

COIMBATORE,

TNAU obtains farmers input for policy formulation

KARTHIK MADHAVAN

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has obtained inputs from farmers on a variety of issues in areas such as irrigation, financing and marketing, that will be provided to State and Central governments for drafting agriculture policy and drawing up an action plan for improving yield. The inputs were obtained at a “Farmers’ Parliament” the university held here on May 23 and 24.

The university Vice Chancellor K. Ramasamy said that the institution had collected inputs from farmers from different agro-climatic zones across the State, compiled them into a report for use by the two governments. It would send the report through the State Planning Commission, of which he was a member.

The university had grouped the farmers into five zones – those from the Cauvery Delta zone, North Eastern Zone, North Western Zone, Western Zone and Southern Zone and High Altitude and Hilly Zone – to ask them for their inputs on a number of issues that concerned agriculture.

Director of Extension Education, TNAU, K.A. Ponnusamy, who coordinated the event with a few others, said that the university asked the farmers for their inputs on water, seed, machineries, finance, marketing, functioning of procurement institutions, functioning of extension/veterinary services, legal and restricting trade policies, use of information and communication technology and functioning of agricultural education institutions.

After discussion among themselves on the first day, the participants, who were grouped zone-wise, presented their demands on the second day, which was debated and then documented.

He said that the farmers sought increasing the holding capacity of water tanks, drip irrigation to all farmers, regulation of ground water extraction, mass multiplication of quality seeds, skill development training in agriculture for rural youth, insurance cover for all crops, increase in upper ceiling for the Kisan Credit Card from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 5 lakh, strengthening of traditional, village shanties, block-level markets, regulation of traders, minimum support price for all crops, exemption of agriculture commodities from sales tax, toll, modification in tenancy act to evict tenants after agreement period and much more.

It was a very good exercise as the governments would know what the farmers wanted, said P.R.V. Varadharajan, a farmer from Sivaganga district. It was a welcome step, added Krishnakumar, another farmer from Gobichettipalayam.

Not only from the farmers' point of view but also from the government's it was a very good exercise, said a senior officer in the Department of Agriculture, on condition of anonymity.

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- The inputs were collected from different agro-climatic zones across the State*
 - The report will be sent through the State Planning Commission*
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ERODE,

Tweak job scheme to revive village economy: farmers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Farmers here believe the BJP Government's commitment to link agriculture to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) would result in revival of village economy in the long run.

Several public works, particularly those aimed at strengthening water bodies, and improving ecological balance, under the programme are already agriculture linked. The works include digging new agriculture ponds, renovating existing ones and other small water bodies, cleaning canals, strengthening bunds of irrigation tanks. Farmers here say the MGNREGA guidelines need to be tweaked to pave way for the beneficiaries to work in farms owned by individuals willing to share the wage costs.

“The major problem faced by farmers is labour shortage. If the objective is to improve the agriculture sector through the scheme, there is no reason why the scheme should not be altered to enable labourers to work in private farms. Farm owners will be more than willing to pay a share of the wages,” said K.V. Ponnaiyan, president, Tamil Nadu Swadeshi Farmers’ Association.

In doing so, BPL (Below Poverty Line) beneficiaries will get work for more number of days in a year, farmers reason out. At present, farm owners are unable to find labourers though they are willing to pay wages much higher than the extent paid under MGNREGS.

However, the idea of farmers here do not conform to the guidelines for new works permitted under MGNREGA.

There is a norm which states that the individual land owner has to be a job card holder and also work in the project.

Another norm states thus: “Only those components of admissible works that lead to creation of durable assets may be taken up under MGNREGA. Items of expenditure that

are recurring in nature and / or do not lead to creation of durable assets, are not permitted under MGNREGA”

At a UGC-sponsored national seminar on ‘Problems and Prospects of MGNREGA’ conducted by the Erode Arts and Science College here earlier this year, economics teachers pointed out that the higher proportion of workers enrolled under the scheme to the available works hampers successful implementation of the vital initiative for bridging the income divide.

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- *Farm works should be brought under the scheme*
 - *Academics want a mechanism to strengthen it*
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B.C. ROAD (BANTWAL TALUK),

Arecanut farmers compensated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



B. Ramanatha Rai handing over cheques to beneficiaries on Tuesday.— PHOTO:
H.S.MANJUNATH

More than 2,100 arecanut farmers of Bantwal taluk, whose crops had been hit by *kole roga*(fruit-blight disease) last year, were compensated to the tune of Rs. 1.6 crore here on Wednesday.

However, the aggrieved farmers claimed that the compensation was far below the loss they had suffered.

This marked the first phase of distribution (Rs. 7,000 per farmer) and the remaining Rs. 5,000 would be given soon, said B. Ramanath Rai, Minister for Forests, Ecology and Environment.

He hoped that the government, which had already released Rs. 70 crore, would grant another Rs. 5 crore as compensation.

Farmer Divanappa Sapalya, from Shamboor, lamented that the cheques were disbursed a year after they had applied for the compensation.

Seventy-year-old Sundara Prabhu said his yield loss in 2013 was seven quintals or nearly Rs. 1 lakh.

“The compensation hardly covers the loss. It won’t even keep food on the table till the next harvest,” he said.

Ramesh Shetty, from Kolnad, who estimated his loss at Rs. 1.5 lakh, said that instead of “meagre compensations”, slashing the prices of fertilizer and pesticides would benefit the farmers more.

SANGAREDDY.

Zaheerabad farmers pin their hopes on KCR government

R. AVADHANI

Make a plea for optimum utilisation of resources to help irrigate agricultural land in the area

Farmers in Zaheerabad have pinned their hopes on the new government as they are expecting it to make optimum use of resources to help irrigate agricultural land in the area. The surplus water is being used more by farmers of neighbouring Karnataka, they allege.

Narinjavagu is located in the Kottur (B) village in Zaheerabad mandal.

