

THE HINDU

'Farmers deserve a standing ovation'

GARGI PARSAI

Underscoring the capability of Indian farmers to enhance production for domestic as well as global markets, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday asked the scientific community to ensure that research reaches farmers and helps raise their incomes. Addressing the 86th foundation day of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) here, Mr. Modi said Indian farmers deserved a standing ovation for providing for the nation and changing the face of the country. Yet, there was potential for more, not only in crops but in fisheries and animal husbandry, where a global market was available, he added. In his first public event since becoming Prime Minister, Mr. Modi told the farm researchers and scientists upfront that it was not enough to sit in five-star seminar rooms and analyse why something could not be done but to think how it could be done. "Design programmes for the people and bring solutions."

Innovation, the future

Emphasising the need for raising productivity when land is shrinking and population increasing, he said with the traditional knowledge of farmers and scientific intervention, this challenge could be addressed. "There is no other way out. Scientists must come out with innovations that can produce crop in lesser number of days without erosion of quality." Bemoaning the supply-demand gap in pulses and edible oilseeds, Mr. Modi asked scientists to dedicate themselves to the research of suitable varieties so that the country was not dependent on imports. "The poor get their protein from pulses. Take it as a challenge that in a few years there will be no need to bring edible oils and pulses from outside," he said.

Wanted: risk-takers

Recognising that traditional farmers lacked the risk-taking mindset, he asked the ICAR and farm universities to draw a list of young, educated progressive farmers who were willing to take risk and experiment with innovations and new technology. "Each university should draw out young researchers and use the community radio to reach out to farmers. Give them hourly updates on crop, fertilizer, weather and pests. You will be more powerful, credible and popular than the regular media barons," he told farm scientists.

More water flow into Kalingarayan Canal brings relief for tail-end farmers

Along nine miles, PWD has constructed baby canal to carry sewage, effluents



Water flowing down the Kalingarayan Canal in Erode district after completion of second phase of concrete-lining works.— PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

The release of water into the Kalingarayan Canal earlier this month following completion of the second phase of concrete lining works has increased the flow velocity, much to the relief of the farmers in the tail-end area. The canal taking a circuitous path runs to a length of 90 km covering an ayacut area of 15,743 acres. The Public Works Department had completed concrete-lining works under phase-II to a stretch of five km (three miles) at a cost of Rs. 41 crore. In the first phase, concrete lining work was completed along a six-mile stretch at an expenditure of Rs. 50 crore. All along the nine miles, the PWD has constructed a baby canal to carry sewage water and industrial effluents.

Proposal

The canal constructed about 730 years ago by Kongu Chieftain Kalingarayan is poised to undergo further civil works. The PWD has reportedly sent a proposal for concrete lining another stretch of 12 km. Kalingarayan Pasana Sabha president V.M. Velayutham has requested the State Government to sanction Rs. 70 crore for the third phase of concrete lining.

24,800 hectares under kuruvai cultivation

Community nursery on 170 hectare for transplantation

R. Kamaraj, Food Minister, distributed agricultural inputs worth Rs. 13 lakhs to the farmers under the recently introduced Kuruvai special package at a function held here on Monday. The government sanctioned Rs. 32.9 crore for the implementation of the scheme in delta region. About 24,800 hectares would be brought under kuruvai cultivation in Tiruvarur district, he said. Under the special package worth Rs. 9.68 crore, 50 paddy transplanting machines worth Rs. one crore, 50 weeders worth Rs. 15 lakhs, 2,100 units of PVC pipes worth Rs. 4.2 crore, and community nursery on 170 hectare for transplantation

on 17,000 hectares had been sanctioned to Tiruvarur district. Special awareness programme was being conducted to sensitise farmers to the scheme. Potential beneficiaries were also being identified at these programmes. The government has accorded priority for the successful implementation of this programme and has ensured 12-hour uninterrupted power supply to farm connections from June 6. Mayilvaganan, Joint Director of Agriculture, Natesan, Deputy Director of Agriculture and other officials participated in the programme.

Receding inflow into Bhavani Sagar Dam a cause for concern for PWD

Water level at Bhavani Sagar Dam is yet to reach 70 feet mark, and the inflow has started dwindling. Compared to the inflow in the range of 7,000 cusecs a week ago, the force of flow has receded to 2,000 cusecs in the last couple of days. Even as farmers in the Lower Bhavani Project ayacut area anticipate timely water release for cultivation, the Public Works Department (PWD) is concerned over the adequacy of water throughout the cultivation season. Already, water from the Dam is being released for cultivation of several thousands of acres in the ayacuts of Thadapalli-Arakankottai and Kalingarayan canals. Usually, the PWD releases water on August 15. Last year, the water level at the Dam was in excess of 80 feet at the time of release into LBP canal. This year, the farmers are said to have appealed to the PWD for advancing the release to August 1, with a suggestion that turn system could be adopted to sustain the duration of water release. According to C. Nallasamy, president of Lower Bhavani Project Farmers' Association, the yield has been high in the years when the turn system was adopted. There need not be cause for worry since the Bhavani Sagar Dam has a storage of 10 tmc, and the combined storage of hydel reservoirs in The Nilgiris district is 18.3 tmc. In the event of shortage arising during the cultivation season, the PWD could exercise the option to source water from the hydel reservoirs, he said. Water must be released for Zone I of LBP for ten days to salvage the coconut trees that were drying up prior to making available water for Zone II. The Zone II had not received water for two consecutive years, Mr. Nallasamy said.

