

AHMEDABAD

Farmers, industrialists hail decision

With clearance for increasing the height of the dam, Gujarat stands to benefit from increased water availability for irrigation, drinking and power generation. The State gets the largest share for drinking water and irrigation, whereas Maharashtra stands to gain power. “The increase in height will enhance the water storage capacity of the dam by four times, from 1 million acre-feet to 4 million acre-feet. This is a big insurance against drought. Gujarat is heavily dependent on the Narmada for drinking and irrigation,” Jagdip Narayan Singh, Managing Director, Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd., told *The Hindu* .

THRISSUR

Ad hoc panel formed to set up company for nutmeg farmers



K. Krishnankutty, chairman of State committee to formulate agricultural policy, addressing a workshop on nutmeg, at the Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur, on Thursday.— Photo: By special arrangement

A one-day workshop on “Nutmeg harvest and post-harvest handling”, held at the Kerala Agricultural University on Thursday, urged farmers to set up a company for marketing and selling the produce.

The company would ensure a transparent pricing system for nutmeg, noted the workshop.

An ad hoc committee was formed to deal with the formalities of setting up the company. K. Krishnankutty is its chairman.

Varghese Koyikkara and M. B. Sasidharan of Ernakulam; Jins George and Lonappan Vennaattuparampil of Thrissur; Thomas Mathew Uppamkandathil; and Narayanankutty of Palakkad; are the farmers’ representatives in the committee. Jalaja S. Menon will represent the Krishi Vigyan Kendra in the committee.

Speakers called for measures to tap export opportunities. Only improvement in the quality of production will enhance exports.]

Systematic post-harvest handling of nutmeg is needed. Micro enterprises in processing and product diversification should be started by rural farmers, the workshop observed.

Inaugurating the workshop, K. Krishnakutty, farmer and chairman of the State committee for formulating agricultural policy, said the State's farm sector needed the special attention of the government. "The government should establish Krishi Business Kendras (KBKs), modelled on Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs). The KBKs should support farmers in price prediction, processing technologies and marketing," he said.

Presiding over the function, P.V. Balachandran, KAU director of extension, stressed the need for popularising scientific practices for post-harvest handling of nutmeg.

The subjects taken up at the workshop included scientific approaches in post-harvest handling (K.B. Sheela, KAU), nutmeg processing (E.Jayasree, Indian Institute of Spices Research), strength and weaknesses of nutmeg export (C.K. George, former executive director, Spices Board), nutmeg cultivation - the scene in Tamil Nadu (O.V.R. Somasundaram) and prospects of nutmeg-based enterprises (Krishnachandra Chaturvedi, Kuriakose Vinay Thomas and B.K. Jose).

M. Neena of Kochi; Ranjan S. Karippai, Professor and Head, KVK; and workshop coordinator Jalaja S. Menon were also present.

Farmers asked to adopt measures

to tap export opportunities

SANGAREDDY,

Loan waiver: farmers relieved over clarity

With the State government giving some clarity on the loan waiver scheme indicating that farm loan of Rs. 1 lakh or below would be waived off, the farmers seemed to be relieved and are figuring out what type of loans would be covered under the scheme.

“The announcement made by the government in the Assembly has given some clarity, but still the confusion prevails. The government should waive off all the farm loans of Rs. 1 lakh and below irrespective of their nature as the loans were taken to meet the farming expenditure,” said Pakala Srihari Rao, president of Telangana Rytu Rakshana Samithi (TRRS).

Stating that the TRS has promised to waive off all the loans to the tune of Rs. 1 lakh, he urged the government to keep the promise as the farmers were facing severe stress in this regard.

‘Scheme should also cover gold loans’

He said that any assurance by the government would prevent their suicides. A farmer, K. Ramachandraiah, from Taddanpally said the scheme should even cover gold loans as many farmers took loans from banks by pledging gold.

NAMAKKAL,

More funds for agriculture sector in credit plan

Outlay for financial year 2014-15 is Rs. 3,067 crore

The Annual Credit Plan (ACP) at an outlay of Rs. 3,067 crore for the financial year 2014-15 was released by District Collector and Chairman of the District level bankers committee V. Dakshinamoorthy at the Collectorate here on Wednesday. This outlay is 19.57 percent more than the outlay of Rs. 2,565 crore for 2013-14.

It will cover a total of 3,27,378 borrowers in the priority sector.

The allocation for the agriculture sector is Rs. 1,841 crore - Rs. 316 crore more than last year's target of Rs. 1,525 crore. Allocation for the non-farm sector has been increased from Rs. 440 crore in 2013-14 to Rs. 506 crore this year.

Allocation for the farm sector includes Rs. 1,400 crore towards crop loan and Rs. 164 crore for the poultry sector. Other major allocations for the farm agriculture and allied agriculture activities are: farm mechanisation – Rs. 71.5 crore, minor irrigation – Rs. 38 crore, plantation and horticulture - Rs. 40 crore, land development – Rs. 28.5 crore, dairy – Rs. 34.5 crore and sheep and goat – Rs. 12 crore.

A sum of Rs. 720 crore has been allocated to the other priority sectors – covering the areas of education and housing loans – compared to the Rs. 600 crore that was allotted to the sector, in 2013-14.

This year's ACP is within the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development's (NABARD's) Potential Linked Plan outlay of Rs. 3,336.38 crore – against Rs. 2,700 crore for the previous financial year.

Banks' share

Out of the total outlay of Rs. 3,067 crore, commercial banks' share Rs. 2,200 crore (71.73 percent), followed by the cooperative banks at Rs. 788 crore (25.69 percent), Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) with Rs. 53 crore (1.73 percent) and the Tamil Nadu Industries Investment Credit with Rs. 26 crore (0.85 percent).

Taking into account various development schemes implemented in the district, a sum of Rs. 102.55 crore has been allocated for Credit Oriented Government Programmes. It is a little less than the Rs. 118.84 crore allocated for these programmes in the ACP in 2013-14.

The annual credit plan was released in the presence of the Project Director of the District Rural Development Agency C. Malathy, Deputy General Manager of Indian Bank, Salem, P. Thangavel, Assistant General Manager of NABARD S. Bhuvanarajan and Manager of the District Lead Bank (Indian Bank) J. Ravichandran.

- *Farm sector allocation includes Rs. 1,400 crore crop loan; Rs. 164 crore for poultry sector*
- *Funds for non-farm sector increased from Rs. 440 crore in 2013-14 to Rs. 506 crore*

UDUPI,

SKDRDP to promote agriculture on 1,059 acres of barren land

The Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project (SKDRDP) will promote agricultural cultivation in barren lands in Udupi district.

Dugge Gowda, Director of district unit of SKDRDP, said that in the present year, the SKDRDP had selected 571 families and provided them with 1,059 acres of barren lands in the district.

These families were being encouraged to cultivate paddy and vegetables in these barren lands. They were also being provided with agricultural and technical inputs on cultivation on barren lands by the experts.

The aim was not only to make barren land cultivable but also to promote agriculture and make it profitable.

This would stop migration of farmers and youth from rural areas to urban areas.

With agriculture becoming profitable, the youth would be more inclined to take it up as their profession.