The project was constructed in the early 70s and the supply of irrigation water commenced from 1971. About 2,450 acres under the Left canal and 550 acres under Right canal can be irrigated under the project.

According to sources in the irrigation department, 85.17 million cubic feet (mcft) water can be stored in the project during the rainy season and it can be increased to 2,412 mcft if the silt is removed.

According to rough estimates, 2,300 mcft water flows into Karnataka as there is no proper facility to store and use it.

Former Minister Md. Fareeduddin had proposed the construction of a canal to divert surplus water and sent proposals at an estimated cost of Rs. 67.16 crore.

However, it did not materialise and meanwhile, the cost escalated.

Later, former Minister and present legislator J. Geeta Reddy sent proposals with an estimated cost of Rs. 90 crore for the diversion of water to Singoor project. As part of that, Rs. 4.5 crore was proposed for the project doors, right and left canals.

Though the works were formally commenced, not much progress was made.

Farmers are expecting that with the formation of TRS government, there will be focused attention on the use of water under the project.

“It may not be feasible in cost-benefit ratio as we have to invest approximately Rs. 150 crore to divert 1 tmcft water of the 1.2 tmcft water that is flowing into Karnataka from Narinjavagu to Singoor. In addition, it may become an interstate project involving many issues,” said an engineer of the irrigation department.

TIRUPATI

Rescue cane and cattle farmers, YSRC tells Naidu

STAFF REPORTER

The YSR Congress has appealed to Chief Minister-designate N. Chandrababu Naidu to provide respite to the farming community which is mired in a variety of problems in the district.

The appeal, which comes in the wake of Mr. Naidu’s arrival here on Wednesday to get elected as the TDLP leader, includes settlement of dues to cane farmers for crushing undertaken in the Gajulamandyam and Chittoor sugar factories and remunerative price to milk supplied by cattle-rearers in the dairy-rich district.

With sugarcane being one of the major ‘fetching’ crops in the arid district, a chunk of farmers are into cane growing. “The Rs.15 crore due for the 2012-13 crushing season has still not been paid to farmers. Though the cost of cultivation has grown 300 per cent, the crushing cost for 2013-14 has not been announced yet,” said T. Adikesavulu Reddy, district convener of YSRC farmers’ wing, indicating that the total dues had piled up to

Rs. 39 crore. The price has been pegged at Rs.2,650 in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and between Rs.2,700 and Rs.2,900 in UP, he said. Another problem staring at the district farmers is the labelling of the jaggery produced here as 'black jaggery'. "Though black jaggery is used as cattle feed, fish feed and even in Ayurvedic products, sanctions are imposed on the farmers and the produce is seized with the notion that it could land in distilleries," Mr. Reddy noted. In his representation, he also urged Mr. Naidu to rescue the cattle-rearers by providing remunerative price of Rs.30 per litre of milk procured. He also appealed to the new Government to arrange to pay the estimated Rs.60 crore crop loss for the kharif season 2013-14 to the farmers.

GUNTUR

Agriculture gets a lion's share in Annual Credit Plan

STAFF REPORTER

District Collector S. Suresh Kumar on Wednesday released the Annual Credit Plan (ACP) outlay for Guntur district which stood at Rs.12,491.43 crore, an increase of 16.15 per cent over the last year's plan.

Allocation towards priority sector was at Rs.10,563.84 crore, an increase of 14.83 per cent over last year's plan of Rs.9199.41 crore.

Agriculture gets a lion's share of credit with an allotment of Rs.7,662.94 crore, out of which agriculture term loans account for Rs.1,334.37 crore and short term production credit was at Rs.6,328.57 crore. The total priority sector advances stand at Rs.10,563.84 crore, while the non-priority sector gets Rs.1,927.59 crore.

The share of annual credit plan was 100.18 per cent of Potential Linked Credit Plan (PLP) prepared by Nabard. The potential identified by Nabard under priority sector was Rs.10,544.34 Crore.

Deputy General Manager of Andhra Bank V.M. Parthasarathi said that increase in outlay of short term production credit was at Rs.1,136.96 crore, an increase of 21.89 per cent over last year. Sufficient allocations were made for minor irrigation (Rs.36.59 crore), land development (Rs.32 crore), farm mechanisation (Rs.123.92 crore), plantation and horticulture (Rs.20.16 crore), dairy development (Rs.777.83 crore, out of which Rs.688.29 crore allotted to SHG), poultry (Rs.42.74 crore) etc.

The SHG sector has been allotted Rs.890.15 crore. The share of Andhra Bank and SBI is 19.59 per cent and 27.46 per cent respectively and the two banks share 47.05 per cent of priority sector credit load of ACP.

KARIMNAGAR,

Paddy worth Rs. 698 cr. procured

STAFF REPORTER

The district administration had procured paddy worth Rs. 698.72 crore through 617 procurement centres including IKP (Indira Kranthi Patham) and PACS (Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies) during the rabi season in Karimnagar district.

In a press note here today, district supply officer B. Chandra Prakash said that they had procured a total of 5,19,566 tonnes of paddy including 2,93,763 tonnes by IKP centres and 2,25,521 tonnes by PACS in the district. Out of the total amount of paddy procured, they had also transported 4,98,185 tonnes of paddy to the rice mills. He also said that they had also disbursed Rs. 637.43 crore to farmers after the procurement of paddy.

NAGAPATTINAM,

Ornamental fish fair in Vijayawada

STAFF REPORTER

The third edition of Aqua Aquaria India', the biennial aquaculture ornamental fish culture exhibition organised by the Marine Products Export Development Authority is slated to be held in Vijayawada in February 2015.

According to a release, the two-day show proposed from February 20 to 22 will be held on Loyola College campus of Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh.

According to the release, over 20,000 delegates from India and abroad are expected. The early bird scheme for exhibitors for registering at concessional rates closes on November 30, 2014, the release said. Visit www.aquaaquaria.com.

