

Kisan TV: ideas sought on Twitter

ANITA JOSHUA

Taking a cue from Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar's decision to "crowd-source" government advertisements, Prasar Bharati Chief Executive Officer Jawahar Sircar on Wednesday took to the social media to seek ideas on the contours and content of Kisan TV proposed in the Budget. This was following a need felt for a "reach out" strategy to de-bureaucratise schemes for the Doordarshan's channel. The Union Finance Minister had set aside Rs. 100 crore for the channel. Mooted by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, Kisan TV will be dedicated to the interests of agriculture and allied sectors. The idea is to disseminate real-time information to farmers on varied issues, including new farming techniques, conservation and organic farming. One of the first decisions that Mr. Javadekar took soon after taking charge was to open up government advertising — usually billed as listless — for crowd-sourcing with the promise that selected ideas would be rewarded.

New paddy procurement policy will not affect T.N. : Jayalalithaa

B. KOLAPPAN

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa on Wednesday cleared apprehensions over the Centre's decentralised procurement policy, saying it would not affect the farmers in Tamil Nadu as the procurement for the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) in the State is far less than what the Centre has allocated. Replying to a special mention in the Assembly, she said the circular sent by the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Distribution on June 12, had made it clear that subsidy would be given only to foodgrains meant for TPDS and other welfare schemes. She said as per the scheme, decentralised procurement of foodgrains, the State governments could procure, store and distribute foodgrains under TPDS and other welfare schemes. In the event of the total quantity of wheat and rice thus procured falling short of the total allocation made by the Centre for meeting the requirement of TPDS and other schemes, the Centre, through the Food Corporation of India (FCI), meets the deficit out of the Central pool stocks. Ms. Jayalalithaa said the current rice allocation for Tamil Nadu was 35.58 lakh tonnes and 52.32 lakh tonnes in the case of paddy. "We have so far procured only 23.81 lakh tonne rice in Tamil Nadu. It is equal to 16.19 lakh tonne paddy. As we are procuring less than

what the Centre has allocated, the Centre's announcement will not affect Tamil Nadu," she said.

Crop insurance: extension of deadline sought

Thousands of farmers in the district stand to lose on account of crop insurance as the government continues to delay announcement of guidelines to waive farm loans. The last date for payment of premium for crop insurance is July 31. Banks have not issued crop loans so far and farmers are worried thinking whether they will be able to pay the premium from their own pockets. It is learnt that a good number of farmers who can afford to remit the premium amount will do so on Thursday. "Many farmers are willing to pay the premium as the rainfall parameter for declaration of crop failure will be considered for the period from July 6 to July 31. The insurance companies take rainfall statistics in phases and the July phase is the first one," explained Telangana Rashtra Samithi farmer leader B. Goverdhan Reddy. In this backdrop, it is learnt that the district administration has sought extension of deadline for payment of crop insurance premium to August 31. It awaits reply from the government which can come as early as Thursday, according to sources.

Co-op seed development societies in the offing

The district administration has decided to promote seed development in a cooperative model in West Godavari district. Collector Katamneni Bhaskar on Wednesday said the move was intended to help the paddy growers achieve self-reliance in seed production and thereby overcome seed shortage. It is proposed to float four cooperatives with active participation of stakeholders for seed development in 15,000 acres on a pilot basis. The Agricultural Research Station at Maruteru will supply foundation seed to the cooperatives for multiplication. In line with the decision, the administration will facilitate setting up seed development cooperative societies each at Jeelakaragudem, Buttayagudem, Yeletipadu in Penugonda mandal and Pentapadu shortly.

A.P. seeks 2.5 lakh tonnes of fertilizer

M.L.MELLY MAITREYI

The AP government will write to the Centre for allocation of 2.5 lakh tonnes of fertilizers that should have come to the State by July-end. As against allotment of 3.76 lakh metric tonnes of fertilizers by June-end, there was a shortfall of 1.17 lakh tonnes, said Agriculture Minister P. Pulla Rao here on Wednesday. He would also meet the Union Agriculture Minister next week at Delhi and make a personal representation. Addressing to the media, Mr. Pulla Rao said Rs.250 crore was allotted to AP for construction of

godowns .Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu agreed to consider suggestion to constitute crop-wise committees to guide farmers. Measures would be taken to facilitate transactions in market yards across the year and farmers could stock their produce for six months.

Kanjarai leaf spot management in banana

M.THERADIMANI & A.VIJAYSAMUNDEESWARI

The disease is caused by a fungus *mycosphaella musicola*. Occurrence of the disease is severe in Tiruchi, Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari, Tuticorin, Erode, Coimbatore, Theni and Dindigul districts of Tamil Nadu. The varieties susceptible to this disease are robusta, gros michale, sandana valai, nali poovan, rsthali, karpooravali, monthan and grand naine. The infestation initiates as narrow spindle shaped light yellow or brown coloured streaks on the leaf lamina parallel to the veins.

Yellow halo

The streaks enlarge into linear, oblong brown to black spots. The central portion becomes necrotic and greyish surrounded by a dark brown band which in turn is surrounded by a yellow halo. Several such spots coalesce to cause drying of entire leaves. This leads to the reduction of photosynthetic area which eventually reduces the yield.