ELURU, June 13, 2014

Fluctuation in temperature takes heavy toll on fish



Heaps of dead fish dumped on bunds of a fish tank near Akiveedu in West Godavari district.— Photo: A.V.G. Prasad

Hundreds of fish have fallen prey to intense heat wave and sudden fluctuation in temperature in West Godavari district. Heaps of dead fish dumped on wayside and bunds of ponds are greeting visitors to aqua-rich villages in the district. The fish markets at Akiveedu and Eluru city, flooded with huge quantities of dead fish, bear tell-tale signs of the calamity which has struck the growers across the district in the last two days.

The fish, ready for harvesting, died for want of dissolved oxygen in the ponds overnight. The vast expanses of the ponds were dotted with the lifeless fish floating on the surfaces. Although there was no official data available yet on the extent of loss in aquaculture, rough estimates revealed that around 5,000 tonnes of dead fish arrived to the Akiveedu market alone from West Godavari and Krishna districts in a single day on Tuesday.

The price fell from Rs. 30 per kg previous day to Rs 5 and even Re. 1. Some farmers abandoned the produce on the road side and returned home crestfallen for want of takers. Fisheries Development Officer Lakshmana Kumar told *The Hindu* that he observed 16 tonnes of fish dead in four villages under Undi and Kalla mandals alone during a visit. Apart from drop in the day temperatures, high density of stocking, low water level in the ponds and late harvesting were the causes for the calamity, he said. The farmers delayed harvesting till June hoping for better prices as against the normal schedule from January to March. A kg of fish fetched them Rs 90 during the January-March period, but fell to 30 by June first week, dashing their hopes. Ramachandra Raju, Delta Fish Farmers Association, put the loss to around Rs. 300 crore caused by the calamity.

Dhatla Rama Raju from Rajulapet in Akiveedu mandal said he had buried four tonnes of fish killed in his ponds in the nearby fields. He invested Rs 75,000-80,000 on fish farming per acre and suffered a loss of Rs. 3 lakh. Venkannababu, another farmer from Akiveedu, said he had spent Re 1 on each seedling which he purchased from hatcheries and he failed to recover even that in the market.

PUDUKOTTAI,

Coconut Board recognises societies

The Coconut Board had granted registration to 12 coconut-growers cooperative societies. This is the second set of societies being recognised by the board for grant of subsidies and other schemes being implemented by the board. C. Manoharan, Collector, gave away the registration certificates to the presidents of the societies at a function held here on Wednesday.

KOCHI,

New fish varieties described



(From top) *Chelidoperca manculicauda*, *Opistognathus pardus*,
Plectranthias alcocki, *Pempheris sarayu*.





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: Researchers from Kochi have described four marine fish species from the Kerala waters. The newly discovered species were named as *Chelidoperca manculicauda*, *Opisthognathus pardus*, *Plectranthias alcocki* and *Pempheris sarayu*.

The samples of the fishes were collected from various fish landing centres of Kovalam, Kochi and Kollam.

The discovery was made by a collaborative research team consisting of A. Gopalakrishnan, the Director of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, N.G.K. Pillai, E.M. Abdussamad and Akhilesh of the institute, J.K. Jena, the Director of National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources and K.K. Bineesh of the Kochi Centre of the Bureau.

John E. Randall of the Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii, too had partnered in the research programme. The results of the study were published in the international taxonomy journal *Zootaxa*, *Journal of the Ocean Science Foundation* and *Aqua*- international journal of ichthyology.

The identification and description of a new species is a time consuming process and it took around four years for completing the scientific assessment process, said Dr. Bineesh.

Researchers would first compare the morphological features of the fish with known samples of the species and later genetic studies would be carried out. The findings would be later peer-reviewed by international researchers. The UK-based International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature had laid down procedures for describing and naming news species, he said.

The researchers also used the opportunity to honour W. Alcock, one of the doyens of fish taxonomy who had made significant contributions to the understanding of deep-sea fauna of Indian seas. They named the species *Plectranthias alcocki* after the veteran researcher.

Though the newly described species didn't have commercial importance, they contributed to the rich marine biodiversity of the country, he said.

BANGALORE,

Cyclone Nanauk could disrupt progress of monsoon



Deceptive:Dark clouds form over the Vidhana Soudha in Bangalore on Thursday.— Photo: V. Sreenivasa Murthy

The monsoon's movement eastward into interior Karnataka could be curtailed for a few days by cyclone Nanauk that developed in the Arabian Sea Wednesday morning, say officials at the meteorological centre here.

While the Indian Meteorological Department had earlier forecast that the monsoon would advance into south interior Karnataka, including Bangalore on Monday, the weather system remains restricted to Karnataka's coast, where it made its onset two days ago.

Cyclone Nanauk, which is moving north-westward towards the Oman coast could disrupt the monsoon current, preventing it from moving much beyond the Arabian Sea coast into the peninsula, said B. Puttanna, director of the met centre.

"But Karnataka's coast will continue to get heavy rainfall in the next few days from the monsoon," he said.

Only when another low pressure system develops in the Arabian Sea or Bay of Bengal can the monsoon current get back on track, Mr. Puttanna said.

There have been earlier occasions when the onset of the monsoon has been similarly disrupted by the development of a cyclone, he added.

Rain on coast

Meanwhile, several parts of the Karnataka's coastal districts — Uttara Kannada, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi — recorded fairly heavy rain measuring between 50 and 60 mm on Wednesday.

While the met centre here forecasts scattered showers in several parts of south interior Karnataka, these spells of rain could not be attributed to the south-west monsoon, said Mr. Puttanna.

'Only when another low pressure system develops in Arabian Sea or Bay of Bengal can the monsoon current get back on track'

ERODE,

Water released from Kodiveri Dam

A day after Chief Minister Jayalalithaa ordered release of water from Bhavani Sagar Dam for irrigation of 25,504 acres in the old ayacut area wetted by the Arakkankottai-Thadapalli channels, Environment Minister N.D. Venkatachalam on Thursday symbolically opened the shutters at the Kodiveri Dam that feeds the channels.

The Minister released water from the Kodiveri Dam in the presence of District Collector V.K. Shanmugam, MLAs, and other dignitaries. The Chief Minister had stated in the order that water would be released in deference to request by farmers in Gobichettipalayam, Anthiyur and Bhavani regions.

On Thursday, water level in Bhavani Sagar Dam stood at 47.86 feet. The storage was 3,938 million cubic feet. The inflow was 262 cusecs and discharge 359 cusecs. Last year, water was not released at this time since the level was 33.95 feet, and storage was 1,599 million cubic feet.

Meanwhile, the Lower Bhavani Farmers' Welfare Association criticised the water release saying it was a violation of the Cauvery Tribunal final order.

According to association president C. Nallasamy, as per the Tribunal's order, water ought to have been released on Thursday from Mettur Dam for Kuruvai paddy crop cultivation in the Cauvery delta. While the State Government's inability to release water from the Mettur Dam due to Karnataka's intransigence and the Centre's failure to create the Cauvery Management Board and Regulatory Authority was understandable, there was a violation in the water release from the Bhavani Sagar Dam at this time.

The tribunal order stated that water should be released from the Lower Bhavani Dam only for Samba crop.

BANGALORE

Fish kill in Lalbagh lake attributed to monsoon rain



A large number of fish was found dead in the Lalbagh lake in Bangalore on Thursday.

