution of plant seeds to the students of St Mary's Higher Secondary School, Pattom and the paddy cultivation on the school premises as part of a comprehensive vegetable development programme. Department of Agriculture is providing plant seeds to the 12,000 students of the school as part of the programme. Opposition leader in City Corporation Johnson Joseph presided over the function. Agriculture deputy director Prabha V presented a report. A pumpset allocated for the school to do watering was handed over to the school by agriculture assistant director, Kazhakkootam George Alexander. School headmistress Asha Annie George welcomed the gathering and principal Fr Varkey Attapurathu proposed the vote of thanks. Ulloor agriculture officer Balachandran, Fr Nelson and Harithasena coordinator Santhosh were present.

Lack of Storage Facilities Led to Onion Crisis: Min



Members cutting across party lines on Wednesday expressed concern in the Assembly over lack of storage facility leading to distress sale of onion by Western Odisha farmers. Even as onion production in the State is more than double its requirement, the vegetable has remained pricey due to Odisha's dependence on import from other States, mostly Maharashtra. Admitting that the current onion crisis in the State is due to lack of storage facilities, Agriculture Minister Pradip Maharathy told the Assembly that the State's onion production in 2013-14 was about 4.32 lakh tonnes as against its annual consumption of 2.28 lakh tonnes. Replying to a question of BJD member Prafulla Samal, the Minister said Balangir, Kalahandi, Angul, Nuapada, Sambalpur and Sundargarh are the major onion-growing districts and farmers often sell their produce to traders of Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal at low price due to lack of storage facility and market linkage. The Minister further informed the House that onion from the State is exported to Bangladesh. He, however, could not provide details of export, including the foreign exchange earning. Onion, being a highly perishable commodity, needs to be preserved in ideal condition till it fetches better market price. Even though the Government has started supporting a few farmers to create low investment storage facilities of their own, it is inadequate to meet the need of all the farmers, Maharathy said. The Minister said the Government is contemplating to meet the design cost of the cold storage apart from the subsidy provided. The Government is providing 75 per cent subsidy of the total cost in KBK districts and 60 per cent in other districts for construction of cold storages. The Minister sought the assistance of the MLAs for construction of cold storage in different areas under public private- partnership mode. The State has 108 cold storages both in cooperative and private sectors. However, more than 80 cold storages are lying defunct. Leader of BJP Legislature Party Basanta Panda urged the Minister to develop a mechanism for proper coordination between different departments linked with onion production, storage and marketing.

Volume hits year's high at Coonoor tea sale

The rising trend witnessed in offers at the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association in recent weeks continues this week when a volume of 24.10 lakh kg will be offered at Sale No: 30 on Thursday and Friday. This is the highest volume to be offered so far in this calendar. It is as much as 1.51 lakh kg more than last week's offer. Of this, a volume of 16.36 lakh kg belongs to leaf grades and 7.74 lakh kg belongs to dust grades. As much as 22.34 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 1.76 lakh kg to the orthodox variety. The proportion of orthodox teas continues to be low in both leaf and dust grades. In the leaf counter, only 1.19 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 15.17 lakh kg is of CTC. Among the dusts, only 57,000 kg belongs to orthodox while 7.17 lakh kg are CTC. With huge volumes remaining unsold in the recent auctions, as much as 5.50 lakh kg of teas that was unsold in previous weeks is being re-offered this week. Last week, although 82 per cent of the offer was sold off, it could be achieved only by reducing prices by as much as Rs. 8 a kg over the previous week. Consequently, average prices crashed to Rs. 67.04 a kg – the lowest so far in 2014.

Cotton Corp plans ginning unit in Andhra Pradesh



Cotton Corporation of India, which carries out market intervention activities to support cotton growers, plans forward integration by setting up its first ginning and pressing factory with capacity of 60,000 bales at Adoni in Andhra Pradesh. The State-owned company will take 7.17 hectares of land on lease in one of the sick units of the National Textile Corporation in the newly-formed State to set up the ginning unit on a pilot basis. The Corporation is also open to setting up similar units in Telangana, which is among the largest cotton growing regions in the South, if the newly-formed State Government offers land free of cost. BK Mishra, Chairman and Managing Director, Cotton Corporation of India, said a memorandum of understanding has been signed with the National Textile Corporation which is in the process of seeking the approval of the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction for leasing out the requisite land.

