

## A website to help farmers

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*Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda launching the redesigned website of the Agriculture Department in Bangalore on Monday. — Photo: K. MURALI KUMAR*

**BANGALORE, March 4, 2014** - Farmers in the State can now get their doubts cleared by experts in the Agriculture Department.

They need to send their queries through the department's website, which has been redesigned in a bid to turn it into an interactive platform. The farmers will get reply from the experts through SMS also.

Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda, who launched the website on Monday, said facilities would soon be provided to help farmers upload photos of pest attack or crop devastation so that experts could diagnose the problem and get back to them with solutions.

He said plans were afoot to share the best practices and innovations of enterprising farmers through the website so that others too could emulate them. The intention behind the redesigning exercise was to create a farmer-to-farmer communication platform through the Agriculture Department, he said.

"Most of the times, farmers have better solutions for the problems through their experience. This website encourages them to share such knowledge with others," he said.

Mr. Gowda said information related to weather bulletin, pest warning, price situation, tenders and various schemes of the Agriculture Department would also be disseminated through the website. He asked the department to put the proceedings of important meetings on the website in a bid to bring about transparency in administration.

This would also serve as a grievance-redressing mechanism as farmers could also send in their queries on administration and delivery of various services through this bilingual website which operates in Kannada and English. The address of the redesigned website is: [raitamitra.kar.nic.in](http://raitamitra.kar.nic.in).

## Use technology to draw youth to farming, appeals expert

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*Huge reserves of India's natural resources going unutilised*



*K. Narayana Gowda, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, takes a look at exhibits at 'Agrifesta 2014', in Thrissur on Monday. — Photo: By special arrangement*

Modern technology should be used effectively to attract the youth to

farming, K. Narayana Gowda, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, has said.

He was addressing a seminar on "Information technology and agriculture" held on Monday at 'Agrifesta 2014', an agricultural exhibition, organised by the Kerala Agricultural University, Union Ministry of Agricultural Cooperation, NABARD, and the Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA).

"India is one of the richest among global nations in natural resources. Water available for Israel, a leading agricultural power, is much less than that for India. India has advantages in areas such as soil fertility, solar energy and wind power. Such factors may help the country gain record foodgrain production. Despite such advantages, India's agriculture sector is having hard times. Increased cost of production, drop in profitability and lack of interest in farming among the younger generation are seriously affecting the sector," he said.

He called for integrated farming systems, adoption of right technology and formation of farmer-producer associations. "They may solve some of the serious problems in the farm sector. Preservation, processing and value addition ensure profitability. Instead of carrying on with mono-cropping and age-old management practices, India should march ahead with the aid of technology. In the current extension system, only 30 per cent of technologies developed by researchers reach rural farmers. The 100-crore-odd mobile phones and other modern devices should be used for agriculture-related communication," he said.

K. Madhavan Nair, Director, Centre for Information Technology and Instrumentation, presided.

P. Ahmed, Director of Students' Welfare; P. Nirmala Devi, N. K. Manoj, Managing Director, KAMCO; Seshagiri Boaydi, Zonal Manager, RML Information services; Ajith Kumar, IA V Santhosh Kumar, V. G. Sunil and Zakkir Hussain spoke. KAU Vice-Chancellor P. Rajendran inaugurated a seminar on biotechnology. Director of Extension P. V. Balachandran presided. P. A. Valsala, V. S. Devadas and P.S. Abida spoke.

## Farmers oppose land acquisition for gold mine

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Farmers from Hutti, Kota and Medanapur villages in Lingasugur taluk in Raichur district staged a demonstration outside the office of Deputy Commissioner here on Monday protesting against the acquisition of their agricultural lands for gold mining.

They alleged the taluk Assistant Commissioner had not given consideration to the farmers' objection to the land acquisition.

They said the compensation of Rs. 56,500 per acre, fixed without consulting the farmers, was not acceptable to them. "The Assistant Commissioner, hand in glove with Hutti Gold Mine Limited, has cheated us by fixing throwaway price for our valuable lands," they alleged.

They threatened to consume poison if the government did not withdraw the process and restart it with a trilateral meeting among the farmers, the Assistant Commissioner and the company officials.

### **Krishna project land to be acquired soon**

Minister for Medium and Major Irrigation M.B. Patil said in Bijapur the government would start acquiring land within two months for the irrigation projects coming under Upper Krishna Project (UKP) stage-III.