Weather

Humid weather and rainfall favour the spread of the disease. The conidia of the fungus are carried by wind and rain water aiding to the spread of the disease. Fields without proper drainage are severely affected. The weed hosts help in the perpetuation and spread of the disease. Closer spacing, heavy weed or grasscover, frequent irrigation and failure to remove suckers increase the relative humidity in the plantation, favouring rapid buildup of the disease. Affected leaves should be removed immediately and destroyed. This helps in reducing the population of the fungus.

Spraying

Depending on the severity of the disease three to four sprays with any one of the following fungicides viz., carbendazim at 1 gm per lit or propiconazole at 1 gm per lit or mancozeb at 2 gm per lit or chlorothalonil at 2 gm a lit at 20 days interval may be done. Wetting agents viz., teepol or sandovit at one ml / litre of water should be added to the fungicide before spray. Spraying on the lower surface of the leaves is effective for control of leaf spot disease. (Dr.M.Theradimani and Dr.A.Vijaysamundeeswari are Professors, Department of Floriculture and Medicinal crops, Horticultural College and Research Institute, TNAU, Periyakulam 625 604, Tamilnadu, E mail : mtheradi@gmail.com)

Water level in Mettur Dam crosses 81 ft.

Water level in the Mettur dam stood at 81.210 feet at 8 a.m. on Wednesday against its full capacity of 120 feet. The average inflow for the 24 hours from 8 a.m. on Tuesday to 8 a.m. on Wednesday was 20,087 cubic feet per second (cusecs). The outflow was 6,901 cusecs. The total quantity of water that is now available in the dam was 43.173 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) against the full capacity of 93.4 tmcft.

Outflow was 6,901 cusecs on Wednesday

Water level

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 81.41 feet on Wednesday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 14,124 cusecs and the discharge 6,800 cusecs.

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Jul 31

Max Min

36° | 26°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:53

Sunset: 06:37

Barometer: 1004

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Friday, Aug 1

Max Min

36° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

Aug 2



35° | 28°

Cloudy

Sunday

Aug 3



36° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Monday

Aug 4



36° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday

Aug 5



35° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday

Aug 6



35° | 28°

Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Chennai

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:53

Humidity: 79

Sunset: 06:37

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1004



THE  NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

The alternative food crop



Millets are highly nutritious food crops which consume very less amount of natural resources like water and soil nutrients compared to other cereals and are resilient to climate changes. Ironically over years, these crop areas are declining due to state agriculture policy that promotes the growth of paddy and others, ignoring multiple benefits of millets. One of the flipside of the green revolution has been that farmers have been forcibly asked to grow crops like rice and wheat in conditions where farmers have been traditionally growing millets for centuries. Apart from being extremely nutritious, millet crops are also less dependent on rainfall and can survive for a long period of time. Since conditions are not ideal to grow crops like rice and wheat, farmers are forced to use a lot more pesticides and other chemicals. However, several organisations have been tirelessly working to revive and promote millet crops once again. “In order to foreground the multifarious nutritional and ecological advantages offered by millets, we have been seeking to deepen its engagement with the governments at the local, state and national level to exert greater pressure to implement on the ground, what has been enacted as a law in order to increase millet farming on the fields and farms of India and millet foods on the plates of rural and urban population of India,” says Giridhar Rao, an official from the Millet Network of India (MINI). Another huge advantage provided by millets is that they are extremely eco-friendly crops which help with bio-diversity water

conservation. “We are engaged in a relentless argument with the government to provide millet farmers a “scientific” price that takes into account not only the cost of raising millet farms but also the contribution it makes towards conservation of water, biodiversity, generation of livelihoods, reclamation of poor soils and their regeneration. Thus millets are the best farming answer to the coming decades of climate crisis and therefore need to be considered for a string of bonuses beyond the MSP offered by the governments across the country,” he explains. MINI, through Medak District Millet Farmers Federation, has successfully implemented INSIMP on its own terms-without the use of chemical inputs and exotic seeds and with organic inputs alone-over two successive seasons. In the first season, 1000 hectares of land encompassing about 1400 farmers were brought under millet cultivation. MINI worked on more than 2000 hectares and 3000 farmers in the second season. “More than the government, the INSIMP programme has benefitted us greatly. Financially, it was more beneficial for us as compared to what the government has promised,” says Jayappa, a farmer from Zaheerabad in Medak district, just 96 km from the city. The farmer, however, urges the government to provide more support to millet crops. “We are all protecting our own livelihood and are living on our own terms. By now we have realised better than to depend on the government. However, I would urge them to show more support towards millet crops,” he says. Monsoons have arrived late this season, when asked if that has affected the crop, he says, “One of the major advantages of millets as opposed to other crops like rice and wheat, is that we are not dependent on rainfall. Having said that, it is always better for the crops if it rains more.” Explaining that they grow 85 different types of millet crops, he says the growth is completely natural. “We do not use any pesticides or other chemicals. Millet crops are completely natural and it takes about three months for them to grow,” he shares. Lakshamma, a seedkeeper in the Medak district, also explains the benefits of millets. “They are extremely beneficial for health. The soil in Telangana is much more suitable for millets and the harvest is of a better quality,” she says. Explaining that most crops grow in three to four months, she says that the demand for millets has significantly increased in recent times. “There is a lot of demand for our crop now as people have realised that it’s extremely nutritious and beneficial for health. The orders for the crop has significantly increased from places like Guntur and Hyderabad,” informs Lakshamma. Even as farmers struggle due to the delayed arrival of monsoon and the lack of substantial rainfall, the government would be well-advised to promote and support the growth of millets, rather than forcing farmers to grow crops which are ill-suited to the climatic conditions in the state.