Many carcasses of fish had washed to the banks of the lake in Lalbagh on Thursday morning at more than three spots. Authorities, who later cleaned the lake of the carcasses, denied that the fish kill was a result of either pollution or fishing activity.

Deputy Director of Horticulture (Gardens), Lalbagh, J. Gunavantha attributed the fish kill to monsoon rain. He said that it is an annual phenomenon. The first rain usually leads to a sudden variation in the oxygen level in the lake and that results in fish kill on a minor scale.

Naseem Afsar, Deputy Director, Fisheries Department, Karnataka, told *The Hindu* that such fish kill was observed due to the increase in Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) in the lake. He said that the increased temperature and rain lead to increased plant growth in the water, which results in an increase in BOD. "Plants release oxygen during the day through photosynthesis. This ensures optimal oxygen level. But at night, the plants also use up oxygen. As a result, the BOD increases, which sometimes lead to fish kill. The carcasses are seen the next morning," he explained.

PATHANAMTHITTA

People urged to return to farming

People should return to farming in the larger interests of maintaining good health and to ensure food security, District Panchaat president Saji Chacko, has said.

Dr. Chacko was inaugurating the district-level award presentation ceremony of the Agriculture Department held at Pullad near Kozhencherry on Thursday as part of the comprehensive agriculture project launched in the district in 2013.

He said the present generation has started experiencing the ill-effects of the society's withdrawal from farming. The worst among them is drinking water scarcity. Ground water-level has been depleted beyond eight metres and the riverbed of Pampa has depleted even below the sea-level, leading of salinity intrusion up to Kozhencherry, he said.

Dr Chacko said ground water replenishment should be taken as a priority by facilitating smooth and effective water percolation into earth. The traditional farming had given much importance for good rain water percolation into the earth thereby replenishing the ground water, he said.

He said people should go back to traditional agriculture practices and children should be encouraged to consume locally available food produces like tapioca, jackfruit, mangoes, papaya.

He said Keralites should give priority to grow vegetables for domestic use in their own backyards with a view to ensure food security. Those who do not have land for farming may opt for using alternate methods like 'grow bags', he said.

Dr Chacko said the district has produced a total of 12,430 metric tonne vegetables under the comprehensive agriculture project in 2013-14, making as many as 20,730 farmers its beneficiaries.

Annapoorna Devi, Koipram Block Panchayat president, presided over the meeting. Eapen Kurien, Reji Thomas, Eliyamma Yohannan, Elizanbeth Abu, all block panchayat presidents; Sosamma Thomas, District Panchayat member; L.Beenakumari, Principal Agriculture Officer; and Suja P.Kuruvila, Deputy Director of Agriculture, also spoke.

RAMPACHODAVARAM

More horticulture in agency with NREGS link

Gandham Chandrudu, Project Officer of Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Rampachodavaram, has asked mandal-level field officers of Horticulture, Agriculture and Revenue departments to link the land distributed to tribal people under different schemes with horticulture and bring it under the purview of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). According to Mr. Chandrudu, the ITDA is taking steps to encourage tribals to take up horticulture cultivation.

On Thursday, he visited tribal lands in Bodlanka, Thothavariveedhi and Achaiahpeta villages and interacted with tribal farmers. Informing that in 2012-13, the Rampachodavaram Agency had set a record by taking up horticulture in 10,000 acres in seven mandals of its Revenue Division which was then linked to the NREGS, he said special teams were deployed in all villages to identify works under a 66-34 per cent ratio last year for horticulture work.

He said each tribal family should have 2.50 acres of land with horticulture plantation and the ITDA was planning to take up 10 to 15 acres of horticulture in next financial year.

Mr. Chandrudu asked field-level officers to identify works related to horticulture under NREGS and announce in Gram Sabhas. Making it clear that the process should begin after the onset of monsoons, he said 52,000 tribals had job cards in the Agency and the card holders would get works worth Rs. 250 crore in a year. He said the tribals had grown cashew in 8500 acres, mango in 1500 acres and lemon in 500 acres.

The ITDA is planning to take up 10 to 15 acres of horticulture in next financial year

A short variety jamun cultivation fetches good rewards



Special Arrangement The jamun fruits are being sold at Rs.150 per kg.

Agriculture is a profession of patience. Apart from the time, labour and financial investment, passion is an important attribute to be successful.

“An optimistic attitude is what sets successful farmers apart from the usual herd. Because a method might fail once, twice or even several times, but the grit and determination to continue trying the same can prove to be rewarding after some time. Mr. C. Jayakumar a jamun grower from Dindugal is a good example of all this,” says Mr. N. Madhu Balan, Assistant Director, Agriculture, Government of Tamil Nadu.

Cultivated area

The farmer has been growing jamun in 1.5 acre (total area is 10 acres. Amla is cultivated in the remaining area) in Nilakottai taluk in Dindugal district.

Jamun trees usually reach a height of 30-35 feet and bear fruits for 60 to 70 years after planting.

The farmer, through constant pruning for many years, has been successful in controlling the height of the trees to 18-20 feet.

“I tried to control the height of the tree by pruning them regularly because harvesting the fruits was proving to be difficult due to the height of the trees. The branches needed to be shaken well for the ripe fruits to fall down.

“While doing so either the branches broke or the fruits got damaged while falling on the ground and did not fetch a good price,” says Mr. Jayakumar.

The farmer purchased about 80 seedlings from a nursery in Andhra Pradesh and planted them at a spacing of 24 feet (8m X 8m). The trees were irrigated through drip lines.

After four years, flowering started and fruits set and yield was about 2 kg from each tree. Gradually the yield increased and at the age of eight years 40- 50 kg of fruits per tree were harvested. Now the trees are in the 11th year of planting and the farmer is able to harvest 60 kg of fruits from each tree.

Inputs

Only organic inputs like farmyard manure, bone meal, poultry manure, sugar mill press mud and bio fertilisers like azospirillum, phosphobacteria, vermicompost and panchagavya are used.

The fruits are collected in trays and delivered to departmental stores and several fruit shops. Each fruit weighs approximately 15 gm and tastes well due to organic inputs. The demand is quite good according to the farmer.

“Presently I am harvesting 50-70 kg fruits from each tree. I expect 4,250 kgs of fruits from all my 80 trees this year. The fruits are being sold at Rs.150 per kg and I am able to earn nearly a gross profit of Rs. 6 lakh in two months.

“The expense for manufacturing own organic inputs, harvesting, packing and transport works out to Rs. 1 lakh a year and I am able to realise a net profit of Rs. 5 lakh,” says Mr. Jayakumar.

Seedlings

The farmer develops jamun seedlings for others based on prior order. It takes 5-6 months to produce quality seedlings.

The expenditure for maintaining the tree is very low and Mr. Jayakumar suggests other farmers to try this out in their fields. He is ready to guide and offer his suggestions for those farmers interested in getting into this cultivation.

The farmer also underwent training at Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology in Thanjavur to study how value addition could be made for his amla fruits so that he could get additional remuneration.

Accordingly, based on their suggestion, he set up a food processing unit in his farm to manufacture Amla juice, candy, squash etc.

Processing

“There is not much advantage in selling the fruits alone. Moreover it is season bound work. So I planned to combine food processing technique which generates remuneration all through the year. I buy organically grown amla fruits from my contacts if I happen to run short of fruits in my farm and continue value addition to them,” he says.