TIRUCHI.

Five tonnes of mangoes seized

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Collector reportedly asked the corporation to raid the godowns in Gandhi Market



DANGEROUS MIX:A worker empties a box of mangoes which was stuffed with calciumcarbide during a raid in Tiruchi on Tuesday.— PHOTO: A. MURALITHARAN

About five tonnes of mangoes, which were being ripened using calcium carbide stones at three locations at the Gandhi Market in the city, were seized and destroyed by officials of the Tiruchirapalli City Corporation here on Tuesday.

Corporation officials conducted checks at over dozen mango shops at the market and mangoes which were being ripened using calcium carbide stones were seized from two shops and a house used as a godown.

Corporation officials conducted the raids on getting instructions from District Collector Jayashree Muralidharan, who personally raided a few godowns at Mambazhasalai in the city about 10 days ago.

About 18 tonnes of mangoes were seized and destroyed then.

City Health Officer S. Mariappan, who supervised the operation at the Gandhi Market on Tuesday, said a report would be sent to the district administration recommending action against the offenders under provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Food Safety Act.

Offence

Use of calcium carbide, a hazardous chemical, to ripen mangoes is an offence under the Food Safety and Standards Act.

Meanwhile, officials of the Food Safety Department said they were monitoring the use of the carbide stones.

Checks have been conducted at 83 godowns and shops to check the use of chemicals and nearly 19 tonnes of mangoes ripened using carbide stone have been seized so far this season.

Food Safety officials were maintaining surveillance across the district and samples of various fruits and vegetables were collected and sent for lab analysis to check for use of chemicals or wax, sources said.

CALL 2333330

Eating fruits ripened using the calcium carbide might have serious health implications for the consumers. Common symptoms reported after eating such fruits are diarrhoea, vomiting, and eye and skin irritations, according to officials. Complaints with respect to food safety can be lodged with the department by dialling 2333330,

VIJAYAWADA

Now, gift carbide-free mangoes

M. SRINIVAS



An employee packing mangoes at an outlet at Mogalrajpuram in Vijayawada.— PHOTO:
V. RAJU

: This summer, send carbide-free mangoes to your near and dear ones across the country in a gift pack without any hassle. Kotagiri Foods, an outlet at Mogalrajpuram, is ready to

serve you. All you need to do is place an order, and your friends get to relish juicy mangoes.

Neatly packed in boxes (minimum 5 kg), the mangoes are delivered at the doorstep of the addressee within 24 hours after placing an order. Senders have to visit the outlet and select the variety of the fruit to be despatched. They must also submit an identity proof of the addressee to ensure delivery at the right address.

“We collect transport charges in addition to the actual cost of mangoes, ranging from Rs.250 to Rs.500. We also explain the terms and conditions to customers before accepting an order to avoid confusion,” explains Kotagiri Foods proprietor K. V. Narasimha Rao.

In all, the outlet supplies more than a dozen varieties of mangoes that include ‘Alphonso’, ‘Banginapally’, ‘Totapari’, ‘Cherukurasam’, ‘Chinarasam’ and ‘Peddarasam’, ‘Rumani’, ‘Suvarnarekha’, ‘Himayath’, ‘Kothapally Kobbari’, ‘Mallika’ and ‘Panchadarakalasa’. A 5-kg-gift pack is made up of at least 10 to 15 mangoes depending on the size.

Mr. Rao says he directly purchases mangoes from farmers at Nuzveedu, Visannapeta and Thiruvuru and shift them to ripening chambers approved by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) at Nuzveedu where fruits are cleaned. The mangoes then are washed with cold and hot water and later, grading is done based on the size to put them in ripening chambers.

“We maintain a temperature of 18 degrees Celsius for cooling the fruits for two days,” he says.

Neatly packed mangoes are delivered at the doorstep of the addressee within 24 hours after placing an order

Water level

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 40.65 feet on Wednesday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 4,039 cusecs and the discharge 500 cusecs.

MADURAI,

The water level in the Periyar dam stood at 113.70 feet (permissible level 142 feet) on Tuesday with an inflow of 3 cusecs and a discharge of 200 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 31.92 feet (full level 71 feet) with no inflow and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 1,330 mcft.

Rainfall recorded during the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Tuesday (in mm) was as follows: Manjalaru -1, Marudhanadhi - 15, Sothuparai - 2, Peranai - 12, Kuppanampatti - 5, Andipatti - 24, Madurai - 11, Sathiyar dam - 13, Metupatti - 16, Kallandhiri - 16, Pulipatti - 13.4, Thaniamangalam - 2, Idayapatti - 15, Viraganoor 14.8 and Kodaikanal - 4.2.

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Wednesday, Jun 4

Max Min

35° | 28°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:41

Humidity: 38

Sunset: 06:31

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1001

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Jun 5

Max Min

34° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday Jun 6	Saturday Jun 7	Sunday Jun 8	Monday Jun 9	Tuesday Jun 10
37° 29°	38° 29°	34° 29°	32° 29°	31° 29°
Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Chennai

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:41

Humidity: 75

Sunset: 06:32

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1003



Business Standard

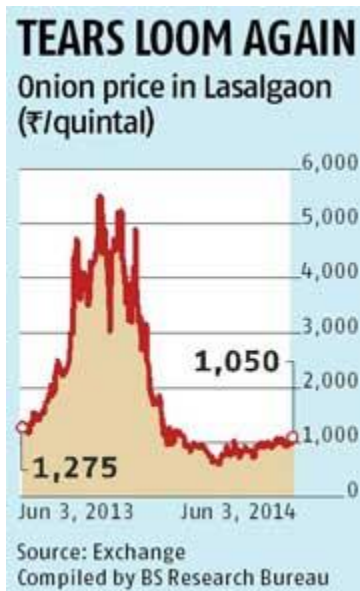
Another onion crisis in the offing



India may be faced with an onion crisis again. This [kharif season](#), the El Niño weather phenomenon, which could disrupt rains, and a shortage of seeds are seen as concerns.