“We plan to invest Rs. 10-20 crore and will also consider investment in a warehouse in the cotton growing areas if the State Government supports us,” he said. With cotton prices ruling above the minimum support price for the last few years, the Government is also planning to engage the Corporation, which has over 300 procurement centres, in ensuring the MSP for other commodities, including jute. Besides market intervention activities to ensure MSP in major cotton-growing regions of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, the Corporation is focusing on commercial operations.

Arbitration to recover Rs. 180 cr

In the first 10 months of the cotton year (ending this September), CCI procured 4.5 lakh bales of cotton worth Rs. 900 crore. Of this, only 40,000 bales were bought at MSP, he said. In 2012-13, CCI bought 22.5 lakh bales and sold 20 lakh bales worth Rs. 5,100 crore. Since cotton prices fell below the MSP, CCI procured 20 lakh bales amounting to Rs. 4,500 crore to support farmers. In the cotton year (starting October 2014), CCI intends to procure 10 lakh bales. NTC and cooperative mills have annual procurement contracts with the Corporation and enjoy longer credit periods compared to other commercial deals. CCI has gone in for arbitration against 89 mills to recover Rs. 180 crore. In 2011-12, these mills refused to take delivery after placing orders as cotton prices dropped below the contracted price. “We have already recovered Rs. 25 crore from 43 small mills while the negotiation with larger mills are in process,” Mishra said.

McLeod Russel reports Rs. 32 cr loss on lower tea output, falling global prices

McLeod Russel has reported a net loss of Rs. 32 crore in the first quarter of the current fiscal against a net profit of Rs. 26.21 crore in the corresponding period a year ago. Crop loss in India and lower prices in the global market, particularly due to higher crop in Africa and Vietnam, were the reasons for the loss, the world’s largest tea plantation company said. Dry weather conditions prevailed in the country during April-May, particularly in Assam, the company’s plantation area. Though tea production in the company’s plantations in Uganda and Rwanda were at the same level as last year, prices up to June for African teas were lower by 15 per cent. Prices in India currently are higher by Rs. 20 a kg but lower inventory and production hit the net realisation of the company. According to Aditya Khaitan, MD, McLeod Russel, benefits of higher price would reflect in the financial accounts of the second quarter. “The company has posted operating loss of Rs. 29 crore against operating profit of Rs. 21.72 crore last year. This is mainly attributed to a substantial loss of production by 6.2 million kg during the quarter,” the company said. “Sales are lower by 43 per cent on lower volume by 43 lakh kg. Staff cost has increased by Rs. 8 crore during the quarter on account of revision of wages in tea estates effective from January 1 this year. Consumption of raw material (cost of small growers’ leaf) is lower by Rs. 21 crore due to decrease in volume.”

Spot rubber drops with futures

Spot rubber prices declined on Wednesday. The commodity lost ground tracking the overall weakness on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. Sheet rubber weakened to Rs. 139 (Rs. 140) a kg, as quoted by traders. The grade slid to Rs. 139.50 (Rs. 140) and Rs. 136.50 (Rs. 137), according to the Rubber Board and dealers. August futures dropped to Rs. 139 (Rs. 139.26), September to Rs. 136.19 (Rs. 136.90) and October to Rs. 135.95 (Rs. 136.18) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) closed weak at Rs. 120.06 (Rs. 120.70) at Bangkok. Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg) were: RSS-4: 139(140); RSS-5: 133 (134); Ungraded: 127 (128) ISNR 20: 120 (121.50) and Latex 60%: 105 (105).