He said the government was preparing rules as per the new Land Acquisition Act for acquiring land for the irrigation projects. A high-powered committee headed by Principal Secretary of the Revenue Department has been formed for the purpose.

Claiming that his government brought all major irrigation projects in the State to a final shape in the last nine months, he said the Upper Bhadra Project would be converted into a national project to seek Union government assistance for the project.

He said the government has granted Rs. 4,000 crore to irrigate around 3.5 lakh hectare land in Bijapur district. The Tubachi-Babaleshwar life irrigation project being taken up at a cost of Rs. 2,400 crore would provide micro irrigation facility to around 42,500 hectares of land in Bijapur, Jamakhandi and Athani taluks.

### **Rs. 24.73 cr. for developmental projects**

Minister for Social Welfare and Chitradurga district in-charge H. Anjaneya said the State government has released a special package of Rs. 24.73 crore for different developmental projects in the district to help it shed the tag of backward district.

Speaking after laying the foundation stone for various developmental works at Bharamasagar village recently, he said the State was honouring its promise to ensure overall development of the backward districts as per Dr. Nanjundappa committee report.

### **'Halt Express trains at Yadgir'**

Members of Karnataka Rakshana Vedike would submit memorandum to Union Railway Minister Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday demanding regular stoppage of all Express trains at Yadgir station. Vedike North Karnataka division president Sharanu Gadduge said on Monday around 10 Express trains including seven weekly trains and three regular trains passing through Yadgir should provide benefits to passengers by halting at the station.

## Fishing in murky waters, women come up trumps

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*livelihood matters: The stall, near Maduran-takam, has been set up by the fisheries department with funding from World Bank —Photo: M. SRINATH*

CHENNAI, March 4, 2014 - At driving distance from Chennai, near Madurantakam on National Highway 45 to Tiruchi, amidst Kumbakonam degree coffee outlets, sits a brightly-lit fish stall. Women from three self-help groups (SHGs) sell fried fish there. "We also

make cutlets from fish varieties like *kaanan*

*kelthi* and *vanjiram* and *bajjis* with *nethili* and *yera*," says A. Alamelu, one of the members taking care of the stall.

From the outside, the stall (open on all days from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.), set up by the fisheries department with funding from World Bank, may look like any other fried fish shop, but for the women behind it — Shakthi, C. Gangaiamma and C. Anjuramma — it is the result of seven years of hard work.

They have argued with men for fishing rights in Pakkam lake, carried gunny sacks of fish and kept watch under the stars to catch thieves who tried to make away with their catch. The SHGs have 57 women members and three men who serve as watchmen. They started off some 12 years ago as ordinary SHGs that provided small personal loans and saved money. "One day, fisheries inspector Chandran, assistant director Reena Selvi and other officials suggested we take fishing rights of the lake on lease. Our spouses said it was not our job. However, with the intervention of the then district collector Venkatesan, we were able to get the rights," says N. Nalini, another member.

Despite training in fish rearing, in the first year, the women were completely lost. But since, they have been successful enough to be invited to college cultural shows to put up fried fish stalls. Running the stall, however, hasn't been an easy task.

“Six months ago, a motor, weighing scales and a small net were stolen. We are yet to learn the nuances of the trade, but will soon catch up,” says Ms. Alamelu.

The women employ the men only to carry heavy things or go to faraway places to buy materials.

“Usually, we prefer to do all the work by ourselves. We don’t trust the men as they could get drunk and end up helping the thieves,” says N. Pankajam, another member.

The women now wish to expand their venture to a restaurant.

“Fisheries inspector Thirunagendran who helped set up the stall is also helping us prepare the project report for submission to the bank,” says D. Tamilchelvi, another member.

## Water level

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The water level in Periyar dam stood at 110.60 feet (permissible level is 136 feet) with an inflow of 274 cusecs and a discharge of 100 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 33.97 feet (full level is 71 feet) with no inflow and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 824 mcft. The Periyar dam received 9.2 mm rainfall and Thekkady recorded 54.8 mm rainfall during the 24 hours ending at 8. 30 a.m. on Monday, PWD officials said.

The water level in the Stanley Reservoir in Mettur stood at 49.34 feet against its full reservoir level of 120 feet here on Monday. The storage was 17.39 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft) as against its capacity of 93.470 tmc ft. The inflow was 605 cusecs while the outflow was 500 cusecs.