Ahead of Diwali last year, onion prices in retail markets across several cities stood at about Rs 100 a kg; in wholesale markets, prices were about Rs 60 a kg. In December 2010, too, prices in the [wholesale market](#) in Lasangaon near Nashik stood at Rs 60 a kg.

This time, however, what may allay concerns to an extent is the fact that states that traditionally don't grow onions, at least not in the kharif season, are experimenting with the crop. These include Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Odisha.



For the onion crop, these states have secured commitments from Nashik -based National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation ([NHRDF](#)) for the supply of seeds.

Also, Madhya Pradesh has decided to give subsidies for storage facilities.

Across growing regions, farmers are seeking to sow more this

season, as they had recorded good earnings last season, when wholesale markets recorded prices of Rs 40-60 a kg for three-four months.

R P Gupta, director of NHRDF, said, “This rabi season, seeds were damaged due to hailstorms and unseasonal rains. This will be a dampener for farmers, as they want to sow more and seeds might not be available. The El Niño threat is already looming over this kharif season. Together, these mean a potential crisis on the onion front is in the offing.”

Gupta added last year, the onion crop was sown across 1.21 million hectares. This year, the sowing area is unlikely to be higher than last year as seed stocks are low.

What adds to the challenges is the fact that though the crop is consumed across the country, it is grown in only a few pockets. Experts say if the crop is grown in the northern and north-eastern states, also India can tap export destinations such as Bangladesh and Singapore. Currently, most exports are from Mumbai.

Gupta says, “The government should ask agencies such as National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation to intervene in the onion market and provide it financial support.”

Earlier, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry’s agriculture committee had reviewed the onion market and concluded that one exchanges could have futures trading in onion, but exchanges didn’t favour the idea. Several market players have said for a futures market, storage and transport facilities have to be made efficient.

To address the scarcity dehydrated onions were also proposed. However, this has been confined only to the export market because except restaurants and food processors, not many have embraced the idea.

After carrying out a study last year, National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange ([NCDEX](#)) had said, “One of the key reasons for frequent price shocks in onion is the structural inefficiencies in the marketplace; the market lacks transparency and is closely controlled by a few participants.”

Therefore, in the first phase, the exchange proposed reforms be introduced in the primary physical markets in Maharashtra and Karnataka. The markets, NCDEX said, should adopt the NCDEX Spot Exchange’s unified market platform. This would ensure recording of all arrivals and trades, and a robust and competitive price discovery mechanism in primary markets.

The study added, “Dissemination of price and volume data to stakeholders could be used for pricing forward contracts and (when launched) futures contracts.”

[Mills await Paswan's stand on sugar export subsidy](#)

Even as the Department of Food and Public Distribution works to resolve the contentious issue of [sugarcane](#) pricing for farmers, there is uncertainty regarding the issue of export subsidy on raw [sugar](#), a major initiative to reduce mounting arrears.

A senior official said just weeks before the new government took charge, the department had moved a proposal to suspend the export subsidy from June, owing to slow exports. In the next few days, Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan is expected to take a decision on the matter. As an alternative, he might aggressively pitch for fast-tracking the ethanol blending programme.

To help millers export excess stocks and clear dues, the United Progressive Alliance ([UPA](#)) government had announced export subsidy of Rs 3,300 a tonne on raw sugar. The subsidy was for February and March. For April and May, the government had reduced the subsidy to Rs 2, 277 a tonne, owing to change in dollar-rupee exchange rates.

Officials said now, it has been proposed this incentive be withdrawn.

From April 4, sugar prices have been falling in the domestic market. As of now, prices have corrected about seven per cent. On April 4, [NCDEX](#) Spot Kolhapur medium grade sugar stood at Rs 33 a kg; now, the price has fallen to Rs 31.8 a kg.

Millers and industry representatives had strongly opposed the cut in export subsidy, saying the conditions on which the subsidy was granted hadn't changed. According to industry estimates, sugar mills owe about Rs 12,000 crore to farmers. Though the crushing season, which started in October 2013, has almost ended, cash-starved mills are unable to clear arrears, as sugar prices are lower than production costs. "Of the four million tonnes (mt) of raw sugar to be exported, only 400,000 tonnes have been shipped. So, to withdraw the subsidy at this state will be wrong," said a senior industry official.

Officials said currently, the ex-factory sugar sale price in [Maharashtra](#) stood at Rs 28-29 a kg, while the cost of production was Rs 31-32; in Uttar Pradesh, the ex-factory sale price was Rs 31-32 a kg, while the cost of production was Rs 35-36 a kg. To enable millers to clear dues, the UPA government had, last year, approved Rs 6,600 crore of interest-free loans to the sugar sector.

In the 2013-14 marketing year, sugar production in India, the world's second-largest producer and largest consumer, is estimated to decline four per cent. The country's annual demand is estimated at 23-23.5 mt.

Cardamom up 0.5% as demand picks up



[Cardamom](#) futures rose by 0.50% to Rs 912.80 per kg in futures market today as speculators indulged in creating fresh positions after demand picked up in the spot market.

Besides, tight stocks position in the physical market following less arrivals from producing region also supported the uptrend.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), cardamom for delivery in June rose by Rs 4.50, or 0.50%, to Rs 912.80 per kg in business turnover of 153 lots.

Likewise, the spice for delivery in July contract edged up by Rs 1.70, or 0.19%, to Rs 913 per kg in 63 lots.

Market analysts said fresh positions built up by speculators on the back of a rise in demand in the spot market against tight supplies from producing regions mainly influenced cardamom prices in futures trade.

Chana up 0.2% on spot demand



[Chana](#) prices recovered by 0.29% to Rs 2,785 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators created fresh positions, driven by a rise in demand in the spot market.