Farmer and the cycle



Smart wheels A farmer from Chitur village in Warangal district has come out with his innovation, converting a bicycle to remove weeds on his farm. M Murali

Business Standard

Uttarakhand to impose 2% entry tax on sugar



Uttarakhand is planning to impose a two per cent entry tax on sugar coming from outside the state, especially from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. The move is seen as a step to counter the two per cent entry tax on sugar already imposed by Uttar Pradesh. "We are unable to get fair price of our sugar in Uttar Pradesh due to the two per cent entry tax

already imposed there. Our entry tax will provide a cushion to our own ailing sugar industry," said a senior government official. The state's sugar department officials have already held talks with the finance department on the move. Chief Minister Harish Rawat has also favoured the two per cent entry tax on sugar. The entry tax in the neighbouring state is acting as a bitter pill for the sugar industry in Uttarakhand, where sugar stocks of 3.2 million quintals have been accumulated in one to two months. "During the past few months, sugar stocks have been piling in the godowns of various sugar mills in the hill state. The stock is not getting fair price from the sugar-consuming industry," said a senior official of the Doiwala sugar mill here. The entry tax of two per cent on sugar coming from outside the state would help spur the sale of the local sugar, experts said. According to sugar department sources, the sugar consuming industry in the hill state, like Nestle, is buying sugar from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh which are giving some discount as there is no entry tax in those states.

AP to appoint one extension office for every 1000 farmers

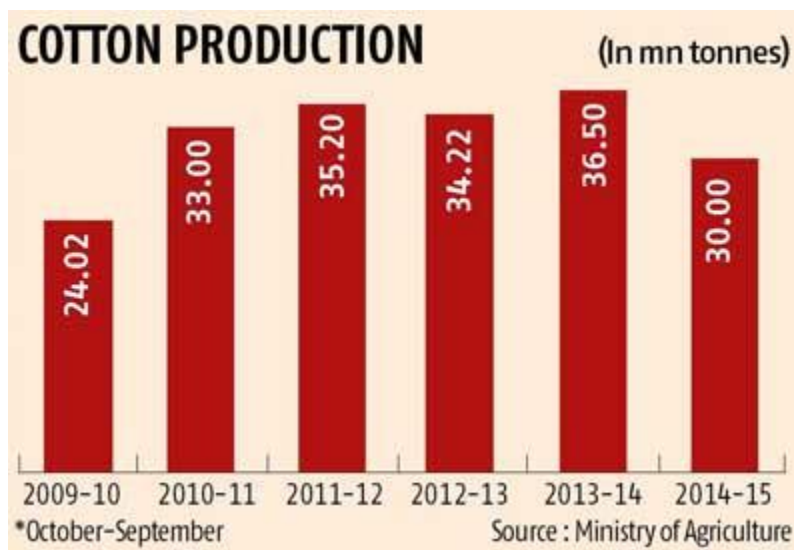
Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday said his government would appoint one agriculture officer for every 1,000 farmers in the state. Releasing a white paper on the status of agriculture sector here on Wednesday, Naidu said the productivity and yields in agriculture fell below the national average due to the negligence of the previous governments. By appointing extension officers, the government would ensure proper advise and monitoring of all crops to make agriculture a profitable venture. The state is estimated to have 7 million farmers. According to the government plan, about 7,000 field-level agriculture officers will be deployed to help them in scientific cultivation.

Cotton output likely to decline by 17%



India's cotton output is likely to hit a five-year low in the ensuing crop year 2014-15 (October-September), due to a steep decline in sowing area on delayed and uneven distribution of monsoon rains because of the El Niño phenomenon. According to sources, the ministry of textiles as well as the ministry of agriculture, have estimated cotton output at 30 million bales (1 bale = 170 kg) for the next crop year based on the area covered under the cash crop as of now. The ministries' cotton output estimate, however, represents a 17 per cent decline from last year's production of 36.5 million bales

estimated by the ministry of agriculture in the third advance estimate released on May 24. The decline assumes significance in the wake of sustained pressure on cotton prices for the past three years. Given that the current lower demand from the domestic textile industry and China, India's largest export destination, are unlikely to rebound in the coming months, lower output will support cotton prices."Both the ministry of agriculture and the ministry of textiles have forecast India's cotton output at 30 million bales in the crop year 2014-15 on the basis of a steep decline in sowing area. These ministries, however, believe cotton supplies will remain comfortable next season," said a senior government official.