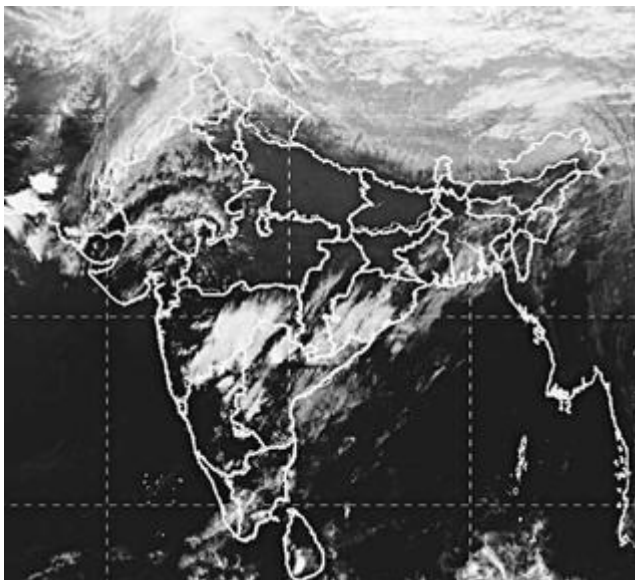
Water level in the Papanasam dam on Monday stood at 49.35 feet (permissible level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 153.43 cusecs and 401 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam.

The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 71.88 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 23 cusecs and 30 cusecs of water was discharged.

**Kanyakumari** - The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 10 feet, 38.35 feet in Perunchani, 3.44 feet in Chittar I, 3.54 feet in Chittar II, 3.50 feet in Poigai and 43.64 feet in Mambazathuraiyaru.

## Weather

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**ANDHRA PRADESH**

Anantapur	36	23	0	0
Arogyavaram	31	20	1	23
Bapatla	31	21	0	0
Calingapatnam	30	21	0	0
Gannavaram	32	22	0	0
Hanamkonda	32	19	15	41
Hyderabad AP	30	20	7	7
Kakinada	32	24	0	0
Khammam	33	21	0	0
Kavali	32	22	0	0
Kurnool	34	22	0	24
Mahabubnagar	34	21	0	0
Machilipatnam	31	23	0	0
Nandyal	34	22	0	0
Nellore	32	25	0	0
Nizamabad	30	20	0	tr
Ramagundam	31	20	1	8
Tirupathi AP	35	23	0	0
Tuni	32	23	0	0
Vizag AP	31	22	0	0
Vizag	29	23	0	0

**KARNATAKA**

Agumbe	31	10	0	0
Bangalore AP	31	19	tr	0
Bangalore	32	20	tr	4
Bagalkote	31	19	0	0
Belgaum AP	32	15	0	tr
Bellary	35	19	1	1
Bijapur	32	20	0	0
Chitradurga	33	18	0	0
Chickmagalur	32	15	0	0
Gadag	33	17	0	0
Gulbarga	33	21	0	1
Hassan	33	14	0	0
Honavar	31	17	0	0
Karwar	33	18	0	0
Madikeri	27	13	0	0
Mangalore AP	32	20	0	0
Mysore	34	21	2	2
Mandya	32	22	0	5
Panambur	33	21	0	0
Raichur	33	21	0	0
Shirali	32	18	0	0

**KERALA**

Alappuzha	32	24	tr	0
Kannur	34	22	0	0
Kochi AP	33	23	tr	0
Kottayam	34	24	0	0
Kozhikode	35	24	0	0
Punalur	36	22	6	12
Thiruvanantha				
-puram AP	31	23	28	81
Thiruvanantha				
-puram City	33	23	1	31
Vellanikkara	35	25	0	0