At the [National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange](#), chana for delivery in June rose by Rs 8, or 0.29% to Rs 2,785 per quintal with an open interest of 86,380 lots.

Similarly, the commodity for delivery in July moved up by Rs 5, or 0.18%, to Rs 2,849 per quintal in 1,10,520 lots.

Analysts said fresh positions created by speculators supported on the back of rising demand in the spot markets mainly led to the rise in chana prices at futures trade.

Gathering pace



Kharif planting With pre-summer rains lashing Kerala and parts of Karnataka, farmers have begun to speed up sowing of kharif rice in Mysore district of Karnataka. MA Sriram

Chana falls on higher arrivals

Chana continued to trade lower in Indore *mandis* , with prices on Tuesday quoting at Rs. 2,625-2,650 a quintal (Rs. 2,675-2,700). Chana (desi), on the other hand, ruled at Rs. 2,500; chana (Vishal) at Rs. 2,700-2,800; Kabuli Bitki at Rs. 2,850-20; and chana (Mausmi) ruled at Rs. 2,900-3,000 a quintal. Compared with last week, chana is ruling marginally higher. In contrast to demand, arrival of chana (domestic and imported) continues to be higher, leading to a fall in prices. Chana dal, on the other hand, gained marginally on improved demand at a lower rate, with chana dal (average) in the local mandis today quoted at Rs. 3,150-75; chana dal (medium) at Rs. 3,250-75; and chana dal (bold) ruling at Rs. 3,425-50. Our Correspondent

Groundnut oil drops as millers sell

Groundnut and cotton oil dropped on poor demand. Moreover, selling by millers also put pressure on oils prices. Groundnut oil new tin fell Rs. 10 to Rs. 1,220-1,225 per 15 kg.

In two days, groundnut oil has decreased Rs. 20 per tin. Groundnut oil loose moved down by Rs. 5 to Rs. 665-670 per 10 kg and Jamnagar line *teliya* tin declined Rs. 7 to Rs. 1,045-1,046 per 15 kg. About 4-5 tankers of groundnut oil were traded in Saurashtra. A Rajkot-based edible oil retail trader said demand in retail market was weak. On the other hand, supply increased from millers as crushing activity has gone up after higher arrival of summer groundnut crop.

Cottonseed oil price declined Rs. 15 to Rs. 577-580 per 10 kg. Cottonseed oil new tin decreased Rs. 10 to Rs. 1,045-1,065 per 15 kg.

About 30-35 tankers of cotton oil were traded.

50% turmeric unsold in Erode markets

50% TURMERIC UNSOLD IN ERODE

Quality problems dogged sales of turmeric in Erode markets on Tuesday, with only 50 per cent of the offerings being sold. Due to the arrival of poor quality hybrid turmeric, the finger variety fell sharply by Rs. 780 a quintal. Of the 550 bags of hybrid turmeric that arrived, only 200 found takers. Other varieties decreased by Rs. 100. At the Erode Turmeric merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety turmeric was sold at Rs. 4,819-6,299 a quintal and the root variety Rs. 3,850-6,111. Our Correspondent

Rubber consumers demand study on stock situation

Natural rubber consumers have urged the Rubber Board to conduct an independent study to estimate the stock situation, considering the paucity of the commodity.

In a communication to the Rubber Board, the consumers said that the domestic availability of the commodity has taken a turn for the worse this financial year.

Non-availability of rubber in markets in recent times has added to the woes of consumers especially small and medium enterprises, said Niraj Thakkar, President of All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA).

The Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA) said that non-availability is playing havoc with the production schedules of tyre companies. While tyre companies have started importing rubber to meet the deficit, the local availability is far lower than anticipated in the current fiscal.

Pepper unchanged on poor upcountry demand

PEPPER UNCHANGED ON POOR DEMAND

Pepper continued to stay unchanged on limited activity on Tuesday. The national exchange remained inactive and one tonne was traded on the regional exchange. Due to good pre-monsoon showers in pepper-growing areas and primary markets, the moisture content in pepper has gone up. As a result, buyers were quoting lower rates, market sources told *Business Line*. They said only six tonnes of pepper arrived and they were all traded. On the IPSTA platform, one tonne was traded in June at Rs. 72,292 a quintal. Shops remain closed from 12 noon to 5 p.m due to the heat wave conditions prevailing in the North Indian States and this has weakened upcountry demand, they said. GK Nair

30,000 tonnes rubber imported in May

Spot rubber finished almost steady on Tuesday.

Sentiments remained under pressure following the news that above 30,000 tonnes of rubber had been imported during May.

The trend was partially mixed as ISNR 20 lost ground on buyer resistance amidst scattered transactions. Sheet rubber closed unchanged at Rs. 145 a kg, according to traders and the Rubber Board. The grade was quoted flat at Rs. 142 by dealers. June futures inched up to Rs. 144.01 (Rs. 143.96), July to Rs. 142.77 (Rs. 142.17), August to Rs. 140.75 (Rs. 140.72), and September to Rs. 139.75 (Rs. 139.46) while the October futures weakened to Rs. 140.90 (Rs. 141.70) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

The rubber mini futures maturing in June declined to Rs. 143.96 (Rs. 151). RSS 3 (spot) slipped to Rs. 119.35 (Rs. 119.42) at Bangkok. June futures closed at ¥183.7 (Rs. 106.66) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg) were: RSS-4: 145 (145); RSS-5: 143 (143); Ungraded: 137 (137); ISNR 20: 135.50 (137) and Latex 60%: 120 (120).

Ample supplies pound wheat

AMPLE STOCKS POUND WHEAT

Lack of buying interest and easy availability of stocks pulled dara wheat and flour prices marginally down on Tuesday. Sluggish domestic demand and easy availability of stocks resulted in lower wheat and flour prices, said Radhey Sham, a market expert. Traders expect dara wheat and flour prices to drop further marginally, but any major fall is unlikely. Dara wheat in the physical market dropped by Rs. 10 to Rs. 1,455-1,460 a quintal. Around 2,500 bags of wheat arrived and stocks were directly offloaded at the

mills. Mill delivery was at Rs. 1,455 a quintal, while delivery at the chakki was at Rs. 1,460. Our Correspondent

Conditions favourable for the onset of monsoon

Myriad pieces of the monsoon onset puzzle have started falling into place, according to an India Meteorological Department update on Tuesday.