For more information and personal visit interested farmers can contact Mr. C. Jayakumar, Nilakottai Taluk, Mettur gate post, Kodai road, Mobile : 09865925193, email : jkbiofarmdgl@gmail.com and Mr. Madhu Balan on email : balmadhu@gmail.com, mobile: 09751506521,

Keywords: jamun, short variety jamun

Management of post harvest diseases in mango

Mango fruits are susceptible to many post harvest infestations. These diseases are mainly due to fungi and bacteria.

Harvest injury, defective handling, inappropriate temperature and humidity affect the storage life of the fruits.

Presence of blemished fruits with good ones also contributes to the decay and damage. If there is a surface bruise or injury to the fruit, micro-organisms such as bacteria, yeast and molds invade into it and cause internal decay.

High temperature and humidity accelerate process of post harvest decaying by microorganisms.

Some measures

Control of diseases occurring on leaves, stems and flowers (pre-harvest) are important in reducing losses.

Similarly, post-harvest temperature management and proper handling during storage and transportation are equally important, since high temperature and injuries or wounds would lead to further losses.

Post harvest treatments do not provide complete disease control measures if pre-harvest diseases are not taken effectively.

— During flowering stage, spray with Mancozeb at 2.5 grams/litre on weekly basis to control fungal diseases.

— During flowering stage, if there is rain, it would be better to apply Prochloraz (462 gram/kg) mix along with Mancozeb at an interval of 3- 4 weeks.

Fungicides

Post harvest dip treatment of fruits with fungicides can control the diseases during storage with the help of the following treatments.

Three sprays of Carbendazim (0.1per cent) or Thiophante-methyl (0.1per cent) at 15 days interval should be done in such a way that the last spray falls 15 days prior to harvest.

Treatment of fruits in Carbendazim (0.1 per cent) in hot water at 52 degree Fahrenheit for 15 minutes can also help control the infestation.

At the time of harvesting, infested fruits should be removed and destroyed manually.

— Use correct equipment at the time of harvesting fruits to avoid damage.

Water level

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 44.40 feet on Thursday as against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 935 cusecs and the discharge 808 cusecs. — Special Correspondent

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Jun 13

Max Min

38° | 29°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:42

Humidity: 55

Sunset: 06:35

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1003

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Saturday, Jun 14

Max Min

36° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday

Jun 15



35° | 28°

Cloudy

Monday

Jun 16



35° | 26°

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday

Jun 17



34° | 25°

Cloudy

Wednesday

Jun 18



33° | 25°

Cloudy

Thursday

Jun 19



30° | 24°

Overcast

Airport Weather

Chennai

Chennai

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:42

Humidity: 55

Sunset: 06:35

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1003



Set up Turmeric Board in Nizamabad or Hyderabad, Kavitha Urges Centre

HYDERABAD: Nizamabad Lok Sabha member Kavitha Kalvakuntla has represented to Union minister of state for commerce Nirmala Seetharaman the need for setting up a turmeric board either in Nizamabad or in Hyderabad for the benefit of turmeric farmers.

The TRS MP, who met the minister in Delhi on Thursday, said location of the turmeric board in Telangana state would be of help to farmers not only in Telangana but also in its neighbouring states.

She said turmeric is grown in Nizamabad, Warangal, Karimnagar and Khammam districts of Telangana state and it is quite popular among the cash crops. Turmeric is traditionally and widely used in food, for medicinal purpose, pharmaceuticals, dyes and cosmetics in India, South Asian countries, Middle East, Africa and Europe.

The Nizamabad MP said that the farmers who grow this crop have no access to scientific input or extension support. They depend on the local seeds and varieties. As most of the farmers are small and marginal, with very small landholdings, they cannot afford any scientific management of their fields and crops.

She pointed out that even irrigation facilities are very limited resulting in low productivity and lower production. The input subsidy available to other spices is not extended to this important spice crop. The post-harvest activities are carried

out by the farmer in very unscientific manner resulting in loss of product and quality. There are also no processing facilities in any part of Telangana for this important and valuable cash crop.

Kavitha pointed out that from the market reports it is becoming evident that the Spices Board accords priority to other spices like pepper, cardamom, cloves and chillies even though the export earnings on turmeric are quite substantial.

Considering its food, medicinal and commercial applications, export potential and the fact that the cash crop is being produced by a large number of small and marginal farmers, there is a felt need to have a turmeric board. She said that government of Telangana would be willing to extend all support for setting up of the turmeric board either in Nizamabad or in Hyderabad.

Karnataka to Offer Customised Crop Plans for Farmers

BANGALORE: The Agriculture Department is working on integrating individual farm practices on a common network to provide customised advice on soil and crops.

Experts will analyse the requirements of every farmer and make appropriate recommendations. That is a massive project, as Karnataka has 78.5 lakh farmers, according to Agriculture Commissioner Subodh Yadav. He said the department will generate booklets for each farmer. "Like a passbook, it will contain information on their farming practices, analyses of soil samples and other information that will help us make useful recommendations."

The information that will be collected by farmers through soil sample testing and their visits to Raitha Samparka Kendras (RSKs) will then be integrated on the

Karnataka Krishi Information Services and Network (K-Kisan). Even if a farmer visits the RSKs without his booklet, he can use a unique code that will help the department access his information.

With an allocation of `15 crore under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana in hand, the department wants to complete soil analyses within three years. This part of the project is expected to cost `40 crore. “We believe this is the first exercise in the country to collate individual farmer details on a common platform,” Yadav said.

Agriculture Minister Krishna Byre Gowda told Express every farmer would be given individual reports of soil tests in the next two to three years.

To begin with, the department will “outsource” analysis of soil samples to private players to save costs and make efficient use of the existing manpower, he said.

Twenty-nine Soil Health Centres (SHC) across the state are engaged in analysing the nutrient status of soil. They recommend the quantities of nutrients — such as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium — to be applied to the soil. According to an internal analysis, these SHCs cost over `85 lakh a year to run. This includes manpower, working expenditure and the cost of testing soil samples. “On an average, we incur a cost of `1,450 to analyse one soil sample, while we collect between `3-10 from farmers. Our centres are testing close to 6,000 samples a year,” Yadav said.

By the government’s reckoning, private players can do the tests at `150-700 a sample, saving money 🍀 for the department in a big way.

“We are not dumping our responsibility. We will get the work done at a fraction of the cost. After all, it is the tax payers’ money that we work with,” Byre Gowda said.

Agriculture graduates now employed in at the Raitha Samparka Kendras will be deployed to work on the fields, and they will be replaced by non-technical personnel. “We want to address the shortage on the field by sending agriculture officers proportional to the agricultural crop area in each hobli,” he said. Under the restructuring exercise, the department has assessed the requirement of staff, which is much below the sanctioned strength.

“To our surprise, we need only about 7,000 people, whereas our sanctioned strength is about 9,700. At present, we have a little over 6,000 people employees,” Yadav said.

State Dips in Marine Fish Landing Records, Says Study



KOCHI: The estimates of marine fish landings (MFL) in 2013 released by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kochi, recorded a fall of 4

per cent from 2012. In 2013, 3.78 million tonnes were recorded against 3.94 million tonnes in 2012, which was an all-time high.