With a revival in the monsoon, sowing area under cotton has intensified. Still, the overall sowing area under cotton was 44 per cent lower at 5.6 million hectares (ha) as on July 18, compared with 10 million ha as on the corresponding date last year. Meanwhile, the Cotton Advisory Board under the ministry of textiles has forecast India's output to remain at 39 million bales for 2014-15, marginally higher than the

ministry's estimate of 36.5 million bales in the current year. Sowing of cotton starts ahead of the monsoon rains in the second fortnight of March and ends with the onset of heavy rains by June-end. Sowing of cotton was delayed by over a month this year, due to a delay in the commencement of monsoon rains.

New herbicide sprayer promises to be a boom for farmers



To make agriculture remunerative, Punjab-based Jasvir Singh Gill, a district extension specialist in Ludhiana-based Punjab Agricultural University, has designed a seed drill mounted automatic sprayer, a patented machine for application of pre-emergence and

pre-plant incorporation herbicides in crops. Considering the total crop size of 3.5 million hectares of wheat in the state, the deployment of this patented technology not only helps in increasing the yield of the crop but would also result in saving Rs 140 crore annually in terms of labour cost. Gill developed this automatic spraying attachment, which can be attached to a seed-cum-fertiliser drill, saving labour cost. Traditionally, spraying is done manually after sowing. This adds to the input cost and affects yield. But in this technology, the spray pump has an automatic function as it applies pre-emergence herbicidal spray within 0.75 seconds of sowing of the seeds. The working is such that spray application starts automatically as seeding begins and stops when seeding stops. The spray has an additional usage for application of post-emergence herbicides also. The process is cost effective as compared to manual spraying procedures. Explaining about the product, Gill said, "I have developed this machine (spraying attachment) for application of pre-emergence and pre-plant incorporation herbicides in field & vegetable crops. Pre-emergence herbicides are usually applied at the earliest just after seeding crop and pre-plant incorporation herbicides are those which are applied just before planting and must be incorporated into the upper layer of soil immediately, otherwise due to their volatile nature, dissipate into atmosphere. As per recommendations, the pre-emergence herbicides should be applied within two days after sowing but are more promising when applied immediately after sowing." This machine is specially meant for the application of pre-emergence and pre-plant incorporation herbicides and additionally these machine can apply any type of agro-chemicals in field crops, vegetable crops. Development of this machine is need based as there is one category of agrochemicals that are meant for suppression of weeds (unwanted plants) from crops, these chemicals are popularly known as herbicides and weedicides, Gill said. There is huge scope of its extension in Punjab. For example, if this technology is applied only in wheat crop on an area of 3.5 million hectares, it will save Rs 87.5 crore to Rs 140 crore annually, depending on the wage rate, he said. In addition, it also helps in increasing the yield as weeds are suppressed. Weeds take away nutrients, leaving less for the main crop. Based on the innovativeness, technical soundness, utility, sustainability and socio-economic potential, the Punjab State Innovation Council has awarded Gill Rs 50,000.

Karnataka doubles grape output in 7 yrs



The area under grape cultivation in Karnataka has more than doubled in seven years, to 20,400 hectares in 2013-14 from 9,700 hectares in 2007-08. The production of all kinds of grapes has increased 98 per cent to 331,800 tonnes during the period. The Karnataka Grape Processing and Wine Policy of 2007 played a major role in this development. Karnataka has also seen fourfold growth in cultivation of wine grape during the past six years, from 500 acres to 2,000 acres. During this period, the state has also emerged as the second largest producer of wine grape and wine after Maharashtra. Wine production touched 7.5 million litres in 2013-14, while Maharashtra stands at top position with 20 million litres per annum. The policy facilitated the setting up of a Karnataka Wine Board for the promotion of wine grapes. The awareness among farmers has increased manifold, resulting in cultivation of wine grapes, said G V Krishna Rau, additional chief secretary. Six years of intensive efforts by the state government through the horticulture department and Wine Board, has made it the second largest producer of grapes and wines in the country. It contributes 13.2 per cent of the national grape production. Maharashtra grows grapes on 90,000 hectares, with an annual production of over two million tonnes, according to the National Horticulture Board. Overall, grape is grown in 118,000 hectares in the country, with an annual production of 2.50 million tonnes. "Congenial agro climatic condition in Karnataka helped cultivation of grapes, and farmers are making best use of the situation by growing grapes for several decades. However, marketing of fresh grapes proved to be a major challenge. In this direction, we are organising an international wine festival to spread awareness among consumers, as well as farmers on the importance of growing wine grapes," said B Krishna, managing director, Karnataka Wine Board. In order to provide better marketing linkage to farmers,