Sun shines on sunflower crop

GIJI K. RAMAN



In full bloom: A sunflower farm near Cumbom on the Cumbom Mettu-Cumbom road on the border of Idukki district with Tamil Nadu.— Photo: Giji K. Raman

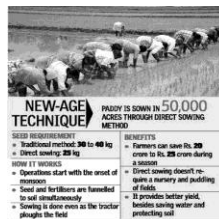
The Kattappana-Cumbom Mettu-Cumbom route is a visual delight now. The flowering season for the kharif crop of sunflower is on, and large sunflower farms welcome travellers to Cumbom in Tamil Nadu which borders Idukki district. The flowers in bloom are also a sign of the shift in farming trend — from that of vegetables to sunflower. Farmers say the time needed for growing sunflowers is less than that for vegetables. However, much care has to be taken in the initial two months. A bright climate with moderate rain is needed for a good harvest, Mahalakshmi, a farmer says. Compared to other crops, daily care is needed in the initial period of growth with complete weed control and timely moderate rain. The summer rain was favourable this time, she says. Duraisami, another farmer, says sunflower is more sensitive to weather conditions than vegetable crops. If the yield is average and the prices steady, it is more profitable. However, if the weather is unfavourable and timely application of fertilizer and weed control are not done, the entire crop can be in peril. There is a trend in favour of sunflower cultivation now, though it has been slowly picking up for the past five years. Even then, only a fraction of the total area that is under vegetable cultivation is used for growing sunflower. This kharif season, a large number of farmers opted for sunflower as it fetched a good price the last season, Mahalakshmi says. Mahalakshmi says once the sunflower seeds are harvested, the land is used for cultivation of beans, potato, or cabbage the next season. The seeds are harvested for making edible sunflower oil and manufacturing soaps and cosmetics. For visitors, from the Ghat road to the plains, it is yellow fields of full-grown sunflowers all round, heralding the kharif season (from June to September).

Medicinal saplings to be distributed to farmers

The Idukki Oushadha Ulpadaka Vipanana Sangham will distribute medicinal saplings to 2,500 farmers by organising Amla Fest at five centres in the district. The fest would be first held at the panchayat hall in Peruvanthanam on July 31 and free saplings would be distributed to farmers, its organisers told media persons at Thodupuzha on Tuesday. The second function will be held at SC community hall, Cheruthoni, on August 1; the third at Deepa High School, Kuzhitholuthu the same day and the fourth at Government Higher Secondary School, Marayoor on August 2. The main function will be held at Government Girls Higher Secondary, Thodupuzha on the concluding day on August 4. Water Resources Minister P.J. Joseph will inaugurate the fest at Thodupuzha. The saplings would be supplied to religious houses and similar institutions, sangham president N. Ravindran said. The project, supported by the Kerala State Medicinal Plants Board, aims to provide two saplings each to 2,500 farmers. The sangham would also create awareness among different sections of the society about the medicinal value of gooseberry, he said.

Farmers turn to direct sowing in Krishna

G.V.R. SUBBA RAO



Direct sowing of paddy through seed-cum-fertiliser drill is gaining acceptance among farmers in Krishna district. Paddy is sown in approximately 50,000 acres through direct sowing this year. Interestingly, the crop is cultivated in 6 lakh acres in the district, and farmers can save Rs. 20 crore to Rs. 25 crore by opting for the method during a season. Kisan Service Organisation (KSO) secretary P.S.R. Das said the organisation had been encouraging farmers to take up direct sowing to bring down the cost of cultivation. A farmer can save Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 5,000 an acre if he adopts the direct sowing method. Unlike the traditional methods, direct sowing does not require a nursery and puddling of fields before sowing. “The operations start with the onset of monsoon. Seed and fertilisers are funnelled to the soil at the same time. Even as the tractor ploughs the field, sowing is done simultaneously,” Mr. Das added. The expenditure involved is far less compared to that of traditional methods,” says Potluri Rajaiah, a farmer from Mukhasa Kalavapalli village in Mandavilli mandal. “We take up weeding and plough the land during summer. Green manure is also used to improve the soil carbon content. “The method neither decreases yield nor the quality of grain. In fact, it provides better yield, besides saving and recharging water and protecting soil,” he said. According to Mr. Das, farmers have sown 1061 variety paddy in Kalidindi, Mudinepalli, Ghantasala and Kaikaluru mandals.