**TAMIL NADU**

Adiramapattinam	33	23	0	0
Chennai	32	25	0	0
Chennai AP	32	23	0	0
Coimbatore AP	33	23	0	0
Coonoor	22	14	38	45
Cuddalore	31	23	0	0
Dharmapuri	33	22	0	2
Kanyakumari	33	24	0	0
Karaikal	31	25	0	0
Kodaikanal	18	11	2	2
Madurai AP	35	26	tr	0
Nagapattinam	32	25	0	0
Palayamkottai	34	24	17	17
Pamban	32	25	0	0
Parangipettai	31	23	0	0
Puducherry	31	25	0	0
Salem	34	22	0	tr
Thanjavur	33	25	0	0
Tiruchi AP	34	25	0	0
Tirupattur	32	22	0	11
Tiruttani	33	20	0	0
Tondi	31	27	0	0
Tuticorin	31	26	0	0
Ooty	18	11	0	0
Valparai	27	13	0	10
Vellore	32	23	0	0
<b>LAKSHADWEEP</b>				
Amini Divi	33	23	0	2
Minicoy	32	26	0	0
<b>OTHER STATIONS</b>				
Kolkata (Alipore)	30	19	tr	0
Mumbai	28	20	0	0
New Delhi	22	11	0	10

The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (trace) and total rainfall in mm since January 01, 2014.

#### ISOLATED RAIN IN ANDHRA PRADESH

**CHENNAI:** Isolated rainfall occurred over Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Interior Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Dry weather prevailed over Lakshadweep and Coastal Karnataka.

On Sunday, the maximum temperature rose at one or two places over Tamil Nadu, North Interior Karnataka, fell at one or two places over Telangana, Tamil Nadu and changed little elsewhere over the rest of the region.

Anantapur recorded the highest maximum temperature of 36 degree Celsius in the region. The minimum temperature fell at one or two places over Tamil Nadu, South Interior Karnataka, rose markedly to appreciably at few places over North Interior Karnataka and rose at one or two places over Coastal Karnataka and changed little elsewhere over the region.

Belgaum Airport, Bidar and Adilabad recorded the lowest minimum temperature of 15 degree Celsius in the plains of the region.

**FORECAST (Valid until Wednesday Morning):** Rain or thundershowers would occur at a few places over Telangana.

Isolated rain or thundershowers may occur over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra Pradesh.

# Weather

Chennai - INDIA

## Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

## Tuesday, Mar 4

Max Min

29° | 24°

Sunrise: 06:25

Sunset: 06:17

Barometer: 1013

## Tomorrow's Forecast



Sunny

## Wednesday, Mar 5

Max Min

30° | 24°

## Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday

Mar 6



31° | 23°

Partly Cloudy

Friday

Mar 7



31° | 23°

Partly Cloudy

Saturday

Mar 8



26° | 23°

Cloudy

Sunday

Mar 9



25° | 23°

Overcast

Monday

Mar 10



26° | 23°

Overcast

## NDDB may help market fruits, vegetables in state

The state government on Saturday inked an agreement with the board for five years for dairy development in the state.

As the NDDB's Mother Dairy will be sold with the tag of Medha milk in Jharkhand, the union minister Jairam Ramesh suggested the state government to use the brand of Mother Dairy even for marketing and product enhancement of vegetables and fruits.

"Mother Dairy is not a brand of milk products but it is also popular for fresh vegetables and fruits," Ramesh said.

Under the brand name 'Safal,' the Mother Dairy Fruit & Vegetable Pvt Ltd has been undertaking integrated marketing of horticultural produce. An official of the state horticulture department said that they would soon prepare a strategy in this regard.

Jharkhand has been the surplus state in terms of vegetable production. However, owing to lack of marketing strategy, storage facility and processing plants, the state is yet to reap desired results from the vegetable productions. As per the Jharkhand economic survey 2013-14, vegetables' production is 4325.38 million tons cultivated on 3.21 lakh hectare area in 2012-13. Jharkhand's annual vegetable demand is just 3000 million ton.

Similarly, production of production of fruits has also increased many folds in last 13 years. The production of fruits was 265.1 million tons in 2000-01 that increased to 889.74 million ton. The area for fruits' production has also increased by three fold in last 13 years. In 2000-

01, areas for fruit cultivation were just 29,900 hectares that increased to 93,820 hectares in 2012-13.



## Fishermen to Launch Nation-wide Campaign

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Ahead of the Lok Sabha election, the fishing community is gearing up to launch a nation-wide campaign from Kerala raising various demands, including setting up of a separate ministry for fisheries and fishermen welfare.

Fishermen, who form a predominant vote bank of political parties, plan to run their campaign parallel to the political campaigns of various parties in Gujarat, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Odisha, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Andaman Nicobar.