GRAPE-GROWING STATES

Figures for 2013-14	Area '000 hectares	Production '000 tonnes
Maharashtra	90	2,050
Karnataka	20	321
Tamil Nadu	3	43
Andhra Pradesh	2	32
Mizoram	2	21
Others	1	17
Total	118	2,483

Source: National Horticulture Board

the Wine Board is facilitating contract farming and providing assistance to growers and wineries, he said. Since setting up the Wine Board, the sale of wine has increased manifold and touched 5.1 million litres in 2013-14 from 1.31 million litres in 2007-08. The turnover

from wine sales has increased from Rs 2.3 crore in 2007-08 to Rs 151 crore in 2013-14. In Karnataka, the grape growing and wine production area is divided into three main zones such as Nandi Valley (seven wineries), Krishna Valley (nine wineries) and Cauvery Valley (one winery). There are 190 wine taverns and 39 wine boutiques in the state. To further promote cultivation of grapes and encourage wine consumption, the Wine Board is organising Bangalore International Wine Festival in Bangalore from July 25-27.

The Telegraph

calcutta, india

Tomato prices take high way



Bhubaneswar, July 23: Tomato, a must have for every kitchen, is going beyond the reach of ordinary consumers with prices soaring to Rs 60-a-kg from Rs 30 a fortnight ago. Traders apprehend further rise in its price because of short supply and high demand. The supply from Karnataka, mainly Bangalore, one of the major growers of the tomato, has come under pressure because most of the states in the country depend on the southern state for their requirement. Traders hope for a drop in its price only after Id. Jasadwini Mohapatra, a homemaker from Soubhagya Nagar, said: "Tomatoes are essential for every kitchen. Hence, the hike in its price has hit us hard." Santosh Kumar Sahu, a vegetable merchant at Unit-I Daily Market said: "When the supply is good, around 10 to 12 truck loads of tomatoes come to Bhubaneswar every day. But now, the number of trucks have come down to four to five." However, he admitted that tomato prices leaping to Rs 60 within a fortnight was something that was happening in the city for the first time this year. "Last year, the price of tomato had reached Rs 60-a-kg only for a short period of a week after the summer. During the rainy season or pre-winter days, tomato price hardly ever touch Rs 60 here," he said. Sources said yesterday the price per

container supposed to carry 25 kgs of tomato at the wholesale *mandi* in Unit-I Daily Market was Rs 1,250. Though the containers are supposed to hold 25kg of tomato, about two to three kilograms of tomato get lost during transportation. “When the vendor purchases a container at this high a price, he naturally sells tomato for Rs 60-a-kg keeping in mind losses that might take place in his shop,” said Sahu. Odisha happens to be the fourth largest producer of tomatoes in the nation with a production of more than seven per cent of the national share. But, due to absence of any production in the state around this time of the year, there is no crop. The state is yet to take up tomato farming under controlled conditions. S.R. Das, horticulture officer at the directorate of horticulture here, said: “Tomatoes cannot be stored in a cold storage for more than 30 days as they are highly perishable. But production in this season can ensure a smooth supply of the vegetable in the market. We have already started educating farmers on using the shed net houses to produce vegetables round the year.” Dillip Kumar Dora, professor of horticulture at Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology, said: “The technology of using shed net houses to produce winter vegetables should be properly explained to farmers so that Odisha can produce tomatoes in the off season as well.”