Mettur level crosses 80 feet

A consistent flow into the Stanley Reservoir at Mettur in the past two weeks has pushed the level beyond the 80-foot mark at 8 a.m. Tuesday, against the full reservoir level of 120 feet. PWD officials said that though the inflow dropped from 40,215 cusecs on Monday to 32,898 cusecs Tuesday, it increased over the day. The storage improved from 39.809 tmcft to 42.045 tmcft against the dam's capacity of 93.470 tmcft. The outflow was 6,799 cusecs. The flow on Tuesday evening was 25,000 cusecs at Biligundlu, where the Cauvery enters Tamil Nadu. It started receding steadily from Monday morning, an official of the Department of Revenue said.

hindustantimes

Wed, 30 Jul 2014

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Jul 30

Max Min

36° | 26°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:53

Humidity: 79

Sunset: 06:37

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1004

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Thursday, Jul 31

Max Min

36° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday

Aug 1



35° | 28°

Cloudy

Saturday

Aug 2



36° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday

Aug 3



36° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Monday

Aug 4



35° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday

Aug 5



35° | 28°

Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:40

Humidity: 70

Sunset: 07:15

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1002



THE  NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

Modi for Raising Farmers Income by Taking Lab to Land



Prime Minister Narendra Modi today said the government's policy should be focussed on increasing the farmers' income and asked scientists to take scientific technology to field for raising crop productivity. Expressing concern over high import of cooking oil and pulses, he said scientists should help increase its productivity for reducing the country's import dependence. "We have to prove two points. One is our farmers are capable to feed the whole country and world, and second agriculture is capable of filling the pockets of our farmers," Modi said while addressing the 86th foundation day of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). The Prime Minister was of the view that if enough income is not generated for farmers it could be challenging to achieve the targets in the sector. "Therefore our policies and actions should be focussed on this," he said. He laid emphasis on the need to take scientific technologies to agriculture field to boost farm production and meet growing food demand. The Prime Minister said there is a need to increase crop yield at a faster pace without compromising on the quality. Modi also called for blue revolution similar to green and white revolutions, saying the fisheries sector has great potential in the international trade. He also asked scientists to focus on herbal medicines as is being done in China. The Prime Minister suggested agriculture universities setting up their own radio stations to provide extension services to farmers. He emphasised on the need for water conservation through rain harvesting and other measures in view of changing water and weather cycle. Modi asked ICAR to start planning for celebrating the organisation's 100th foundation day by setting specific targets and exhorted them to achieve more in the next 14 years than what was done in the last 86 years.

Andhra Pradesh Government Caught in the Pincers on Crop Loan Waiver Issue

With the Reserve Bank of India not inclined to give nod for 'rescheduling of crop loans' citing 'good yield', the Andhra Pradesh government is thinking of alternatives to mobilise resources to keep its promise of waiving farmers' bank loans taken for agricultural operations. The financial position of the new state is not good as it is left with a fiscal deficit of more than Rs 15,000 crore after its forced separation from Telangana. The chances of the central government coming to its aid on this matter can be ruled out, going by what Union minister M Venkaiah Naidu had said during his visit to Hyderabad a couple of days ago. Further, the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBM) limits the state's borrowing capacity which would be somewhere around Rs 15,800 crore, while it requires nearly Rs 42,000 crore to fulfil its promise of loan waiver to farmers, weavers and self-help groups (SHGs). Experts say loan repayment capacity of the state is almost non-existent given its financial position and the chances of raising security bonds are also bleak. So what are the options the state will be left with in case the RBI refuses to entertain the plea for rescheduling of crop loans? How will it mobilise money for the purpose?

OPTIONS: According to experts in governmental financial strategies, there are some options available to the government to mobilise the resources to fund the loan waiver scheme, which chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu mentioned, in case RBI does not allow loan rescheduling. One of those options is to sell away the red sanders wood seized by the forest department over the years from smugglers. Huge stocks of the sandalwood logs, about 11,000 tonnes, have got piled up at various stock yards of forest department in the state. The revenue from their sale in a global auction can fetch an income of Rs 1,500 crore to Rs 1,600 crore. The preliminary process of getting permission for the sale and calling for global tenders has already been initiated and is in progress. Another option is securitising the annual surplus income generated from state-run corporations like Beverages Corporation for about 10 years and get advances from banks. "Supposing the surplus income from such corporations is to be around Rs 8,000 crore per annum, it will come to Rs 80,000 crore for 10 years. A 70 to 80 percent of that amount could be taken as advance from banks. The amount can be repaid along with interest in instalments." a banking expert said. The government is also expecting substantial revenues from taxes, more so from the companies and corporations engaged in liquor, fuel and transport. But the revenues so earned cannot be expected to be channellised for financing the loan waiver and other populist schemes, as other needs of the state too should be taken care of apart from building the state capital as one can not expect the central government to bear the entire cost.

REIMBURSEMENT: On the other hand, experts say that the government can ask the farmers to cooperate and offer ‘farm loan reimbursement’ in place of ‘farm loan waiver’. “Given the precarious financial position and its determination to implement the loan waiver scheme, the government can ask farmers to repay the loans and reimburse the farmers the same amount over a period of time,” an expert suggested. Meanwhile, government sources claim that doors on RBI rescheduling the crop loans are not closed yet. The central bank has sought certain information pertaining to farmers, which the government will be providing. Discussions are still going on, it is said.