The campaign will be launched in Kochi on Wednesday followed by Gujarat on March 10. "We want to send a clear signal to the political parties. Demands of the fishing community are often neglected by both Centre and State Governments. The population of fishermen in the country is three crore. Though they are striving and providing nutritious fish as food to 80 per cent of the population of our country at cheap rate, they remain socially, economically and educationally backward. But, in spite of this, fisheries had been included as the fourth portfolio behind agriculture, animal husbandry and dairy under the Ministry of Agriculture since its inception and fishermen's welfare is continuously being neglected by the authorities concerned," said T Peter, secretary, National Fishworkers Forum (NFF), an umbrella of state-level trade unions in the fishing sector.

NFF leaders had met various political parties, including Congress, BJP, CPM, CPI and AAP in New Delhi last month and submitted a memorandum highlighting various issues of the fishing community. The key demands raised in the memorandum include strict implementation of the ban on coastal sand mining as ordered by the National Green Tribunal, 10 cents of land each to fishermen families for building houses away from the areas prone to sea erosion and ban on destructive fishing gadgets in the Indian territorial waters.

"For the agriculture sector, various loans such as cultivation loan, crop loan and gold loan are given through banks and other government financial institutions at 4 per cent interest rate. But, the fisherfolk have to pay an interest rate of 12 per cent for their loans. This interest rate should be made on a par with that in the agriculture sector. Also, all loans availed of by fishermen from banks and cooperative societies should be written off in the event of fishermen suffering damage," Peter added.



## Scent of sandalwood, oil no more fragrant

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Inconsistent supply, rising demand push up prices

**Bangalore, March 3:** Prices of sandalwood as well as its oil have increased 30 per cent between 2007 and 2012, according to industry experts. "This spurt in prices is due to sharp decline in production in the country. From a production level of 3,000 tonnes in 1960 and 70s, it has declined to 400 tonnes currently," said HS Anantha Padmanabha, forestry consultant and former scientist at the Indian Wood Science and Technology (IWST).

**As for the sandal oil output, it is around 20 tonnes currently compared with 150 tonnes during the 1970s. The entire production is consumed by State-owned enterprises, leaving the private trade and industry to look for import to meet**

their requirements.

This spurt in prices has resulted in loss of business for small traders in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala and some have even shut shop.

V Soundara Rajan, scientist at IWST, said: "There is has been a sudden increase in import of sandalwood oil. Current imports (2012-13) are averaging at around 30,000 kg which are about 10 times more than what it was five years ago. Most of the imports are for internal consumption or re-exports."

The price of sandalwood at various Government auctions is around Rs. 75 lakh (\$125,000) a tonne and the price for sandalwood oil is quoting Rs. 1.35 lakh (\$2,200) a kg.

"Price may continue to rise by 6 per cent annually. A few plantations, both in the government and private sectors, are keen to take up sandalwood cultivation using new technology," said Anantha Padmanabha.

"This new cultivation pattern is sustainable and may not lead to fluctuations in prices in the year to come," he said. Echoing a similar sentiment, RK Upadhyay, chief conservator of forests, Tamil Nadu, said urgent legislation is required to allow private individuals and farmers to take up sandalwood cultivation.

**Need for laws**

Southern States, where agro-climatic conditions are favourable to grow sandalwood, have stringent forest acts/rules in place to protect sandalwood.

But the laws have not been implemented properly and stocks have dwindled to mere saplings of less than 10-15 centimetre girth.

"Since sandalwood trees are illegally cut and removed from forest areas, these regulations are of limited purpose.

Now, one of the best options is to analyse these regulations and amend them to help the farmers to cultivate sandalwood in their land, harvest and trade," he said.

# Govt notifies export subsidy of Rs. 3,300/tonne for raw sugar

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Cabinet had okayed incentive to be provided for February and March

**New Delhi, March 3:** According to a gazette notification dated February 28, sugar factories which produce raw sugar and undertake export either by themselves or through exporters will be eligible for this incentive.

The incentive will be provided from the Sugar Development Fund. It will be reviewed before the commencement of next season. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the incentive on February 12.

The incentive will be for 40 lakh tonnes of raw sugar produced and exported during 2013-14 and 2014-15 sugar seasons. The incentive will be utilised to make payment of cane arrears. Cane arrears have already crossed Rs. 10,000 crore.