Innovative City Farmer Tastes Success Again



For those who have a passion in terrace farming, here is a happy news. R Raveendran, 57, a farmer hailing from Kochulloor in the city who has many recognitions to his credit, has tasted success in his experiment in drip irrigation for terrace farming. He has cultivated paddy and around 15 varieties of vegetables on terrace using drip irrigation, a method that saves water and fertilizers by allowing water to drip slowly to the roots of plants, either onto the soil surface or directly to the root zone, through a network of valves, pipes, tubing and emitters. In this method, which Raveendran calls 'Safe Organic Terrace Farming', not even a drop of water falls on the terrace and goes waste. Raveendran also saves water by collecting the water flowing out of the grow bags in trays, storing the water in a separate tank to be used again. "The water received on a single day, thus stored, could be used for three days," says Raveendran, a farmer who has dared to innovate in cultivation with almost 100 per cent success and bagged awards for his efforts. Raveendran, an advocate of organic farming, also makes the manure himself as part of this experimentation. Using the drip irrigation method, he cultivates paddy, chilli, yam, amaranthus, ladies finger, tomato, brinjal, ash gourd, passion fruit, ginger, turmeric, wild turmeric, curry leaf and 'pudina' on 1,450 square feet. Raveendran started with the method in 2011 and has now reached a stage of success as he was in other experiments too. "The produce is more than enough for the use of a family and I do sell the vegetables. For the past three years, I didn't need to buy rice for Onam for my family. I get 30 kg of paddy from which I can make 15 kg of rice," he says. For paddy cultivation, R Raveendran, a farmer hailing from Kochulloor, uses flower pots without holes to keep the water in it. Raveendran harvested an African yam that weighed 275 kg, earning him a spot in the Limca Book of Records in 2011, and used that for making a special curry for his elder daughter's wedding. On the ten cents of land where his house is built there is not an inch which is 'barren'. Apart from the terrace, he has grown purple passion fruit on his

car porch and there is amaranthus with a height of 12 feet on his land, where he also plans to plant an African yam that would give a yield of 300 kg. The Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi, honoured Raveendran with the National Innovative Farmer Award 2013-14 at the Pusa Krishi Vigyan Mela. He received the award from Dr K L Chadha, deputy director general, Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR). Raveendran was working as an auto electrical mechanic in Saudi Arabia for ten years when his passion for farming ultimately turned him into a full-time farmer. His wife Sindhu and daughters Reji and Rakhi are happy over the honours Raveendran has received.

Ryots Assured Paddy Incentive

Express News Service

Chennai: Pointing out that the recent directive of the Central government barring State governments from giving incentives to farmers for paddy procurement would not affect Tamil Nadu farmers, Chief Minister J Jayalithaa on Wednesday asserted in the State Assembly that "this year too, the farmers in the State would get an incentive of ₹50 per quintal for ordinary rice and ₹70 for refined variety".

As such, from October 1, the farmers would get ₹1,410 per quintal for ordinary variety and ₹1,470 for refined

variety.

"The directive will not affect Tamil Nadu, since the State has procured a maximum of 23.81 lakh metric tonnes of rice (equal to 16.19 lakh MT of paddy) against the entitled allotment of 35.58 lakh metric tonnes of rice (equal to 52.32 lakh metric tonnes of paddy) under various schemes," the Chief Minister observed.

Accusing DMK chief M Karunanidhi of creating "unnecessary tension" among the farmers in delta districts over the orders, the Chief Minister said Karunanidhi had made the statement without checking the facts as

his primary intention was to find fault with the AIADMK government. Jayalithaa also clarified that her government had not opposed the Centre's directive as it would not affect TN.

Responding to a special mention moved by the Opposition parties, Jayalithaa said Karunanidhi had remained a silent spectator when the previous UPA government, in which the DMK was a key ally, came out with many anti-people initiatives such as Methane extraction project, laying of GAIL pipelines in farm lands, genetically modified crops and FDI in retail trade.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Pepper output to rebound on favourable weather next season

The country's black pepper production during 2014-15 season starting October is likely to be better than the current season due to favourable weather conditions so far. However, Kerala's Pathanamthitta, Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram districts, which had a comparatively good crop last season, are unlikely to harvest a better crop. The crop in other regions, especially the high ranges, Kottayam and other districts will comparatively have a good crop. A near-real assessment could be possible only by October, Joshua Daniel, a major pepper grower of Pathanamthitta district, told *Business Line*.

Good yield

According to him, only 25 per cent of the growers are following good farm management practices required for pepper cultivation. He is of the view that if the vines are well looked after with timely fertiliser applications/inputs and phyto-sanitation works with the help of skilled labourers, the grower would get good yield. In an acre a maximum of 600 vines can be planted. The total input cost for a three-year gestation period will be Rs. 3 lakh per acre. Third year onwards, these vines will start yielding. But, from the fifth year, the yield will peak.