Gujarat topped in the MFL with 7.1 lakh tonnes followed by Tamil Nadu with 6.88 lakh tonnes and Kerala with 6.71 lakh tonnes. Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshwadeep were not included in the records.

The state witnessed a fall in its major resource - oil sardine - this year. The other major contributors were threadfin breams, cephalopods, stolephorus, Indian mackerel and scads.

The other states which contributed to the MFL were West Bengal (2.62 lakh tonnes), Odisha (1.24 lakh tonnes), Andhra Pradesh (2.66 lakh tonnes), Puducherry (0.69 lakh tonnes), Karnataka (4.37 lakh tonnes), Goa (1.04 lakh tonnes), Maharashtra (3.64 lakh tonnes), and Daman and Diu (0.79 lakh tonnes).

CMFRI director A Gopalakrishnan, pointed out that the overall production of the MFL indicated that there is no immediate threat to the fisheries sector.

But state-wise data show some interesting results. "Kerala can be cited as an example where the dip in catch is due to reduction in the most dominant resource of Indian oil sardine. But there is no reduction in the catch per boat involved in fishing. Thus we can infer that the reduction in catch is due to less number of fishing days in the state," he said.

The reduction in fishing days is due to inclement weather and rough seas.

"A reduction in resource in a particular year is not a reason for panic. We plan to make use of all resources from the sea as fish meal plants want raw material for their production," he said.

Although the catch is slightly low, there is a concerted effort to search for smaller and juvenile fishes to fulfil the demand of fish meal units.

“An indiscriminate use of resources will sometimes result in an unsustainable fishing which can lead to collapse of marine fishery resources in the long run.

But CMFRI has recommended legal mesh sizes for respective fishing gears which can be enforced for reducing fishing of juveniles,” he said.



Copra, coconut oil price up on speculation

Erode,

Coconut oil prices increased by Rs. 17 a kg this week mainly on speculation supplies could be affected by the Monsoon setting in.

“Coconut oil prices increased by Rs. 250 for a 15-kg loose pack this week and the rise is an artificial,” said RM Palanisamy, a coconut oil trader. He said last week coconut oil was sold at Rs. 1,830-1,850 loose pack. Prices were up by Rs. 100 on Wednesday and again on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the price of copra also increased at Rs. 9,500 to Rs. 9,700 a quintal, which is Rs. 1,500 a quintal more than last week’s price. In the private market copra was sold at Rs. 10,000 a quintal. Many private traders are keeping huge stocks with them, expecting further increase in prices. Edible copra was sold at Rs. 11,000 a quintal.

The price of palm oil remains almost same at Rs. 5,550 a quintal. Many coconut oil users already deflected to palm oil. Many crushers with huge stock of coconut oil expect prices to increase again.

AP, Telangana growers in a tizzy over farm loans

Hyderabad,

As farmers in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana await waiver of their loans, they are now forced to rely upon private source for loans during the current kharif season.

Telangana Chief Minister K C Rao and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had promised in their election manifestos to waive farm loans.

“As the *kharif* season begins, banks have virtually shut the doors on us with confusion over the waiver refusing to die,” a leader of farmers’ union said.

“Banks are supposed to prepare a plan by May and begin disbursements of loans on May 15 and complete the process by June 30. Sometimes, it will go up to July 15. But the process has not started at all this year,” S Malla Reddy, national Vice-President of the All-India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) told *Business Line* .

The banks reportedly are advising the farmers to pay at least part of the dues or interest to renew their loans and get eligibility for fresh loans. “But then, if you do that you will become ineligible for loan waiver programmes. So, farmers are in a precarious position,” he said.

Stance of banks

The problems faced by farmers on account of the loan-waiver have also been acknowledged by bankers at two state-level bankers committee meetings held in last ten days.

According to norms of the banks, a fresh loan cannot be given unless the existing loan/dues are cleared. As observed by CVR Rajendran, CMD of Andhra Bank and President of AP SLBC, “Unless a policy decision on the quantum and type of loans to be waived off is taken and informed to banks, fresh loans for *kharif* season cannot be given.”

Bankers had also expressed concern over the pressure the waiver puts on them in the way of preparation of list of eligible farmers for the waiver. “The loan waiver of 2008 had many loop-holes including *benami* beneficiaries which led to an investigation and bank staff were made scapegoats. We want the Government to take responsibility to prepare a correct list,” said a senior official of a State Bank of Hyderabad. All this would mean only further delay from a farmer’s perspective.

Confusion reigns

While N Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, appointed a committee to study the issue and advise the Government in 45 days, conflicting reports on the quantum of loan waiver in Telangana have left a lot of scope for speculation.

“The outstanding loans of farmers in Andhra Pradesh stand at Rs. 87,000 crore, with farmers East, West, Krishna and Guntur districts promised waiver of half the total dues,” Malla Reddy said.

Spot rubber prices flat

Kottayam,

Physical rubber prices finished flat on Thursday.

Sentiments remained neutral as buyers stayed back.

June futures slipped to Rs. 142.40 (Rs. 142.63), July to Rs. 143.97 (Rs. 144.29), August to Rs. 142.47 (Rs. 142.48), September to Rs. 141.25 (Rs. 142.07) and October to Rs. 140 (Rs. 141.31) on the NMCE.

RSS 3 (spot) firmed up to Rs. 124.83 (Rs. 122.91) at Bangkok.

June futures closed at ¥186.1 (Rs. 108.05) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg) were: RSS-4: 145.50 (145.50); RSS-5: 141.50 (141.50); Ungraded: 137 (137); ISNR 20: 132 (132.50).

'Strong monsoon flows' may wallop West Coast soon



High alert Security guard on alert as high waves caused by cyclonic storm Nanauk developed over the Arabian Sea lash Mumbai's Gateway of India. The Met Department has warned of moderate to heavy rains along the West Coast.
Paul Noronha

Thiruvananthapuram,

A 'very strong monsoon flow' from the Arabian Sea to the west Pacific could topple a likely tropical cyclone off the Philippines.

This is what the US national weather agency has forecast for the South Asia Monsoon during the rest of the week and into the next.

Reviving flows

The monsoon over India may manage to conduct itself reasonably well despite provocation in the form of another cyclone – this time to its east, in the west Pacific.

This is mainly due to the comparatively short shelf-life of the system before it fades out expectedly east of Taiwan.

All signs indicate a revival of the monsoon flows once the raging Arabian Sea cyclone Nanouk weakens off Oman.

The revival will be underwritten by a Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) wave transiting the Somali region and entering the Arabian Sea, peninsular India, and the Bay of Bengal, in that order.

Enhanced rain band

MJO waves travel in the higher atmosphere but sets up clouding at the ground level that sets up monsoon onset, low-pressure areas or storms.

The monsoon onset over Kerala had ridden on the back of a weaker MJO wave.

Ocean basins on either side of the peninsula are projected to come under the influence of the wave unlike when the wave travels more southerly latitudes, as is usually observed.

This is apparently what will force the flows to confine themselves to these basins and even extend to the immediate, east half-way into the west Pacific.

Most models are in general agreement for enhanced rainfall in a narrow band from the Arabian Sea to the western Pacific, the US agency said.

The reviving monsoon flows are expected to blast their way into coastal Karnataka and the Konkan-Mumbai coast. Monsoon has already delayed by two days in Mumbai, its next big stop over the country.