The notification, while prescribing the rate of incentive for February and March, says that rates will be recalculated every two months after taking into account the average exchange rate of rupee vis-à-vis dollar as on the seven days immediately preceding April 1, June 2, and August 1, 2014, for April-May, June-July and August-September respectively. The date of shipment will be the basis for determining the incentives.

The move will directly benefit sugar mills in Maharashtra and Karnataka provided they ship out the raw sugar over the next two months. Other sugar producers will indirectly stand to benefit on expectations that domestic prices will stabilise.

# Ukrainian crisis fuels sunflower oil prices

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**Ahmedabad, March 3:** Imports of crude sunflower oil are turning dearer following the crisis in Ukraine. Prices of the oil have increased by 10-12 per cent in less than a month.

Sunflower oil makes up about 10 per cent of the country's total edible oil imports of over 10 million tonnes a year. According to the Solvent Extractors' Association of India data, 9.7 lakh tonnes of sunflower oil were imported during 2012-13 season that ended in September. Exports of Ukraine sunflower oil to India made up nearly one third of the shipments from the largest

sunflower seed producer of the world.

According to the extractors body, imported crude sunflower oil prices have increased from \$895/tonne (c.i.f, JNPT ) in January 2014 to over \$955-960 by March 3.

In the domestic market, prices have touched Rs. 66,000 a tonne from Rs. 60,500 a month ago.

According to the solvent extractors body, in the current oil year, the country has imported 3.63 lakh tonnes of sunflower oil, up by 1.15 lakh tonnes from the same period a year ago.

“The Ukrainian crisis has added fuel to the already rising prices. Sunflower oil supplies could get affected due to escalating cross-border tension,” said Laxmichand Aggarwal, past chairman of Central Organisation for Oil Industry and Trade (COOIT).

In addition to the Ukrainian crisis, climatic fluctuations in Indonesia – a major producer of palm oil has resulted in the entire imported edible oil complex turning bullish. Prices of imported palm oil have jumped by about \$100 a tonne (or over 12 per cent) in past one month to \$890.

“There are fears of damage to mustard crop in India due to recent hailstorm in growing regions. Also, weather has been uncertain in Indonesia, thereby causing increase in the palm oil prices. The overall sentiment is bullish in the edible oil complex,” he said.

## Demand sweetens sugar

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**Mumbai, March 3:** Sugar prices rose by Rs. 15-25 a quintal across the country in the physical market on Monday following higher demand. Producers held back their produce from selling at lower price on expectation of higher demand with the mercury rising and this kept sentiment positive. On Saturday evening, producers sold over one lakh bags to local traders and upcountry buyers.

Sources said that prices improved by Rs. 20-30 at the Vashi wholesale market, tracking strong *nakarates* which increased by same margin. Mills tender rates ruled unchanged at higher level as spot prices were lower.

Arrivals at Vashi market were around 61- 62 truckloads (of 100 bags) and the local dispatches were 59-60 loads. On Saturday, 19-20 mills offered tenders and sold about 1-1.10 lakh bags at a steady rate of Rs. 2,570-2,670 for S-grade and Rs. 2,750-2,820 for M-grade.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association’s spot rates were: S-grade Rs. 2,736-2,842 ( Rs. 2,732-2,826) and M-grade was Rs. 2,856-2,980 ( Rs. 2,872-2,977). *Naka* delivery rates were: S-grade Rs. 2,765-2,850 ( Rs. 2,700-2,820) and M-grade Rs. 2,800-2,950 ( Rs. 2,810-2,930).

## Vietnam, China pip India in rubber output

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Skidding yield and ageing trees leave user industries worried



ostill/shutterstock

**Kochi, March 3:** Tyre and rubber industries have expressed concern over the fall in productivity and slack pace of growth in the country’s rubber production.

An analysis of rubber production data released by the Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries for 2013 showed that India now trails Vietnam and China in production. It has now slipped to the fifth position in rubber production.

The Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association and All-India Rubber Industries Association, ( which analysed the ANRPC data, have raised concerns over this at a meeting organised by the Rubber Board. In 2013, the country's rubber production decreased 7.6 per cent to 8.49 lakh tonnes. Vietnam registered a growth of over 20 per cent and its production has topped the coveted 10-lakh-tonne mark which India has been aspiring to achieve. China has also picked up momentum and its production has overtaken that of India, Rajiv Budhraj, Director-General, ATMA, said.