Best practices

Thus, from the fifth year, the yield per vine would come to 5 kg making it 3 tonnes per acre and 7.50 tonnes a hectare per season, he said. He has planted six varieties of vines such as Panniyur -1, Karivali, Karimunda, Kottamunda and Velliyaramunda. Daniel said he has 15 acres under the crop and is raising the vines using good farm management practices with no assistance from either the Centre or the State Government. Total output in 2013-14 has been estimated at around 35,000 tonnes, including carry forward stocks, according to the trade. It is against the normal output which has been in the range of 55,000 to 65,000 tonnes until a few years ago. Karnataka output last season was reportedly below 15,000 tonnes against 25-30,000 tonnes. However, the coming crop is expected to be better, growers said. In Wayanad district of Kerala, pepper cultivation has been declining as vast stretches of pepper estates have been converted into tourist resorts. Domestic consumption of pepper is projected at around 45,000-48,000 tonnes and since the overall usage of pepper in the daily food items is in small quantity, the price hike has not affected consumption. Added to this is the purchase by industrial units such as masala, extraction, crushing/powdering and Pappad. Change in food habits is also raising consumption by industrial units significantly.

Tea exporters seek refund of value-added tax

The South Tea Exporters Association has sought the intervention of the Tea Board to help them get the refund of value-added tax on time from the Commercial Tax Department. Association Chairman Dipak Shah told *BusinessLine* that the outstanding refund from the department has shot up to over Rs. 13 crore. With exporters continuing to remit one per cent tax on sales, the refund from the department is mounting. He also said that out of the total exports of 100 million kg tea from the South, close to 70 per cent were done by the members of the association, and on payment of one per cent VAT.

Recapping the events that led to the present imbroglio, Shah said, “Until 2007, sales at auction were permitted under three modes – on payment of local tax, export at zero per cent tax on production of Form H within six months of sale and inter-State sales with C Form. It was a smooth run until the sales tax department caught a broker with fake C Forms. There was a breakdown in the system thereafter.”“Shah said that the exporters took an impromptu decision and abstained from buying at the auction in the first week of July.

Basmati exports may lose steam on Iran’s duty hike

(Quantity in lakh tonnes; Value in ₹ cr)

	Iran		Total	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
2013-14	14.4	10,975.71	37.57	29,299.26
2012-13	10.82	6463.5	34.59	19,409.38
2011-12	6.14	2843.21	31.78	15449.61

• Source: DGCIS



• Basmati shipments are likely to see a slowdown in the near-term as Iran, the largest buyer of the Indian aromatic rice, has hiked the import duty to around 40 per cent from 22 per cent. Iran accounted for over a third of India’s basmati exports in value and about 40 per cent in quantity last year. “There will definitely be an impact on our exports. We expect our shipments to come down by around 30-40 per cent to Iran this year,” said MP Jindal, President of All-India Rice Exporters Association. Iran has imposed a steep duty hike after a span of two years, Jindal, who is Chairman of Best Foods International, said. The latest move by Iran is aimed at discouraging imports at this time of the year, when its domestic rice crop comes into the market. “We were expecting this duty hike. It may be a temporary measure and they may revert to the earlier levels by September-October,” an industry source said. Farmers in the key basmati-growing of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh are seen planting more of the fragrant variety this year in anticipation of better returns as prices had shot up by 30 per cent last year.

Growth in acreage

Also, with more farmers seen adopting the newer variety – 1509 – which yields more and consumes less water besides being pest resistant compared with 1121, basmati acreage and output is poised for a significant increase this year. Basmati was planted on some 19 lakh hectares last year. Vijay Setia, Director at Chaman Lal Setia Exports, said the delayed rains this year was seen driving acreages of 1509 variety in Punjab and Haryana. Planting of 1509 will go on till mid-August and it is too early to assess the acreage. On the duty hike by Iran, Setia said the impact would not be significant as Indian exporters are not dependent solely on that market. “Every other market is growing for us. With the US resolving the tricyclazole pesticide residue recently, exports are likely to sustain momentum,” Setia said.

Other markets

Besides Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq were the other large buyers of Indian basmati last year. Also, countries such as US, Afghanistan and African nations such as Ghana, Nigeria, and Ivory Coast have been buying more of Indian basmati to cater to their growing demand. Jai Oberoi, Associate Director at LT Foods Ltd, said the Iranian duty hike will certainly affect the exports, without quantifying the impact.

Monsoon ravages the West ahead of emerging ‘low’; M.P. to get heavy rains

The monsoon is literally spitting fire over the western parts as extremely heavy to very heavy rain lashed the region overnight on Wednesday morning. It is in this background that forecasts for another low-pressure area in northwest Bay of Bengal assumes significance.