Warm in Mumbai

On Thursday evening, Mumbai was partly cloudy with southerly wind gusts of 33 km/hr. Humidity level at 66 per cent was not enough to trigger monsoon rain, which is at least a couple of days away still.

This is even as cyclone Nanouk prowled the waters 830 km to the west-southwest of the country's commercial capital, which is the next big stop for the monsoon.

Rains ranging from moderate to very heavy are forecast for the east coast and into the contiguous east and North-East India as reviving flows sets off activity in the Bay of Bengal.

Weak inflow supports mustard, oil

Indore, June

Mustard oil across mandis in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat has been witnessing a rising trend for the past one week on improved buying and weak arrival. On Thursday, mustard oil in Indore mandis was quoted at Rs. 632. In Rajasthan, mustard oil was being quoted at Rs. 625 (up Rs. 15 from last week), while in Gujarat it was Rs. 615 (up Rs. 10 from last week). Plant deliveries of mustard oil for Jaipur line ruled at Rs. 3,350 (3,440-45 a quintal last week) on

scattered demand in mustard oil. Notwithstanding a drop in arrivals, mustard prices in the physical market for the past one week have been trading low at Rs. 4,200, while raida ruled at Rs. 2,900. Arrival of mustard in Madhya Pradesh was recorded at around 20,000 bags. Our Correspondent

Business Standard

Cotton yield improves significantly in Rajasthan



Rajasthan farmers' cotton yield has risen significantly in recent years, from 415 kg of lint a hectare in 2007-08 to 785 kg a ha projected in 2013-14; the national average is 550 kg a ha. Output in the state has risen from around 200,000 bales (each 170 kg) in 2007-08 to 900,000 bales in 2012-13.

The Cotton Development and Research Association, which looks after the cotton extension activities of the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) has been working for the past six years on improving the yield in 630 villages spread over the districts of Banswara, Bhilwara, Rajsamand, Ajmer, Jodhpur , Nagaur and Pali — about 78,000 ha in all.

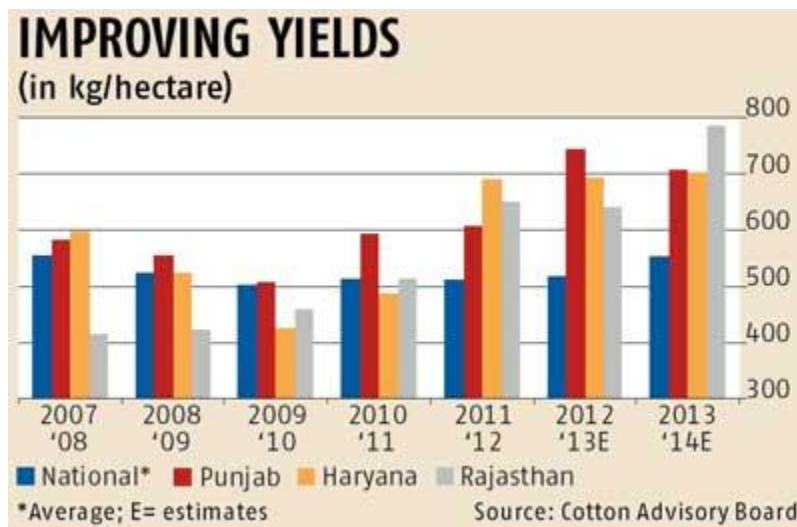
The programme was sponsored by the central government's directorate of cotton

development. Availability of experienced field officers who've helped farmers in drip irrigation, pest management and motivation to exploit local resources have helped.

So has introduction of genetically modified seeds.

P D Patodia, chairman of CITI's standing committee on cotton expects to have a yield of 1,000 kg of lint a ha

in Rajasthan over the next few years.



Patodia informed the fact that the CITI CDRA implemented the Front Line Demonstration Programme on Cotton Production Technology and Integrated

Pest Management, sponsored by the Directorate of Cotton Development, Govt. of India in 630 villages from Banswara, Bhilwara, Rajsamand, Ajmer, Jodhpur, Nagaur and Pali districts during the period from 2008-09 to 2013-14 in an area of 78,000 hectares.

Rubber industry wants inverted duty to be changed in Budget



The Rubber industry, dominated by around 6,000 micro, small and medium-sized manufacturing units in different clusters spread across the country, is pinning its hopes on a correction in the inverted duty structure in the next Union Budget.

“Inverted duty structure has been the bane of the rubber sector in India and has stifled the growth of this vital sector of manufacturing. We hope the new government, with its avowed agenda of a revival of manufacturing sector, will address this anomaly in the budget,” said Niraj Thakkar, President, All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA).

In its pre-budget submission to the Ministry of Finance, AIRIA has stated that finished products can easily be imported as import duty on rubber products is in the range of 0 to 10 per cent, while the duty on raw materials for the rubber industry is between 5 per cent and 70 per cent.

Not only is the import duty on raw materials higher, but so also is the duty levied even on raw materials not produced in the country. If the idea is domestic value addition, this anomaly needs to be corrected, added Thakkar.

According to AIRIA, stiff import duties on raw materials have eroded competitiveness of the rubber industry. On the other hand, lower taxation and export incentivisation policies of countries like China have helped manufacturers there to flood the Indian market with cheaper products. The rubber sector has therefore asked for a Safeguard Duty on finished rubber products so that the domestic manufacturers, particularly SMEs, get a level-playing field.

Quoting Capexil data, AIRIA has stated that the import duty on raw materials is the highest in India when compared to the neighbouring rubber products manufacturing countries. For instance, import duty on natural rubber in China is 10 per cent as against 20 per cent or Rs 30 per kg in India. On NR latex, the import duty is 70 per cent in India while it is just 10 per cent in China. Similarly, in case of synthetic rubbers like SBR and PBR, the import duty is 7.5 per cent in China as against 10 per cent in India. India is deficit in both natural rubber and synthetic rubbers.

On the other hand, the import duty on finished rubber goods is the lowest in India compared to other rubber-consuming nations, facilitating the import of cheaper goods to India. For instance, on tubes, pipes and hoses, the import duty in China is 10 per cent and above, in India, these can be imported for even as low as 6 per cent. Rubber rice de-husking rolls, widely used in rice mills across the country, can be imported duty free while China imposes up to 80 per cent duty on the same.

As a result, the import of rubber products in India has gone up almost 100 per cent from Rs 3,810 crore to Rs 7,608 crore in three years, from 2009-10 to 2012-13. "A significant number of manufacturers are turning to trading in rubber goods, leading to a loss to the exchequer and also loss of domestic jobs," he said.

According to AIRIA, India has the capability to manufacture quality rubber products which are globally accepted as is evident in the export of Indian rubber products to some of the discerning and quality-conscious markets in the world. A safeguard duty on the import of finished rubber products will also ensure that rubber entrepreneurs continue to manufacture rubber products.

Further, AIRIA has stated that the drawback duty of at least 5 per cent should be fixed on the reclaim rubber instead of 2 per cent at present. Reclaim rubber plays a vital part in environment conservation as discarded tyres and other rubber products are crushed and regenerated.