### **Yield declines**

Provisional figures for 2012-13 by the Rubber Board showed that productivity has also declined. The productivity, which was 1,867 kg/ha in 2008-09, has been estimated at 1,813 kg/ha for 2012-13.

According to Niraj Thakkar, President, AIRIA, the country has had a chequered history of rubber production.

Going forward, it is important to optimise the potential of rubber in India so as to support the growth of the industry.

Quoting Rubber Board data, the associations said that between 2008-09 and 2012-13 the tapped area under rubber had increased by 41,000 hectares. The productivity of the incremental tapped area has been calculated at just 1,200 kg/ha which points to a worrisome trend, the associations said.

The tyre and rubber goods industries have asked for an annual assessment of the age profile of trees.

Age profile of trees is imperative from the perspective of planting, re-planting and determining productivity, etc.

### **Spot rubber slides**

Aravindan reports from Kottayam: Rubber prices turned weak on Monday. The inauguration of the State-level rubber procurement by Finance Minister KM Mani at Kottayam failed to make any impact on the market.

There was no follow up buying in RSS 4 as expected and the market made all-round declines amidst low volumes.

Sheet rubber dropped to Rs. 147.50 ( Rs. 150) a kg, according to traders. The grade fell to Rs. 148.50 ( Rs. 150) and Rs. 145.50 ( Rs. 147) respectively, as reported by the Rubber Board and dealers.

March futures slipped to Rs. 147.40 ( Rs. 147.51), April to Rs. 151.50 ( Rs. 151.76), May to Rs. 154.51 ( Rs. 154.85) and June to Rs. 155.30 ( Rs. 156.37) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) improved to Rs. 136.10 ( Rs. 134.09) at Bangkok. March futures closed at ¥224.4 ( Rs. 137.51) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates ( Rs. /kg): RSS-4: 147.50 (150); RSS-5: 146 (147); Ungraded: 142 (144); ISNR 20: 143 (144) and Latex 60%: 119 (120).

## Tea prices down 6.61%

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**Coonoor, March 3:** Tea prices are ruling lower compared with last year at South Indian and North Indian auction centres, reveals an analysis of the latest data available with Tea Board and auction centres.

In January, all-India auction average prices dropped to Rs. 112.69 a kg from Rs. 121.05 in January 2013, marking a decline of 6.61 per cent. North Indian price average fell to Rs. 120.23 ( Rs. 128.58) and South Indian price average dropped to Rs. 91.11 ( Rs. 100.84).

Export demand was weak in January in the context of global oversupply and disturbances in trade due to prolonged snowfall in the US, CIS, rest of Europe and Japan as also floods in the UK.

North Indian auctions passed through low volumes due to winter closure forcing upcountry buyers to shop in South but this did not push up prices in South Indian auctions because of inadequate competition from exporters. The absence of the much-needed marketing



initiative resulted in South Indian auctions losing Rs. 10 on every kg compared to January 2013 despite thin offerings in the North.

# Business Standard

## Coffee exports rise 15% in Jan-Feb

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[Coffee](#) exports rose 15 per cent to 62,956 tonnes during January to February on firm global [prices](#), according to the Coffee Board.

Shipments from [India](#), the world's fifth-biggest exporter, were 54,679 tonnes a year ago.

"Coffee exports have risen on account of improved price trend in the international market," a senior Coffee Board

official told PTI.

In value, exports increased to Rs 937 crore in the first two months of this year against Rs 824 crore a year ago. Most were to Italy (17,205 tonnes), followed by Germany (7,513 tonnes), Belgium (3,709 tonnes), Jordan (3,189 tonnes), Turkey (3,053 tonnes) and Russia (2,576 tonnes), by the Board's data.

Experts said global prices had risen to the highest in February, fuelled by fears over falling [production](#) in top producer Brazil. On February 20, Arabica jumped to 177.5 cents a pound, the highest since October 2012, they added. Of total exports, the shipments of Arabica rose 35 per cent to 19,856 tonnes from 14,696 tonnes a year ago.

Instant coffee shipments more than doubled to 10,902 tonnes during the January-February period of 2014, from 3,918 tonnes in the year-ago period, the data showed.

However, re-exports declined to 4,754 tonnes from 10,495 tonnes in the corresponding period.