Fruit, Flower Plantations for Biodiversity

The Vizag Development Council (VDC) has proposed a unique project to face the challenges from eco-disorders in and around the city. Since industrialisation is expected to be promoted, in a swift move, the VDC has requested Lok Sabha member K Haribabu to take up a green project to increase biodiversity, oxygenation, protect environment, ensure a green cover and make Visakhapatnam a landmark for high potential tourism. Against this backdrop, Haribabu visited the IT Park at Rushikonda and interacted with IT professionals Tuesday. VDC vice-chairman O Naresh Kumar explained to him about the pollution threat to the city and expressed his worry about the deteriorating biodiversity in and around the city. He also asked the MP to select hillocks where one lakh fruit and flower saplings could be planted. The VDC proposed the plantation of a variety of fruit saplings to feed birds and small animals throughout the year. The varieties include gooseberry (big and small), chikku, black berry, custard apple, bullock’s heart, guava, orange, jujube, small mango and cashew. The VDC also proposed planting trees with beautiful flowers like cassia fistula, gulmohar, butea monosperma, lagerstroemia and saraca indica to present a spectacular view for tourists. The VDC members requested the MP to ask the collector to allot 100 MGNREGS workers to take up the plantation, with a minimum maintenance of one year. They also asked him to release MPLAd funds and ask the industries to support the VDC in this regard. The VDC assured the MP that they would donate 25,000 fruit-bearing trees for environment enrichment in the project.

Poultry Farmers in a Fix, Unable to Hike Egg Prices Despite Rise in Feed Rates

Poultry farmers in both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are incurring losses due to increased prices of poultry feed. To top it, they cannot increase the prices of eggs as neighbouring states would readily supply the product at a reduced cost, general manager of the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) Vispi R Batliwala said. Last week, the NECC had appealed to the government to grant a moratorium on payment of interest and loans for a period of one year to provide relief from the crisis. Vispi said around 70 per cent of poultry farmers’ investment is allotted for purchasing feed and if subsidies are

provided on maize and soya, the losses can be recovered. India produces 23.6 million metric tonnes (MMT) and 13.6 MMT is used by the poultry industry. “As much as 3.6 MMT of maize is produced in AP and Telangana and the consumption by poultry in the two states stands at 3.5 MMT,” business manager of NECC Sanjeev Chintawar said and added that the poultry consumption of soya in the two states is 1.5 MMT which is on par with the production. Speaking about the crux of the problem, Sanjeev said though the states are self sufficient, the problem arises as traders are hoarding the produce to increase prices. “Prices will go higher if they opt to import maize from Karnataka or Maharashtra,” he added. Sanjeev felt that the farmers incurred a production cost of Rs 3.5 per egg and the selling prices have been lower than that. “In March, the farmers got Rs 3.04 per egg. Rs 2.44 in April and Rs 2.91 in May. In July, they got Rs 3.14 but now the rate has fallen to Rs 2.64,” the NECC official said.

Jasmine Price Burns Hole in Buyers' pocket



With the festive season approaching fast, the prices of flowers have started sky-rocketing and are set to burn a hole in the common man's pocket. For instance, Jasmine and other flowers got dearer by at least 300 per cent within a span of 24 hours and sellers attribute the rise to fall in production owing to scanty rains. Retailers, taking into account the series of festivals lined up, said that the price would continue its northward journey for sometime to come. Jasmine, which was being sold for Rs40, Rs50 and Rs60 per kg on Sunday depending on quality at Mattuthavani flower market, went for Rs140, Rs150 and Rs160 per kg on Monday. Pichi, which fetched Rs100 per kg, doubled on Sunday, while Mullai, a variety of Jasmine, touched Rs200 per kg. Rose too was not left untouched by the spike and the price rose from Rs50 to Rs100 per kg within 24 hours. Explaining the reasons behind the sudden escalation, S Ramachandran, president of Mattuthavani flower market, said, “The dry spell with scanty rainfall affected production. This coupled with the increased demand in view of the festival season has led to the price spike.” Increase in

demand for seasonal varieties in view of Ramzan and Aadi Puram festivals too contributed to the rise, he said, adding that the trend would continue for a few days. “There is limited growth during the moon waning period. However, the production would get a boost when the moon enters waxing phase,” he said.

Tomato Prices to go Down



The prices of Tomatoes, which increased by around 300 per cent in wholesale markets and 400 per cent in retail markets, is set to come down to below Rs 10 within the next two weeks. According to K R Vijay Kumar, estate officer, Mehdipatnam Rythu Bazaar, it has already started its southward journey. As on Tuesday, the price of Tomatoes stood at Rs 45 per kg at the Rythu Bazaar and in retail market it was sold at Rs 50. The trend is the same in case of other vegetables and leafy vegetable prices sold at Rythu Bazaars. One kg of Brinjal is sold at Rs 11 against Rs 24 two weeks ago and Ladies Finger which was priced Rs 30 was sold at Rs 23 on Tuesday. In the retail markets, tomato prices have started to rise from Rs 16 per kg from the month of June and by the fourth week of July, the prices touched Rs 80 in retail market, while it was sold at Rs 60 in Rythu Bazaar. “The prices rose from Rs 16 per kg and increased by Rs 10-20 gradually every few days”, said G Vijaya, a retailer from Ramnagar. The situation was the same in Delhi and Mumbai, where prices increased by substantial margins. “The main reason for the price rise shortage in supply of tomatoes because of less water supply to fields. Now that the supply is increasing, price is more and the prices are coming down”, said K R Vijay Kumar, estate officer, Mehdipatnam Rythu Bazaar. He added that if farmers instead of depending on traditional farming methods, begin using techniques like drip irrigation, they would be able to grow more tomatoes. According to the statistics available at Rythu Bazaar, the volume of tomatoes arriving at Mehdipatnam’s bazaar has gone down significantly in the last two months. In the month of March, 4307 quintals of Tomatoes arrived at the Bazaar, 3126 quintals in April and it reduced to 1407 quintals in June and 1313 quintals in July. Regarding the consumption, Vijay Kumar said that around 1500 to