Mutant ‘low’

India Met Department seems to agree with international agencies that the next ‘low’ might show up around August 5 over the Head North Bay of Bengal. Its genesis is interesting in that it would be a mutant of an existing well-marked ‘low’ stopped on its tracks inland by a prankster circulation over west Madhya Pradesh-Gujarat. In fact, this persisting circulation is primarily for the extreme heavy to very heavy precipitation over west Maharashtra, Gujarat and Konkan-Mumbai over the past few days. The circulation is gathering strength from the fury of the flows it is managing to draw from the Arabian Sea as also to the east from the Bay of Bengal.

No quarters given

It has refused to allow space for Bay 'low' to land on terra firma for a second day on Wednesday. This is since two strong monsoon systems cannot co-exist over land except in rare conditions. The Bay 'low' will manage to emerge over land over Gangetic West Bengal by Thursday but will be forced to move to the opposite direction (north-east India) until after the circulation over Gujarat weakens. The weakening trend will allow the 'low' to revert from the hills in the North-East and ease down its way into the Head Bay of Bengal by August 5. The track from here is yet to be ascertained, but the US Climate Prediction Centre does not see much scope for the kind of heavy rain triggered over land in the previous round.

Heavy showers

Still, a round of very heavy precipitation is in order for Madhya Pradesh and adjoining south-east and south-west Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, south-east Bihar, Chhattisgarh and west Odisha until August 5. Meanwhile, the monsoon pyrotechnics flooded eEast Rajasthan, west Maharashtra, Gujarat, west Madhya Pradesh and parts of the Wwest Ccoast during the 24 hours ending Wednesday morning. The blitzkrieg is forecast to continue variously for a couple of days more, the Met Office said.

How far can Essential Commodities Act address hoarding?

No empirical evidence to prove that action against hoarders will bring down prices



Doubts have been raised in the recent times about the effectiveness of the Essential Commodities Act in the current form to control prices. On the other hand, there is no empirical evidence to prove that acting against the hoarders will bring down the price of commodities. The annual report of the Department of Consumer Affairs gives some interesting facts about the effectiveness of the Essential Commodities Act: It is even more interesting to observe that the conviction to arrest percentage in the post-election period of 2009 was 9.87 per cent. It was 10.18 per cent during the pre-election period (2012-13) but fell dismally below 1.5 per cent during the intervening period. The Essential Commodities Act is often supplemented by stock control orders. Thus in some cases, the regulatory authority or prosecutor are able to get direct evidence that stocking of the commodities was done with the intention for profiteering. It is often difficult to get direct evidence – either through documents or testimony. State government has to enforce the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act. The short-duration spurt in onion prices, which is encountered every year and seen this year too, needs to be seen whether it is a case of price rise or price gouging. Price gouging (a term not often used) is a situation when a seller prices commodities at a level much higher than what is considered reasonable. In the US, laws against price gouging have been held constitutional at the State-level as a valid exercise of the police to preserve order during an emergency and may be combined (like in India) with anti-hoarding measures. Laws against price-gouging have been enacted in 34 States in the US. Exceptions are prescribed for price increases that can be justified in terms of increased cost of supply, transportation or storage. Proponents of laws against price gouging assert that it can create an unrealistic psychological demand that can drive a non-replenish able item into extinction. As the new Government in India is embarking on enactment of changes in the Essential Commodities Act, we must understand that statutes generally give wide discretion not to prosecute. In some of the states in the US, only one-third of complaints were unfounded and a large fraction of the remainder was handled by consent decrees, rather than prosecution. What if an anti-hoarding law is passed where arrests are non-bailable for hoarders to symbolise opposition to scarcity? Let's abolish causes of scarcity. Will sending people to jail bring down the scarcity?

Business Standard

Andhra govt exploring other options on farm loan recast



Amid dim hopes of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) rescheduling agricultural loans in Andhra Pradesh, the state government on Wednesday said it was exploring alternative arrangements. State Agriculture Minister P Pulla Rao said, “It (RBI) had earlier hinted it would consider our request only for loans taken up to October 31 last year.” He added the government would soon implement a loan waiver programme, as decided by the state Cabinet. The minister’s statement followed RBI saying there was no case to restructure crop loans in the state, as yields in areas declared calamity-hit pointed to a different story. So far, the government had considered loan recast as an alternative to the difficult and expensive process of loan waiver, which it had promised ahead of the general elections. The alternative to the loan recast will mean depositing the money directly into the accounts of borrowers. Pulla Rao didn’t elaborate on how the government planned to do this. A former banker who worked on the modalities of the state government’s loan waiver programme told Business Standard, “If RBI refuses to recast the loans, the only alternative is to clear the loans of borrowers and take money from the government at a later date, as promised.” He added if the borrowers didn’t repay the loans, they might have to pay interest on the overdue, as these loans wouldn’t get interest subvention and might surpass the loan waiver cap of Rs 1.5 lakh a family, as fixed by the state government. Earlier, RBI had told state government officials in case it considered restructuring the loans, it would extend the facility only to crop loans given during the previous kharif season, adding it was against gold loans taken in the name of agricultural credit. A state-level committee of bankers had set a target of disbursing Rs 41,978 crore of short-term agriculture loans during the kharif and rabi seasons this year, against Rs 37,058 crore the last agricultural year. Of this year’s crop loan target, Rs 25,885 crore is for the kharif season. Bankers say it is unlikely these targets will be met. State Finance Minister Yanamala Ramakrishnu told Business Standard even if RBI decided to recast the loans on its terms, not much relief was likely. He added only loans amounting to