According to AIRIA, there is an urgent need to upgrade the technology in large number of Rubber SMEs. With a view to improve productivity, a Technology Upgrade Fund (TUF) to upgrade the present technology be made available to the MSME sector at a rate of 5 per cent interest. High cost of finance, inflation, volatility in raw material availability and prices has retarded the technology upgradation drive amongst Rubber MSMEs in India.

Sugar up 0.2% on rising spot demand



Sugar prices rose by another 0.26% to Rs 3,070 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators enlarged positions supported by rising demand in spot market.

However, heavy stock positions following ample supplies from producing regions capped the gain.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, sugar for delivery in June added Rs 8, or 0.26% to Rs 3,070 per quintal with an open interest of 15,570 lots.

In a similar fashion, the sweetener for delivery in July contract gained Rs 4, or 0.13% to Rs 3,056 per quintal in 34,570 lots.

Analysts attributed persistent rise in sugar futures to higher demand from bulk consumers in the spot market in view of summer season.

Refined soya oil up 0.3% on good spot demand

Amid rising domestic demand and limited arrivals from producing regions, refined soya oil prices rose 0.39% to Rs 689.85 per 10 kg in futures market today as speculators enlarged positions.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, refined soya oil for delivery in June moved up by Rs 2.65, or 0.39% to Rs 689.85 per 10 kg with an open interest of 50,620 lots.

Similarly, the oil for delivery in July edged up by Rs 1.65, or 0.25% to Rs 667.30 per 10 kg in 1,77,080 lots.

Market analysts said besides rising demand in the spot market, restricted arrivals from producing regions attributed rise in refined soya oil prices at futures trade.

Barley up 1% on low levels buying



Barley prices improved by Rs.14 at Rs.1,296 per quintal in futures trading today after speculators enlarged positions, triggered by restricted supplies in spot market.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange counter, barley prices for

delivery in current month looked up by Rs 14, or 1.09% to Rs 1,296 per quintal, in an open interest of 1,110 lots.

The most-active July month contract too rose by Rs 13.50, or 1.03% to Rs 1,322.50 per quintal, with an open interest of 14,320 lots.

Analysts said the rise in barley at futures trade was mostly on fresh positions created by speculators following restricted supplies in the market

Cardamom down 1.6% on profit-booking



Cardamom prices fell 1.60% to Rs 940 per kg in futures trading today as speculators booked profits at prevailing levels amid subdued demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in June declined by Rs 15.30, or 1.60% to Rs 940 per kg in business turnover of 4 lots.

Market analysts said besides profit-taking by speculators at existing levels, weak demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position, mainly led to the fall in cardamom prices at futures trade.

Scheme to help farmers sell vegetables in Aurangabad

AURANGABAD: The agriculture department has initiated a scheme for farmers to help them sell vegetables in the city. The department would spend a sum of Rs 17 crore in the next two years for the same.

Janardhan Jadhav, divisional joint director of agriculture, here said that the government allocated Rs 300 in 2011-12 under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana for implementation of a vegetable initiative for urban clusters. It helped set in motion a cycle of production and income for farmers and assured supply for consumers.

"The scheme was initiated in urban cities like Mumbai, Nagpur and Pune and has now begun in Aurangabad. The farmers from Aurangabad, Beed and Jalna are to form groups and seek necessary infrastructure from the state government," Jadhav said and added that the aim is to provide fresh vegetables to city dwellers and cause less damage to it while transporting.

"The aim of the scheme is to address the concerns related to demand and supply aspects, enhance vegetable production, improve nutritional security and income support for farmers," he added.

Jadhav said that transport vehicles and other infrastructural benefits will also be provided to farmers at subsidised rates. It is a part of promoting, developing and

disseminating technologies for enhancing production and productivity of vegetables. The agriculture department official said that the farmers will have to understand the demands of the city dwellers and accordingly increase the open and controlled atmosphere farming activity.

"The farmers will also have to change the conventional methods of farming and use modern methods along with use of technology. Regular training workshops will also be held according to the crop pattern chosen by them and the market requirements," he added.

Facilities like shed net, green house and equipment to cultivate high quality vegetables, pack house, reefer van, storage house, retail market outlets, mobile vending carts, cool chamber with platform and motorised vending cart will also be made available at 40-55% subsidies to farmers.

Post a comment

'Ensure availability of seeds and fertilisers'

VARANASI: District magistrate Pranjal Yadav inspected the development works at Jeetapur village in Araziline block on Thursday. He found several hand pumps non-functional in the village, and the drain of government tube well was also found damaged.

The DM directed the engineers of PWD and Jal Nigam for immediate redressal of the problems. He also instructed the agricultural officer to ensure the availability of seeds and fertilizers at the cooperative centre of Gram Sabha.

He took strong note of incomplete construction of some houses under Indira Awas Yojna and instructed the official to complete the work on war footing

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Compound feed consumption to touch 28 million tonne by FY18: Report

MUMBAI: The demand for animal proteins and dairy products in the country is likely to drive the growth of compound feed consumption to 28 million tonne by 2017-18, says a study. Compound feed is livestock fodder that is blended from various raw materials and additives.

India has recently emerged as one of the largest and fastest growing compound feed markets in the world. The demand for animal proteins and dairy products in India will increase the compound feed consumption volumes t ..

The feed industry is growing at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of eight per cent, with poultry, cattle and aqua feed sectors emerging as major growth drivers, it said. Broiler feed is still the largest segment but aqua feed has experienced the strongest growth, it added.

The report said that there is enough potential for compound feed segment to grow if livestock challenges such as disease outbreaks, volatile livestock product

prices and poor animal genetics are addressed.

Increased industrialisation and participation from organised players will help in driving production system efficiencies and improve food safety standards, it added. In 2012-13, India became the world's fourth-largest broiler producer and the third-largest egg producer.

Will raise urea capacity by 3 MT in 3-4 years: Ananth Kumar

NEW DELHI: Government is working on reviving three FCIL units to raise domestic production of urea by 3 million tonnes within 3-4 years, which may initially cost around Rs 10,000 crore, to cut down imports.

Fertiliser Minister Ananth Kumar said his ministry is working on reviving the three closed urea units of Fertiliser Corporation of India Ltd (FCIL) in Talcher (Odisha), Sindri (Jharkhand) and Ramagundam (Telangana).

He said the units at Talcher and Ramgundam, once revive ..

"I am confident that in next three to four years closed units at Talcher and Ramgundam will be revived and ready to manufacture urea, whereas for Sindri unit some more groundwork is required," Kumar told reporters here late last evening.

The country's urea production has stagnated at 22 million tonnes, while current demand is about 30 MT. The shortfall of 8 MT is met through imports.

Both Talcher and Ramagundam plants will be of standard 1.3-1.5 MT size and will be revived by consortium of PSUs.

RCF, Coal India BSE 2.23 % and Gail BSE -0.24 % are working on to revive the Talcher plant, while Ramagundam plant will be a joint venture between National Fertilisers and EIL.

Ananth Kumar said he has also reviewed the progress of proposed joint venture fertiliser plant in Iran.

"We are working on to manufacture urea which is lower than the import price and affordable for both industry and farmers," the minister said.

As many as 8 state-owned fertiliser manufacturing units - 5 of FCIL and 3 of Hindustan Fertiliser Corporation Ltd - are closed with combined asset value of about Rs 5,600 crore.