2,000 quintals of tomatoes are consumed per day in Hyderabad. He said that, according to estimates, the prices of Onions were also supposed to rise to Rs 30/kg in the month of June because of the government's Market Intervention Programme, intended to control prices of onions, it is sold at `24 per kg and during specific timings everyday it is sold at Rs 21/kg.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

PM urges farm scientists to focus on soil fertility



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday called upon agricultural scientists to focus on soil fertility since demand for food was increasing and the land available would not increase. Addressing the agricultural scientific community on the 86th Foundation Day of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) here, Modi also called upon scientists to work for achieving self-sufficiency in edible oils, improving protein content and availability of pulses. Modi said that scientists should work towards a two-fold objective – of enabling the Indian farmer to feed India and the world, as well as earn a good income, an Agriculture Ministry release said. Giving away 10 awards for excellence in agricultural research, the Prime Minister said farming in India was hereditary, and practices were difficult to change, adding that change would happen only when the farmer was convinced about its efficacy. “Therefore, agricultural scientists must – in accordance with changing circumstances of climate, water and soil – help the farmer get convinced about their initiatives,” he said. Commenting on the changing weather cycle and its impact on farming, the Prime Minister also urged scientists to work towards managing the water-cycle so that more crops can be grown per drop (of water).

Blue revolution

Animal husbandry, the lifeline of agriculture in India, also required special attention from researchers, especially to raise the level of milk productivity. He also called for a 'blue revolution' to extend the benefits of scientific research to the fisheries sector. Calling for a digitised database of all agricultural research in the country, Modi said young, educated and progressive farmers and agricultural research scholars could together form a talent pool in all districts. To meet the challenge of "lab to land", he also exhorted agricultural colleges to start radio stations for farmers.

Can we control milk inflation?

India is the world's No. 1 milk producer with 120 million tonnes (mt) output in 2012 – 66 mt from buffaloes and 54 mt from cows. Yet, our consumers are being forced to pay high price for milk. Is there a way to control inflation in this essential commodity while taking care of our dairy farmers – who have, no doubt, benefited from price increases in recent times? The answer is: yes, it can be done by simply increasing the milk productivity of our animals. You don't need any foreign guru to tell this. But just to give an idea, India's milk cow population of 50.1 million is almost 36 per cent of the world's total of 140.3 million. However, its cow milk production of 60.1 mt for 2014 would be just over 12.5 per cent of the world's 479.5 mt (source: USDA, 'Dairy: World Markets and Trade', July).

Future cows

The problem isn't with our animals: Well over a quarter of India's milch cows are cross-breeds; they produce more than half of our total milk from cows. The problem really lies in educating our farmers on better feeding practices. They tend to over-feed the animal that is in milk, while ignoring the calf. In not feeding it properly, the calf that should have come to puberty and be ready for insemination in 13 months takes 18 months for the same. This point is important because at the end of the day, not only does the farmer spend more on the calf by feeding it for an additional five months, but also the resultant cow is an animal with much reduced milking potential. To borrow an analogy from cricket, we Indians mainly produce medium-pacers because our kids aren't given nutritious and balanced food right from childhood, necessary to build both stamina and strength for the future. Ultimately, only a healthy calf can make a great cow!

Balanced ration

The crude protein (CP) requirement of an adult cow is about 750 grams/day only for maintenance of body weight and general mobility. A milking cow requires an additional 100 grams/day for every litre of milk. So, if a cow is to give 10 litres a day, its total CP requirement is 1,750 grams – 1,000 grams for milk and 750 grams for body maintenance-cum-mobility. The challenge is to deliver the above CP requirements in the most economical way. Right now, we seem to emphasise too much on giving concentrated cattle feeds (CCF), while not leveraging India's tropical country advantage that enables it to grow green fodder round the year. Today, we have very good hybrid fodder grasses such as Co-4 developed by Tamil Nadu Agricultural University yielding up to 140 tonnes an acre annually. With 20 per cent dry matter (DM) and CP content at 10.7 per cent of that, this translates to 3 tonnes of CP per acre. By contrast, annual fodder yields in temperate countries such as New Zealand are only about 40 tonnes an acre due to extended winters there. Even after factoring in higher protein content – 16-17 per cent of DM – the overall CP yield comes to only 1.3-1.4 tonnes an acre.