about Rs 10,000 crore would get relief. “There were places in a particular district where normal-to-higher crop production was achieved, but that cannot be taken as a representative sample for several other locations where the crop was damaged by floods, cyclones and drought. All we asked was to relax a particular norm that mandated the government to report the calamity within a specified time from the date of declaration of calamity-affected mandals. The previous government did not do it; maybe because it was preoccupied with the issue of bifurcation,” Ramakrishnudu said. The YSR Congress has already held protest rallies against the delay in implementing the loan waiver programme. On Monday, Chief Secretary I Y R Krishna Rao had written to RBI, urging the central bank to heed the state’s request in this regard. Sources said preparations for implementing the loan waiver hadn’t progressed. The state cabinet’s resolution regarding the loan waiver scheme is yet to reach various departments. Also, the government hasn’t constituted a resource mobilisation committee to implement the loan waiver programme yet. Officials said member of Parliament Y S Chowdary and former Canara Bank chairman and managing director M B N Rao were being considered for inclusion in the panel.

Vegetable prices decline after revival in rainfall



Following a steep rise till the third week of July, prices of vegetables have moderated in the past 10 days due to resumption of monsoon rains, which has brightened the prospects of a recovery in production. After Finance Minister Arun Jaitley cautioned against hoarding and imposed a stock limit, stockists released additional quantities of vegetables into the market to avoid seizure. Consequently, prices of primary vegetables fell up to 50 per cent since July 21, after hitting peak levels early this month. On Wednesday, okra prices at the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) wholesale mandi in Vashi fell 15 per cent to Rs 34 a kg compared with Rs 40 a kg on July 21. Cauliflower and brinjal prices declined 27 per cent and 50 per cent to trade at Rs 16 a kg and Rs 14 a kg, respectively, on Wednesday. “Advancement of monsoon rains has improved the prospects of a restoration in productivity; earlier, a loss was feared.

Importantly, the recent spells of rains have been spread evenly across the country. With the help of the recent moisture, additional acreage covered by individuals will also increase. Consequently, prices of vegetables have started moderating,” said Avinash Patil, deputy secretary and head (vegetable section), APMC, Vashi. The trend of a fall in prices was seen at other mandis, too. Data compiled by the National Horticulture Board (NHB) showed a decline in the prices of brinjal, cabbage and okra in Delhi. While brinjal price fell by a marginal amount to Rs 10.75 a kg on Wednesday from Rs 11.25 a kg about 10 days earlier, cabbage and okra prices also moved down by around a Rs 1 kg lower to close at Rs 12.50 a kg and Rs 16.75 a kg respectively.

PRICE TREND

	Jul 21	Jul 30	(₹/kg)	% chg
Ladies' fingers	40	34		-15
Cauliflower	22	16		-27
Cabbage	18	10		-44
Cucumber	28-30	14		-50
Guar	50	44		-12
Brinjal	28	14		-50
Onion	22	22		-2
Potato	18	20		7

Source: Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee, Vashi

“Owing to incessant rains in the past few days, stockists procure wet vegetables from the origin, which has shorter shelf life. Also, there is fear of higher spoilage, which pursues stockists to sell vegetables, even with marginal profits. This is because holding stocks for a few hours might result in an increase in spoilage,” said Sanjay Bhujbal, a vegetable stockist at the Vashi mandi.

Tomato prices, however, continue to worry consumers. Through the past 10 days, prices at the Vashi mandi have risen 50 per cent to Rs 60 a kg. Dilip Gupta, a tomato stockist, attributed the rise to spoilage due to rains. National Horticulture Board data showed India’s tomato production rose five per cent to 19.10 million tonnes in 2013-14, compared with 18.23 million tonnes in 2012-13. “Tomato prices will continue to move up, at least for two weeks, by when the new crop will hit mandis. For other vegetables, prices will depend on the rains. In case of heavy rains and water-logging in the fields, harvesting will be affected; this might lead to a rise in prices. In case of normal rains, however, prices will continue to soften,” said a senior government official.

New tech gives a boost to shrimp farming in Punjab & Haryana

Shrimp and prawn farming in Punjab and Haryana may get an impetus with the new technology developed by the Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), Mumbai. Prawn farming is restricted to coastal areas but the new technology allows use of the

saline wastelands in Punjab and Haryana, where productivity is poor, for the farming. Started in 2008 by CIFE at its Rohtak centre (Haryana), the experimental trials on tiger shrimps or prawns were continued until 2012 to study the feasibility and financial viability of the technology. Buoyed by the response, the technology was passed on to farmers in Haryana. Farmers have now started commercial prawn farming, spread over 20 acres this year. The technology was developed by W S Lakra, vice-chancellor, CIFE (Mumbai), and V Harikrishna, scientist, CIFE (Rohtak), and their team. Speaking to Business Standard, Harikrishna said, "There is big demand for prawns in domestic and export markets. Currently, prawn farming is restricted to coastal areas as water is saline. As the nature of habitat in which shrimp is naturally found and commercially grown - coastal soil & seawater - is entirely different from inland conditions, the present innovation focuses on changing the chemical composition of inland water by designing specific and correct ionic concentration to make it suitable for growth, survival and commercial farming of shrimps. This has immense relevance in southwest Punjab, including the districts of Ferozpur, Faridkot, Muktsar, Bathinda." Farming of tiger shrimps or prawns is lucrative as these have high export demand. It will also provide an opportunity to ensure there is nutritious fresh seafood in the northern parts. The threat developed due to salinity problem in the northwestern part of the country will provide an opportunity to the farmers to earn higher income, generate self-employment and in rural development, he added. Parts of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Bihar and Rajasthan have salt-affected soil, covering 2.8 million hectares. The groundwater quality is poor in these parts and cannot be used for irrigation.