An offshore trough, an elongated area of lower pressure and a receptacle for the westerly to south-westerly flows, is in the process of stretching out into place along the Kerala coast.

The intensity of the monsoon will depend on the strength of the offshore trough. As on Tuesday evening, it was a feeble formation and in need to deepen further to precipitate the onset. This should take place over the next couple of days, according to the Met Department outlook.

Also in place was a crucial “east-west shear zone of turbulence” over the south peninsula, another monsoon enabler.

This “shear zone” features opposing winds in an area rising from three km and six km into the atmosphere.

This is the height-level in the atmosphere where the monsoon is most active. The “shear zone” also sets up the platform for rain-bearing systems (low-pressure area et al) to play around in and drive the monsoon upcountry.

The Met Department assessed conditions as favourable for the onset of monsoon over Kerala, and its further advance into some parts of Tamil Nadu and adjoining Bay of Bengal over the next two days.

Conditions are also favourable for the advance of the monsoon into the north-eastern States over the next three days.

The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts said cross-equatorial flows strengthening from Friday and peaking through the next week.

This will translate into heavy to very rain variously for peninsular India, the east and west coasts.

The US National Centres for Environmental Prediction suggests that a rain-head racing away along the east coast during the week starting on Tuesday.

India Met Department also indicated the possibility of deep trough building along the east coast, thanks to the intense heating of East India in the recent past.

Heavy rain

Heavy rain is expected to wallop the west coast from January 11 onwards, according to this forecast. A cyclone tracker featured by the US Climate Prediction Centre continued to put the south-east Arabian Sea (off Kerala) for formation of a weather system (likely low-pressure area) during this week.

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Rubber industry wants relook at official stock data

Agitated by weak stock flow to the market, the rubber consuming industry has questioned the quality of official Natural Rubber (NR) stock data of the Rubber Board of India.

All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA) and Automative Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA) have also demanded that the Board get a fresh study conducted on the supply situation by an independent agency. "There has been practically no selling of NR for the most part of May," says Niraj Thakkar, president, AIRIA. "It is apparent that the domestic NR availability scenario has taken a turn for the worse in the ongoing financial year and we have pointed this out to the Rubber Board," he told FE.

In a letter to Rubber Board chairman Sheela Thomas, AIRIA has dubbed the available stock figures in Rubber Board's projections as "divorced from reality" and urged "a reality check through an independent study". "It is during such times that the available NR stock should come into play. However there has been no availability of NR in markets in recent times, adding to the woes of rubber consumers, especially SMEs who are already grappling with a challenging environment," says Thakkar's letter.

According to latest Rubber Board figures, the NR stock available at the end of April 2014 was 2.35 lakh tonne. Apparently, the industry is no mood to believe this data.

"Currently, the domestic NR price is ruling around R30 per kg higher than the international price. That should cause the stock lying with dealers to find its way to the market. Since there is continued acute shortage, it only lends credence to the industry's contention that the stock position as suggested by the Rubber Board may be exaggerated. An independent study to check the stock position will do a lot of good," says Thakkar. ATMA too points out that the absence of NR in local markets is wreaking havoc with the production schedules of tyre companies. While the companies have already contracted imports to meet the deficit, the local availability is much lower than anticipated in the

current financial year. “Considering the present levels of scarcity, we have apprehensions over the likely scenario in the coming months,” says Rajiv Budhraj, director general, ATMA. ATMA and AIRIA have also asked for revisiting the projected NR scenario for 2014-15 in terms of production, consumption, imports and exports based on the actual scenario observed in April and June.

Extra 21,000 tonne of pepper to enter market from 2016

An additional 21,000 tonne of pepper is likely to come to the Indian market from 2016, as newly planted vines in Idukki start yielding, Spices Board officials said. Domestic production of pepper in 2013-14 is estimated to be around 45,000 tonne, while the last Spices Congress put it at 35,000 tonne.

India’s pepper production has been declining rapidly in the past 10 years. From nearly one lakh tonne of annual production, it has come down by more than 50%. India is the largest consumer of pepper in the world with annual consumption of 40,000-45,000 tonne. India used to export 40,000- 50,000 tonne annually from its yearly production of 80,000-100,000 tonne.

Currently, Vietnam is leading the global pepper trade, growing between 125,000-150,000 tonne annually. It also leads in productivity, producing 1,200 kg to 1,300 kg per hectare as against 300 kg of India. Pepper prices have already crossed the R700 per kg level in the domestic market and supply being really short, the market is expected to rally in the days to come.

Due to non-availability of enough pepper for export, the Spices Board had formulated a special project for pepper in Idukki district from 2009 to rejuvenate pepper and thereby increase production by funding from the National Horticulture Mission.

The project’s cost was R230.58 crore with financial assistance of R120 crore for five years from 2008-09. The Board had implemented the project for five years from 2009-10 and the project period was over by 2013-14.

“An area of 21396 hectares has been replanted under the scheme. It is expected to give additional yield of 21,000 tonne during 2016-17,” board sources said. Integrated pest and

disease management practices have been adopted on 28299 hectares which could result in higher yields.

DECCAN Chronicle

Kerala Government aims to plant 10 Lakh trees



Thiruvananthapuram: The State Government, in a massive afforestation drive, will plant one million trees within an hour on June 5, World Environment Day. The ‘one million tree’ project, ‘Harithasree’, has been taken up as part of the Participatory Environment Action Programme.

“The programme is built on the concept of ‘One Man One Tree’,” a top Forest Department official said. “The hope is that the programme will evolve into a major plant and nurture initiative,” the official said.