Milking fodder

This green fodder advantage we can and should leverage. At Hatsun, we have shown that an animal's entire 750-gram daily CP requirement for body maintenance-cum-mobility can be met by just feeding 35 kg of Co-4. It means CCF needs to be given only for production of milk. The cost savings from this are huge. For a farmer, cultivating fodder in-house costs only 15-20 paise a kg, whereas he has to pay Rs. 18-20/kg for buying CCF. True, CCF has 20 per cent CP, against 2.1 per cent for Co-4 fodder. But even in terms of CP, CCF is nearly 13 times expensive than green fodder. By making our farmers realise the importance of balanced nutrition for their calves (so that they become good future milkers) and encouraging them to cultivate good-quality green fodders such as Co-4 and Desmanthus in-house (not to replace, but reduce reliance on expensive CCF), we will see both milk yields and feeding costs come down. By producing more milk at less cost, both the farmer and the consumer stand to gain. Through this, we can increase India's milk production to 200 mt probably without adding a single animal and also make milk an affordable source of nutrition for our masses. But this 'win-win' solution requires common sense and hard work, for which the industry (both cooperative and private dairies), agricultural universities, animal husbandry departments and the National Dairy Development Board need to come together. The focus should be on educating the farmer to improve feeding and on-farm fodder cultivation practices. Verghese Kurien showed us 50 years ago how milk shortages can be dealt with through common sense and by

working with farmers. That same approach can be useful today in addressing milk inflation.

Rubber rules flat in holiday trade

Spot rubber showed a mixed trend on Tuesday. The market was almost in a holiday mood and the domestic futures also remained closed on the NMCE owing to Eid-ul-Fitr. The volumes were low. Sheet rubber was quoted steady at Rs. 137 a kg by traders and the Rubber Board. The grade closed unchanged at Rs. 134, according to dealers. RSS 3 (spot) firmed up to Rs. 120.54 (Rs. 119.33) at Bangkok. August futures closed at ¥199.5 (Rs. 117.67) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber rates (Rs./kg): RSS-4: 37 (137); RSS-5: 132 (132.50); Ungraded: 127 (127); ISNR 20: 117 (118) and Latex 60%: 105 (105).

Business Standard

Genetically modified crops' field trials put on hold



In a move that marks the first successful policy intervention of Swadeshi Jagaran Manch and Bharatiya Kisan Sangh — both affiliates of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) — the Narendra Modi-led central government has put field trials of genetically-modified (GM) crops on hold. Representatives of the two RSS-backed outfits on Tuesday met Environment, Forests & Climate Change Minister Prakash Javadekar and apprised him of their concerns over an approval given to field trials of GM crops. “The minister assured the members of Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM) and Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) that the decision (on field trials) had been put on hold,” Ashwani Mahajan, all-India co-convener for SJM, said in a press statement. Sources in the ministry said Javadekar put on hold the clearance given to GM crops’ field trials by the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC). They also said the decision was now likely to be put on the back burner. At a meeting on July 17, its first after the Modi government took charge at the

Centre, GEAC had approved field trials of 13 GM crops, including those of mustard, cotton, brinjal, rice and chickpea.

At that time, SJM had termed the decision “a betrayal of people’s trust”. GEAC, comprising senior environment ministry and other government officials, besides experts, is the statutory body for recommending approval to any release of genetically-engineered products into the environment. Field trials by companies and researchers in open farms across the country to test their products also fall under its ambit.

The agenda for GEAC meet, like in the case of other statutory bodies, is set after informal consultations at the ministerial level.

Its recommendations require approval from the environment, forests & climate change minister. Today, the joint SJM-BKS delegation reminded the minister that Parliament’s standing committee on agriculture had recommended in its report on GM food crops, tabled in Parliament on August 9 last year, “stopping all field trials under any garb” until regulations and oversight were overhauled and made better. The delegation pointed out that the technical expert committee, appointed by the Supreme Court and comprising eminent scientists, had also advised against any open release of GM crops, including through field trials, until a robust regulatory mechanism was put in place. The outfits’ representatives requested the minister that no field trials of GM crops be allowed without proper scientific evaluation of their possible long-term impact on human health and soil, as the decision to introduce a ‘foreign gene’ in the environment was irreversible.

They argued there was no scientific study to prove the GM technology increased productivity and told Javadekar GM crops posed a challenge to the issue of India’s food security.

“In India, as in many other parts of the world, a few multinational corporations (principally Monsanto) have a virtual monopoly on the GM technology. If a country’s food production becomes overly dependent on seeds and other inputs from a handful of such companies, will it not compromise its food security,” Mahajan asked. SJM, Mahajan said, urged the minister not to rely on “biased and manipulated reports of vested interests among industry”.

It advised him to institute independent enquiries on the likely impact of GM food crops on soil, human health and health of other species, to ensure no harm was done to the traditional gene pool/biodiversity of the soil, food security and health of the people of India. The Bharatiya Janata Party’s manifesto for this year’s Lok Sabha elections had said: “GM foods will not be allowed without full scientific evaluation of their long-term

impact on soil and production, and biological impact on consumers.” SJM, which is the RSS’s economic policy arm, has consistently and publicly opposed the introduction of GM food crops in the country. In the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime, the government had remained divided on the issue.