Cashew processors resent lack of government support



Cashew processors in the state have urged the government to make necessary arrangements to export their products to overseas buyers. "Odisha is the third largest state in the country in cashew cultivation, production and processing but we are unable to export to other countries. The processors from Kerala and Karnataka export the products of our state and earn profits", said Rajendra Sabat, president Odisha Cashew Processors

Association (OCPA) here. Lack of government support has been a dampener for the cashew processors, who are operating on thin margins for being unable to export their products. "If we can export at least 50 per cent of our production, we can earn around Rs 500 crore every year", he added. "The government needs to provide all support to enter into the export market like overseas buyer contacts, port and container facilities and financial support to the entrepreneurs to compete with exporters of other states", said Sabat. The OCPA officials spoke on their constraints at a workshop on 'Awareness Programme on Quality Technology Tool (QTT) and Quality Management Standard (QMS) of Ganjam Cashew Cluster in Food Processing' here. The workshop was organised by Odisha Young Entrepreneurs' Association (OYEA). Jogendra Behera, state minister for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) inaugurated the workshop. "The government will look into the matter and try its best to develop the cashew sector in the state", the minister assured. He also asked the processors to ensure production quality to compete with their counterparts in other states. MLA (Berhampur) Ramesh Chandra Chyapatnaik urged the minister to provide financial support to the cashew processing units, particularly in Ganjam district, which suffered major damage from the tropical cyclonic storm Phailin in October last year. Odisha produces around 100,000 tonne of cashew with an area of 160,000 hectares under cultivation. Around 300 cashew processing units with over 140,000 tonne processing capacity per annum, are functioning in the state. "Due to lack of supporting policy, we procure raw cashews from other neighboring states like West Bengal and also from West African countries to run our units", said the OCPA president. Ganjam, Gajapati, Puri, Khurda, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Koraput and Nabarangpur are the major cashew producing districts in the state.

Cardamom up 1% on spot demand



Cardamom prices rose 1.06 per cent to Rs 895 per kg in futures trade today as traders enlarged commitments, supported by a pick-up in export and domestic demand. At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in September rose by Rs 9.40, or

1.06 per cent, to Rs 895 per kg, with a business turnover of 64 lots. The August contract edged up by Rs 8.50, or 0.92 per cent, to Rs 925.20 per kg in 319 lots. Traders said apart from rising export and domestic demand, tight stocks in the spot markets following restricted arrivals from growing regions influenced cardamom prices at futures trade here.

DECCAN Chronicle

Tabs for Andhra Pradesh farmers to cost Rs 2,000 crore



The government exchequer will have to shell out Rs 2,000 crore to fulfil Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's proposal to provide tablet computers to every farmer. There are 80 lakh farmers in the state, according to official records. The Chief Minister wants farmers to know the latest developments in the agricultural field, like soil tests, quality seeds, fertilisers and market position of the crops through satellite. If the scheme is to be implemented, it will become an additional burden to both the government and the farmers. The Union ministry of human resource development is supplying Akash second generation tablet computers to students at a cost of Rs 1,132, but it will cost Rs 2,263 in the open market. Generally in rural areas, whole families are into agriculture. In a family, if a father and his two sons are into agriculture, all three members will be treated as farmers in government records. There are around 50 lakh farmer families in the state. According to the Kotiaiah Committee appointed by the state government on waiver of farm loans, the farmers have total 44,28,890 accounts in various banks. The Kotiaiah Committee warned the state government that if any new scheme is taken up by the government, it would add to the requirement of additional resources. The Committee

quoted the example of enhancement of pensions to Rs 1,000 and Rs 1,500 per month for old people and disabled persons respectively. In the recent past it resulted in additional resource requirement of Rs 2,048 crore for the remaining period of six months during 2014-15. The computer tablets once given, the farmers will have to bear the recurring cost of internet connection, a minimum of Rs 400 per month. Agriculture minister P. Pulla Rao said the idea of giving tablet computers to farmers was to make them go for allied sectors like horticulture, pisciculture. While Mr Naidu had already said that every farmer will be given a tablet computer, the minister said it is not decided whether to give these computers to each family or to each village.