Harithasree cooperatives, made up of members of Kudumbashree, biodiversity clubs, residents associations and NGOs will be constituted for the nurture of the saplings that will be planted on the day.

The Social Forestry division of the Forest Department has supplied the saplings to schools and colleges across the state. Each sapling costs Rs 8. The trees which would be planted are mango, jack fruit, mahagony, Kudampuli (Malabar tamarind), Koovalam (aegle marmelos), Chamata (palash) and Zapota.

The District Collector will oversee the planting in each district. The Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) will be the coordinating officer. “The Collector and the ACF will enlist the support of the local bodies, residents associations, sacred grove owners and religious leaders for the planting and subsequent upkeep of the saplings,” the forest official said.

Participating organizations like Kudumbashree and NGOs will also be asked to come out with a strategic plan on ways to tend the saplings. Schools and colleges have already intimated the District Collectors and ACFs concerned about the number of seedlings required.

Large quantity of chemical-laced mangoes seized

Civic authorities on Tuesday seized and destroyed nearly 7,000 kg of mangoes which were found ripened using calcium carbide. This followed a raid conducted by corporation health officials in the godowns of fruit merchants located across the Gandhi Market.

Corporation authorities said carbide stones which were used for ripening mangoes were also seized along with powders of the same chemical. Ash from the stones engulfed the godowns during the raid.

The seized fruits were dumped into a garbage truck and were taken away for destroying. City health officer Dr S Maariappan led the team of civic officials during the raid. Officials are yet to estimate the total value of the destroyed mangoes.

Though traders have been warned about the hazards of artificial ripening, wholesale merchants still practice it. Speaking after conducting the raids, Maariappan said shops were found selling mangoes that were artificially ripened and they were seized to protect the health of consumers.

Earlier during two raids 21.15 tonnes of artificially-ripened mangoes of several varieties were seized. A team from the food safety wing had raided 50 shops in Gandhi Market on April 30. Seized mangoes kept in 110 cases were valued at Rs 1.47 lakh. On May 20, a team led by district collector Jayashree Muralidharan seized about 18.9 tonnes of mangoes from six godowns at Mambalasalai in Srirangam.

Food safety officials have been alerting public about the risks involved in consuming mangoes. They advise people to buy mangoes with care. Artificially ripened mangoes

lack greenish patches and spot only black patches and wrinkles. Consumption of mangoes treated with calcium carbide is extremely hazardous because it contains traces of arsenic and phosphorus. Such mangoes can cause mouth ulcers, gastric problems, diarrhoea and skin rashes.

Calcium carbide produces maximum artificial heat which helps ripen the mangoes within 25-26 hours. Calcium carbide can be used when the mangoes are 30-40% ripe. Traders across the country use the same technique to ripen bananas.

Pokkali farms in west Kochi take the mechanized route

A mini tiller was presented to the farmers in Edavanakkad to help them prepare the field for the pokkali crop as the monsoon sets in this week.

The tiller machine was handed over on Tuesday by Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Ernakulam, which functions under the Centre for Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Ernakulam. Last month, the machine was given a trial run at different pokkali fields.

"The tiller machine is suitable for the pokkali crop which follows the traditional organic farming system. The machine popularly known as garden tiller/mini tiller is of 5.5hp and weighs 60kg. The fields have to be dry to enough for a person to walk without sinking his legs.

"Most pokkali fields will be dry, naturally, if the previous shrimp farming is over on time to facilitate the draining of water in the first week of May. In certain fields, pumping may be required to dry the fields," KVK's senior scientist Shinoj Subramannian. The mini tiller can plough about 1.5 acres in eight hours. At least, 15 labourers are required to cover so much area in a day. The cost of operation of the tiller is only Rs 2,500 compared

with Rs 12,000 for manual labour. The machine requires a litre of petrol to run for an hour. "It is very helpful for sustainable pokkali farming as skilled labourers are not available in most places. Most of the skilled workers are also above 50 years of age," he added.

After introducing the machine to a group of farmers and Padasekhara Samiti office-bearers on Tuesday, KVK selected Pushpangadhan from Edavanakkad and two youths from Paravoor to train others in using the machine. As part of the Mahila Kisan Saha Saktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), funds have been provided through the district Kudumbashree mission to training women workers in pokkali farming. The Kendra plans to train a group of 15 Kudumbashree workers from each block panchayat having pokkali farming into a mechanized task force.

The CMFRI has already popularized cage fish farming in pokkali fields through KVK to augment the income of pokkali farmers.

Foundry man' gets state award for green awareness

Sheetal Ketkale (42), who is known as the 'foundry man', has won the state government's first prize for creating environment awareness by consistently experimenting with bamboo.

Ketkale, who has a foundry in which 200 people work, has successfully planted bamboo on over 100 acres of land spread across Kolhapur, Sangli and Satara districts. When he started the work, hardly anyone supported the idea as people were unaware of the monetary and environmental benefits of bamboo.

The water resources department of the state government recently awarded his NGO Global Cooling Foundation (GCF) with the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vanshree Puraskar for its experiments with bamboo, which is not a favourite among the farmers in

Western Maharashtra. The award comprises Rs 1 lakh cash prize and a certificate for the NGO.

"I am into engineering business and people expected me to continue with it. However, I read about the benefits of bamboo on the internet which attracted my attention. I started digging dip and found that though bamboo exists in Western Ghats, people are unaware of its business potential. Some parts in Konkan region are famous for it, but people in Western Maharashtra treated bamboo as useless," Ketkale said.

He contacted experts from southern India, where bamboo is seen as a cash crop. Later, he started using his own 10-acre land for planting bamboo. His efforts started gathering momentum around two years ago, when a handful of farmers approached him to help in planting bamboo at their fields.

"Now, hundreds of people are taking part in the process and I am helping them to establish a chain from plantation to factory. I have started my own furniture factory by experimenting with bamboo, which will start operating in a month," Ketkale said.