As environment minister, Jairam Ramesh had put a moratorium on one BT brinjal experiment, sparking a debate, while his successor, Jayanthi Natarajan, had strongly opposed all food crop trials and held back clearances given by GEAC, citing an ongoing Supreme Court case. Manmohan Singh, the then prime minister, and Sharad Pawar, agriculture minister in his government, had advocated for GM crops, pushing for this to be put as the government’s official stance before the Supreme Court. M Veerappa Moily, who took over from Natarajan at the environment ministry, gave his go-ahead to about two dozen field trials of food crops, claiming his predecessor had misread the facts of the Supreme Court case. According to the ministry’s internal notes, more than 100 crop varieties, including those of cereals, fruit and vegetables, are in various stages of development and testing. The Biotechnology Regulatory Authority Bill, moved by UPA to hand over control and oversight of the GM technology to the promoting department of biotechnology, lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha. SJM had largely welcomed the Modi government’s railway and finance budgets tabled in Parliament earlier this month.

Kharif sowing completed in 66% area in Chhattisgarh

The July spell of rainfall in Chhattisgarh has resulted in picking up kharif sowing as more than half the area targeted for the season had been covered. According to agriculture department officials, sowing work has been completed in about 66 per cent of the acreage targeted for the kharif season 2014. The state government had set a target to take kharif crops in 4.8 million hectare this year. Of which, paddy would be sowed in 3.6 million hectare. "The sowing work has been completed in 3.1 million hectare that comes to be around 66 per cent of the target set for kharif crops to be sowed this year," the officials said. The paddy sowing had been completed in 2.5 million hectare area, they added.

ITC net rises 16% on farm biz revenue, but short of expectations

ITC on Monday reported a 15.6% year-on-year jump in the June quarter net profit to R2,186.39 crore, a shade below expectations. The company, however, felt it has been able to maintain “robust growth” despite a challenging business environment. The company’s profit before tax increased 18.2% y-o-y to R3,265.67 crore while the total income from operations jumped 24.9% y-o-y to R9,164.42 crore.

The company attributed the increase in net profit to the growth in agri-business revenue driven by trading opportunities in wheat, soya and coffee. Higher capacity utilisation in paperboards, paper and packaging segment following recent investments also contributed to the growth. ITC’s non-cigarette FMCG segment registered a 10.9% revenue growth despite deceleration in the industry growth rate. Paperboards, paper and packaging segment’s revenue increased 10.8%. Tax expenses during the quarter increased to R1,079.28 crore from R870 crore in the corresponding period last fiscal. Earnings per share went up to R2.75 in the quarter from R2.39 in the quarter a year ago.

Although the company’s flagship cigarette business has been operating under a restrictive environment with share of legal cigarettes witnessing a de-growth in the country’s total tobacco consumption, the cigarette segment’s net revenue during the quarter increased 18.7% y-o-y to R4,201.06 crore on the back of price hikes, which gave a cushion to the significant tax increase in the last Budget.

According to the company’s statement, ITC’s unwavering focus on providing world-class products enabled it to sustain its leadership position in the industry. Several initiatives were launched in the quarter across the portfolio in terms of pack modernisation and introduction of new variants to consolidate market standing. However, revenues in the hotel segment remained muted in the quarter coupled with R14.3 crore worth of additional depreciation charge in the useful life of fixed assets in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act 2013. During the quarter, the company commissioned ‘My Fortune Bengaluru’, a 115-room flagship property under the Fortune banner in the ‘upscale’ segment and made significant progress in the construction of ITC Grand Bharat — a super luxury golf and spa resort — at the Classic Golf Resort, Manesar. The project is nearing completion with the hotel expected to start operations shortly. Construction activity at the luxury hotel projects in Kolkata and Hyderabad are on track, the company statement said.

Cane farmers in delta regions yet to get their dues

Despite the government doling out interest-free loans of up to Rs 4,400 crore to the sugar industry to pay the farmers their arrears, farmers in Thanjavur are yet to be paid their dues to the tune of over Rs 70 crore by owners of the private sugar mills.

At least 10,000 farmers in Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Kumbakonam are involved in sugarcane farming and supply their produce to three sugar mills that are located in the delta districts. The farmers here for long have been complaining of arrears from two private sugar mills that have been demarcated by the state government. Swamimalai Vimalanathan, secretary of the Thanjavur district Cauvery Farmers Protection Association said that it has been more than a month since the issue broke out, but, a solution has so far not been arrived at.

According to the delta farmers, the government has been giving enough subsidy but, nothing reaches them. In a recent announcement in the state Assembly, agricultural minister S S Krishnamoorthy said that private sugar mills alone have a debt of Rs 527 crore, which will be paid in a span of 14 days.

However, the farmers charge that the 14 days is an old formula as a number of deadlines have passed. In all the state has 42 sugar mills in which 24 are private and 18 are co-operative-cum-state run mills. The issue was also raised a month ago in the Trichy region and was sorted out by the collector after the necessary arrears were paid to them. However, the delta districts seem to be the worst-affected. According to the farmers association in Perambalur, the dues were paid to them by the only private sugar mill company in the district though there was a delay. Initially, the district collector of Thanjavur N Subbaiyan had assured the farmers that all the dues will be collected through the Revenue Recovery Act.