Trouble brewing for Andhra Pradesh? RBI unlikely to waive loans



The Andhra Pradesh government has almost given up on the RBI regarding rescheduling of crop loans. Agriculture minister P. Pulla Rao said on Wednesday, “As per RBI’s attitude, it is 100 per cent not willing to allow rescheduling of loans.” He said that instead of waiting for reschedulement, farmers who had the capacity to repay the loans should do so to get fresh loans and the government would reimburse them Rs 1.5 lakh. Speaking to the media on Wednesday at the Secretariat, Mr Rao said that the government was making alternative arrangements to pay the banks. He also said that earlier the government had decided to pay back the farmers within three months but now it had been reduced to two months. The Agriculture minister said that the RBI had earlier favoured rescheduling of crop loans but had later changed its stand. He said that while the state government was talking about cyclone and drought-affected mandals, the RBI was talking about paddy yields. To a question he said that the government had no information about banks freezing farmers’ accounts and added that if any complaints were received, the government would give directions to the banks. He added that the government had not finalised the

committee for mobilisation of additional resources. Mr Rao also said that the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development had sanctioned Rs 250 crore for construction of godowns in the state and had asked for proposals within 15 days. District officials have been instructed to send the proposals immediately. He added that till June, the Centre had supplied 2.59 lakh metric tonnes of fertilisers out of 3.76 lakh metric tonnes.

Farm incentives will be continued this year: Jayalalithaa



Asserting that the Union government's recent circular barring state governments from providing incentives to farmers for procuring paddy will not affect Tamil Nadu, Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa assured the House that her government would continue to give incentives of Rs 70 in addition to the MSP of Rs 1,400 for normal paddy and Rs 50 over MSP of Rs 1,350 for special variety of paddy this fiscal too. "The circular (dated June 12) will not affect Tamil Nadu, since the state has already procured 23.81 lakh metric tons paddy, including 16.1 lakh MT rice against the entitled allotment of 35.58 lakh MT rice and 52.32 lakh MT paddy under various schemes," she said while replying to a special call attention motion of various opposition parties in the House on Wednesday. The state government would give incentive of Rs 70 in addition to MSP of Rs 1,400) and Rs 50 (in addition to MSP of Rs 1,350) for normal and special varieties of paddy, respectively, this fiscal. In its circular to the states, the ministry of consumer affairs, food and public distribution barred the state governments from providing incentives, in addition to the MSP for procuring paddy from farmers. Accusing DMK chief M. Karunanidhi of causing "needless tension" among farmers in delta districts, Ms Jayalalithaa said keeping the farmer's interests in mind, last year her government gave Rs 70 and Rs 50 as incentives over and above the MSP of Rs 1,345 and Rs 1,310 per quintal fixed by the Central government for fine and ordinary varieties respectively.



Farmers warm up to new tomato variety

HUBLI: The extension centre of the National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF), Hubli, plans to convince vegetable growers to sow seeds of the Arka Rakshak tomato which is high-yielding hybrid with higher resistance to various diseases. As the Arka Rakshak, developed by the Indian Institute of Horticulture Research, Bangalore in 2013, has a shelf life for about a week and doesn't get damaged during transportation, it'll be more profitable for growers and consumers. Project Assistant of NHRDF Kalmesh Angadi told TOI the variety has a slightly thick skin which prevents damage. "Currently, it has been sown in about 20 hectares in Dharwad, Hukkeri and Bailhongal taluks as kharif crop. We're receiving more order from farmers from Mysore and Mandya districts where vegetables are grown in large quantities," he said. He also said it has higher resistance to diseases like leaf curl, ToLCV (tomato leaf curl virus), bacterial wilt (BW) and early blight. According to sources in IIHR, Bangalore, saplings of this variety grow up to 100cm in height and each sapling can give a yield of 19kg. "It is an all-season crop and can be grown in both kharif and rabi seasons in Karnataka and farmers can get a yield of 750-800 quintals per hectare," they added. Ashok Biradar, a farmer in Devar Hippargi, said that plants of this variety are stronger right from the stem. "It has been difficult to maintain saplings of existing varieties of tomato as they are weak in all sections. When maintenance cost is less and damage is reduced, we'll definitely share the profit with consumers," he added. Kalmesh said the price of this tomato will be on a par with existing varieties. "If farmers grow it in bulk, the price will come down. It stays good for about a week even without cold storage. This will reduce maintenance cost for homes and hotels," he said. Attractive tomato *

Arka Rakshak tomato is deep red in colour and very attractive * Each fruit weighs about 90-100g

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Circular on state incentive on paddy MSP will not affect Tamil Nadu: Jayalalithaa



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa today assured the state assembly that the Union Government's recent circular barring state governments from providing incentive to farmers while procuring paddy would not affect the state. "The circular will not affect Tamil Nadu, since the state has procured only 23.81 lakh metric tonnes of paddy, including 16.10 lakh metric tonne of rice against the entitled allotment of 35.58 lakh metric tonnes of rice and 52.32 lakh metric tonnes of paddy under various schemes, she said, replying to a special call attention motion brought forward by Opposition parties in the House. The government would give its incentive of Rs 70 in addition to the MSP of Rs 1,400 for normal paddy and Rs 50 in addition to MSP of Rs 1,350 for special quality paddy this fiscal, Jayalalithaa said. As per the Decentralised Procurement Scheme brought to the state since 2012, Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation is the nodal agency for Food Corporation of India in procuring paddy and other crops for the government. TNCSC in turn uses its rice mills or private ones to get rice out of paddy and distribute them through fair price shops as per the state's entitlement of rice from the Centre.