At present, people from several districts such as Pune, Solapur and Gadchiroli are making money using the information and plantation provided by GCF. "We provide complete solution to the farmers such as site selection for plantation, cultivation, sapling supply, after care, fertilizer, irrigation management, cutting, harvesting, marketing and transportation. This is helping the poor and middle-class people having small pieces of land to earn additional revenue. At the same time, the process is addressing environmental concerns as bamboo absorbs carbon dioxide," Ketkale added.

Benefits of bamboo

- * Plantation of bamboo over an acre is ensuring production worth Rs 1-1.5 lakh
- * One-time plantation is sufficient for the next 50-60 years
- * Bamboo can be used for more than 1,500 purposes
- * It has become a major source to reduce salinity of land
- * Bamboo is seen as a major source of carbon absorption

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Organised milk procurement share to reach 34 per cent by FY19: Report



The share of organised milk procurement, which currently contributes 24 per cent of total supplies, may climb to 34 per cent by 2018-19, according to a Rabobank report.

The organised dairy sector has shown strong growth in the face of product price

increases. Further growth in value-added dairy products will compel private milk processors to reinforce the supply chain links to get additional supplies of quality milk, Rabobank said in a report 'Milking the Chain'. It said access to capital will be the main driver to support the growth ambitions of private processors.

"Large-scale corporate dairy farming is only likely to develop in the long term. In the meantime, medium-scale farming will be essential to secure sufficient milk supplies. Processors will have to play an anchor role for other stakeholders.

"This will help create integrated dairy companies involved in milk production and in the processing and distribution of dairy products, yielding higher returns in the value chain," Rabobank Senior Industry Analyst Shiva Mudgil said.

To increase milk production, private processors have to become actively involved upstream to promote and enhance their milk supply, it said. They need to reduce their dependence on agents and directly engage with dairy farmers to source good quality milk, according to the report.

Private processors must also engage with service providers of feed, nutrition, genetics and animal health care, it said. With strong value growth of 15 per cent over the past five years, the Indian dairy industry has experienced little impact on demand even after retail prices of dairy products were increased.

Further, growth in traditional market categories such as packed milk and indigenous products (10 to 15 per cent) and in value-added categories such as cheese and infant milk products (20 to 25 per cent), has created a good opportunity for milk processors to expand the product portfolio and geography.

Income security for farmer must be a priority of new government: M S Swaminathan

NEW DELHI: Income security for farmers and conserving water and soil health should be the top priorities of the new government, eminent agriculture scientist M S Swaminathan said today.

Swaminathan said he had met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and presented him the agenda on agriculture for the new government.

"The income security for farmers, conserving water and soil health should be on top of the agenda of the new government," he said.

"I have also suggested for sea water farming in coastal regions of the country... to make use of the sea water for irrigation purposes," he added.

New Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh after taking charge had said the government would launch insurance scheme for farmers after determining their average income in the last 5-7 years.

"Farmers will take interest in agriculture only when their investment is guaranteed," Singh had said.

Swaminathan also said there was proposal to set up 60,000 pulses villages that needs to be implemented at the earliest.

He added that government should rename the Agriculture Ministry as 'Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare'.

Government keeping close watch on onion prices



With onion prices showing a marginal rise in some parts, the new government is closely watching the trend and is likely to restrict exports if the vegetable gets abnormally costlier.

Onions are costlier by Rs 5/kg in retail markets in most cities as compared to the last year prices. The vegetable is selling at Rs 21/kg in Delhi, Rs 22/kg in Kolkata and 27/kg in Mumbai, as per official data.

When asked about onion prices, Consumer Affairs Secretary Keshav Desiraju told PTI: "The retail price at this point of time has increased marginally as compared to last year level. However, there is no abnormal rise in prices and there is no serious concern at this point of time."

The Department is "keeping a close watch on the price trend" and has "flagged concerns to both the Agriculture and Commerce Ministries" to take steps to control if any abnormal price rise in the coming days, he said.

The retail price is ruling at Rs 21/kg at present in Delhi as compared to Rs 17/kg in the year-ago period.

Asked if prices are rising due to production shortfall, he said: "There is no serious production glitch this year. There was hailstorm in the key growing state Maharashtra few months ago, but there was not much impact."

Stating that the current price trend is no different from that in the last few years, Desiraju said: "Steps need to be taken, if prices go up abnormally. We have an option of either importing or restricting exports."

"There is no minimum export price (MEP) on onion right now. A call on re-imposing MEP will be taken by the Cabinet Committee on Prices soon." he said.

In September last year, retail prices had shot to up Rs 100 per kg in many parts of the country. To rein in prices, the government had imposed MEP on onion and the minimum export price was raised several times to curb outbound shipments and boost domestic supplies. The government even imported onion.

With domestic supplies improving and wholesale prices crashing, the Centre had later done away with the MEP.

In the 2013-14, total onion exports fell by over 25 per cent to 1.35 million tonnes as against 1.82 million tonnes in the previous year.

According to the government research body National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF), the country's total onion production is estimated to be higher by 15 per cent at 19.29 million tonnes this year (July-June), from Rs 16.81 million tonnes a year ago.

In India, the world's second largest onion producer after China, onion is grown in three seasons -- kharif (summer), late kharif and rabi (winter).

Potato futures gain 0.76 per cent on rising demand



Potato futures gained 0.76 per cent to Rs 1,334 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators enlarged positions, supported by rising demand in the spot market.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, potato for delivery in June moved up by Rs 10, or 0.76 per cent to Rs 1,334 per quintal in business turnover of 34 lots.

Potato for delivery in July also gained Rs 8.90, or 0.65 per cent to Rs 1,373.20 per quintal in 50 lots.

Analysts said, besides rising demand in the spot markets, restricted arrivals from producing belts mainly led to rise in potato prices at futures trade.