However, as no action has been taken, they are planning an agitation. The farmers are now planning to send representations to the state government to recover the dues.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Kharif output may fall 7% on weak monsoon



Weak monsoon may reduce the kharif output by 7% or more, which the government can easily manage as it has huge stocks of food, but rural distress is rising in some regions such as Telangana, where many indebted farmers have committed suicide. Officials say crop sowing, which was completed only on 53.32 million hectares against 70.2 million last year, can still pick up as there is a 10-day window to plant oilseeds, pulses, coarse cereals and paddy in the country. The government had earlier anticipated kharif output to rise to 129.37 million tonnes, slightly more than last year's 128.07 million tonnes, but experts said the target looks difficult to achieve, when the rainfall deficit is 24% since the start of the monsoon season.

Planting of coarse cereals, oilseeds-soyabean and groundnut and cotton has been very slow across Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh till last week. "A 24% deficit rain and drop in planting by 24% over the previous year make a huge difference.

It can hit production from 8% to 20% as we have seen in years where there is drought or poor rains," said Y K Alagh, agriculture economist and former planning commission member. The yield goes down if water is not available at the right time, which is the case mostly as large area is rainfed in the country said Alagh. Total rainfall since the start of the season is 24% below normal.

Rainfall is weakest in north and northwest India. Rainfall in this region so far is 34% below normal. On Tuesday, monsoon rainfall was 19% above average with heavy rains recorded over Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Konkan and Goa, Maharashtra, coastal Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Officials in the agriculture ministry said even if the monsoon deficit recovered from 24% to 10-12%, there was a likelihood of drop in planting by 15%. "It will be early to say but there could be a fall of 6-7% in production," said the official. Experts said 2014 rainfall is similar to 2009, when India suffered the worst drought in 37 years.

"The governments at both state and Centre levels are not realising that there is hardly few days left for sowing and they should take immediate measures. It seems a production loss from 10-20% in the kharif season is not huge for government for whom food means wheat and rice," said G V Ramanjaneyulu, agriculture scientist working with Centre for Sustainable Agriculture in Hyderabad.

He said since June, local media has reported that 100 farmers had committed suicide in Telangana alone where farmers have gone for replanting of cotton and red gram. "Farmers are taking crop loans from private players at rates as high as 60% at a time when you home loan is 9-12%. Where are the measures of free seeds, diesel subsidy etc," he said.

PM Narendra Modi's mantra for raising farmers' income: Take lab technology to land



Pitching for greater use of research for boosting the agriculture sector, PM Narendra Modi on Tuesday gave the slogan 'Lab-to-Land', saying that farmers should be able to enhance production to increase their income and feed the country as well as the world.

He pressed for the use of scientific technologies to help raise the agricultural production in "less land, less time" as he expressed concern over the depleting natural resources and the challenge of climate change.

Modi also called for 'Blue Revolution' in fisheries sector on the lines of Green and White Revolutions. "We have to prove two points. One is how we can make farmers capable of feeding the whole country and the world. Second is how we can make agriculture capable to fill the pocket of our farmers," Modi said at 86th Foundation Day of Indian Council Agriculture Research (ICAR). He asked the scientific community to plan for the

centenary celebrations of ICAR and achieve more in the next 14 years than what they have over the last 86 years of the existence of ICAR.

Field trials of 13 genetically modified crops put on hold: Prakash Javadekar

Environment minister Prakash Javadekar has said that the government has decided to keep in abeyance the decision by the statutory committee of genetic engineering to allow field trials of 13 genetically modified or GM crops, a clarification that marks a departure from the previous Congress led UPA government's policy. Javadekar gave this assurance to representatives of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch and Bharat Kisan Sangh at a meeting held on Tuesday.

Both organisations are affiliates of the ruling BJP's ideological mentor Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The decision is in line with the BJP's poll promise of not allowing genetically modified foods without full scientific evaluation of its long-term effects on soil, production and biological impact on consumers. In a meeting on July 18, the statutory panel Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee had recommended that field trials be allowed for 13 GM crops including rice, brinjal, chickpea, mustard and cotton. However, the environment minister said soon after on Twitter, "Field trials of GM crops are not a government decision. It is a recommendation of a committee.

" The panel's decisions are recommendatory in nature and the final decision lies with the environment ministry. Javadekar's position is also in sync with that of the science and technology minister Jitendra Singh who had earlier stressed that decisions would be taken on a scientific basis.

"For reasons not convincing, we have tried to rule out scientific reasoning in this issue. We will try to serve science with a scientific approach and we will take decisions with a scientific temper," Singh had said on assuming office.

Besides the party's poll promise, the delegation from the Swadeshi Jagran Manch and Bharat Kisan Sangh drew attention to the 59th report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture, tabled in the 15th Lok Sabha, which recommended "stopping of all field trials under any garb".

The issue of GM crops is pending before the Supreme Court, which is hearing a 2005 public interest litigation by groups of non-governmental organisations led by activist Aruna Rodrigues calling for the government to place a moratorium on biotech crops until new regulations for plant biotechnology are established.

The delegation from the RSS backed outfits also drew attention to the recommendations of the SC-appointed technical expert committee comprising eminent scientists in the field of biotechnology and agriculture.

Five of the six experts involved in the report had suggested a moratorium on field trials in the absence of a strong regulatory mechanism in India and strongly opposed any open release of GM crops until a robust regulatory mechanism is put in place.