Meanwhile, the minister ruled out any increase in urea prices at present and assured that there will no shortage of the soil nutrient in the ongoing kharif season.

Tea output plunges in April as dry weather hits plucking

MUMBAI: Tea production in April dropped by a quarter from a year earlier to 56.77 million kg due to a drop in plucking in the top producing Assam state due to extreme dry weather, the state-run Tea Board said on Thursday.

Production in the north-eastern state fell 40 per cent from a year earlier to 25.33 million kg, the board said in a statement.

Tea output in Assam state is likely to fall by 10 per cent in 2014 due to scanty rainfall and a sharp rise in temperatures, hitting exports of premium grade leaf from the world's biggest black tea producer, industry officials said.

India exports CTC (crush-tear-curl) grade mainly to Egypt, Pakistan and the UK, and the orthodox variety to Iraq, Iran and Russia.

Fearing weak rains, Indian cotton farmers switch to high-yield seeds

MUMBAI: Worries about weak monsoon rains this year have prompted Indian cotton farmers to use more hybrid seeds that need less water and have a higher yield, boosting shares of companies such as Kaveri SeedBSE 0.76 % Co.

Some farmers are also raising cotton acreage as the crop is generally less water-intensive, a trend that will help increase output and pressure global prices that are also likely to be squeezed by an expected rise in U.S. production.

The United States is the world's biggest exporter of the fibre, while India is the No. 2 producer and exporter.

India's monsoon is expected to bring below-average rainfall in 2014, potentially lowering grain yields as half of the country's farmland lacks irrigation. However, the impact of the El Nino weather phenomenon - which can cause drought in South Asia - is likely to be weak in India.

Farmers in India start sowing cotton by the end of May and harvesting commences from end-September. Many cotton-growing farmers this time around are using expensive but high-yielding seeds to ensure productivity does not suffer.

K.B. Jadeja, a farmer in the western Indian state of Gujarat, the top cotton cultivating state, said he bought seven varieties of high-yield hybrid seeds from local firms. Seed suppliers such as Kaveri Seed and Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Co (Mahyco) are beneficiaries of purchases by the farmers.

"The cotton seed supplier companies would make money because the sale of seeds, especially rain-resistant varieties would be more this season," said Prerana Desai, vice-president of research at Kotak Commodities.

Kaveri Seed shares are up about 12 percent in the past month, outpacing the 8 percent gain in the broader index. The company did not respond to emails seeking comment.

"We expect (sales) to grow reasonably well at about 8-10 percent in volumes this season," said Subbarao A.R., strategic business head of Mahyco's cotton business.

"There are many options of good hybrids with tolerance to water stress available to farmers in the market."

GOOD PRICES

Farmer Jadeja said he has cut down area under groundnut cultivation this

season, due to the potential water scarcity.

"I've increased the area under cotton by 20 acres to 150 acres this season as prices are attractive and risk factor is less compared to other crops like groundnut," Jadeja told Reuters over the phone from Gujarat.

In the previous sowing season, farmers sprinkled cotton seeds in 11.5 million hectares and the estimated yield was 551 kilogram per hectare, according to the state-run Cotton Advisory Board (CAB). Subbarao of Mahyco said cotton acreage could go up about 5 percent this year.

CAB estimates India's cotton output at a record 37.5 million bales for 2013/14, with exports of 9 million bales. Most of that goes to China.

In the spot market, the most-traded Shanker-6 variety of cotton has been quoted at 41,700 rupees (\$700) per candy of 356 kg on Wednesday, a rise of more than 6 percent since the same period a year ago.

Government may re-impose minimum export price on onion if prices rise

PUNE: Bumper production across the country has kept onion prices stable and slightly lesser as compared to the same period of the previous year.

However, trade sources say that the prices may shoot up in next one or two months, especially if the rains are poor in key growing areas.

The Modi government is already keeping a close watch on onion prices by holding frequent meetings with key stakeholders and has said that it will not hesitate to reimpose the minimum export price (MEP) to curb exports if the domestic prices move up. Bulb prices have remained stable for almost two months.

Consumer Affairs secretary Keshav Desiraju had reportedly said that the government may consider re-imposing the minimum export price (MEP) on onion. A higher MEP discourages onion exports from the country.

The average wholesale prices at Lasalgaon and Pimpalgaon APMCs in Nashik

district, the main onion growing areas in the country, are about Rs 10/kg to Rs 13/ kg, showing a slight increase of Rs 1-2 /kg in the last 10 days.

"Onion prices have remained stable till now because the production is more. Farmers are also taking onion out of the storage as the rain-damaged crop will not last very long," said RP Gupta, director, National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation.

The average wholesale price of onion during March to May used to remain in the range of Rs 3/kg to Rs 6/kg till two years ago as fresh rabi crop is harvested during this period. Onions prices used to increase only after September- ..

The stored crop starts getting over by this time if the stored crop is less or the new crop is damaged by rains at the time of harvesting.

However, from last year, onion prices have remained high even during the harvesting stage. Despite damage caused by rains and hailstorm in some parts of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, onion prices have remained stable due to the bumper production in most parts of the country.

Despite there being no movement of onions from Maharashtra by railway for more than a week, prices have remained mostly stable as states like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have ample stocks.

Bumper production during the rabi season in all parts of the country is keeping the prices low. "Prices are stable as there is lot of production," said Ajit Shah, president, Onion Exporters Association of India.

How the prices move in near future will depend upon rains as well as the quality of the stored stock.

Rice and wheat stock sufficient for non-rainy days

KOLKATA/NEW DELHI: Even though the Meteorology department has predicted below-normal monsoon this year, rice and wheat prices are likely to remain steady as the country has enough stock of these two grains. There may be a slight upward swing in cooking oil prices as imports may increase if rainfall is less

but pulses prices are expected to remain steady.

India is forecast to get 93 per cent of its average rainfall this monsoon because of a 70 per cent chance of the El Nino factor by July and early August. This is lower than the April estimate that had forecast 95 per cent rainfall. Nearly half of India's population livelihood depends on this sector and a poor monsoon will have a ripple effect on the rural economy and demand for consumer goods.

However, India has a good bufferstock of grain which will help the new government put a check on rising prices. Against a buffer norm of about 100 lakh tonne of rice and 170 lakh tonne of wheat, the total central pool stock as on June 1 was 206.45 lakh tonne of rice and 415.86 lakh tonne of wheat. This is expected to keep prices of grains under check said traders.

Tejinder Narang, a grain consultant said wheat and rice prices will have no impact due to weak monsoon. "We have sufficient stock for wheat and rice. The demand for Indian rice including basmati has gone down in the global market. Non-basmati prices in Thailand have come down by \$150 to \$380 a tonne in the past one year making Indian prices competitive in the global market," he said. Iran has also slowed its purchases by a significant percentage and raised duty from 24 per cent to 40 per cent for all rice imports. Shakti Bhog Foods, India's largest player in milled products, does not expect changes in prices for wheatbased products. There is ample wheat in the country and prices will remain stable," said [Siddharth Kumar](#), executive director, Shakti Bhog. Edible oil prices may appreciate by 2 per cent-3 per cent if India has to import higher volumes this year if lesser rains affect oilseed crop. Prices of October contract of soybean futures has risen . 200 per quintal, traders said.