Top five exporters were Amalgamated Bean Coffee Trading Company Ltd, CCL Products India Ltd, Allanasons, ITC and Olam Agro India during the January-February period of this year.

The board has pegged the total output at 3,11,500 tonnes for 2013-14 crop year (October-September), down by 2.1% from 3,18,200 tonnes produced in 2012-13.

## MPEDA's co-branding drive for seafood exports

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India's [seafood export](#) industry, dominated by small and medium enterprises ([SMEs](#)), and growing at 20 per cent a year, will soon get a shot in the arm. In a bid to help entrepreneurs, the [Marine Products Export Development Authority \(MPEDA\)](#) under the ministry of commerce is undertaking a major [co-branding](#) drive, which will promote the brand equity of Indian marine products in regulated markets.



Seafood exports from India are expected to touch \$4.3 billion in the current fiscal year and \$10 billion a year by 2020, according to MPEDA.



A J Tharakan, president, Seafood Exporters Association of India, said there is no large company in this industry, which comprises 400-500 exporters. It consists almost entirely of SMEs, most of them family-run businesses.

There are some 150 major players, with about 100 exporters contributing 70 per cent of total exports. The largest of them have revenues in the region of Rs 100-400 crore. The industry is a 100 per cent net foreign exchange earner.

Leena Nair, chairperson, MPEDA, added that value-added products are gaining momentum. They used to contribute around five per cent of total seafood exports about three years ago, but now contribute around 17 per cent. The target is to increase this first to 30 per cent and then to 50 per cent in the next three to five years.

As market promotion has assumed special significance in view of growing competition and regulation from other seafood-exporting countries, MPEDA believes that there is a need to step up promotional programmes in major overseas markets and develop better rapport with the trade and officials in importing countries, said N Ramesh, director - marketing, MPEDA.

He said MPEDA has decided to tie up with established brands for promoting Indian seafood products and, as a preliminary step, it signed a co-branding agreement with Sysco Corporation Inc for the promotion of Indian Black Tiger Shrimp in the United States a few years ago.

MPEDA also signed a similar agreement with Japan's Aeon supermarket chain recently, and is looking for more such tie-ups in European countries. "Over the next few months we want to have at least 10 such-tie-ups with foreign supermarket chains," said Ramesh.

The MPEDA logo will be awarded to processors who satisfy the standards fixed by MPEDA, he noted.

With more and more companies realising that demand for value-added products is picking up, and the return on investment is also high, there has been a jump in investment, said Ramesh. MPEDA estimates that in the next four to five years, the industry is poised to increase capacity by 50 per cent with an investment of about Rs 3,000 crore, according to Ramesh.

Over the years, the industry has added capacity in order to export value-added products, Tharakan said. So far, India has been exporting the raw material to China and Thailand, where they are converted into products for the ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook segments.

One key concern, he said, is that the industry doesn't have a coordinated conservation and fisheries policy. The states have different policies and this has an effect on the industry. With the exception of Goa, the state governments have not put in place any conservation measures.

While conditions are favourable for exports at present, better coordination between ministries will be needed and export procedures speeded up, to help farmers, the MPEDA officials said. The Central and state governments need to bring in appropriate policies in support of the industry and for the welfare of fishermen in the coastal areas, they added.

The US, the European Union and Japan are the major destinations for Indian seafood exports, while China and South East Asia are also emerging as favourite destinations.

## Odisha rice production may cross 80 lakh tonne by 2017: Assocham

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Rice production in [Odisha](#) can reach 82 lakh tonne mark by 2017-18, a 17% rise from the current level of about 70 lakh tonne through increased usage of high yielding varieties of rice, improving [soil drainage](#), spreading rice-fish culture and taking other such measures, according to a study by the apex industry body, the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India ([Assocham](#)).

"[Rainwater](#) harvesting and storage, expansion of area under high-value cash crops and vegetables, improvement in seed supply to increase the seed replacement rate (SRR), soil treatment to improve the productivity of crops in acidic soils in the region, use of high yielding varieties for water logged and upland areas, discouraging rice cultivation in marginal lands and diversifying in favour of oilseeds and pulses, utilisation of rice fallows are certain significant steps required to increase cropping intensity and crop productivity in Odisha," according to the study titled, 'Towards Second Green Revolution in Eastern India: A Road Map'.

Rice production in eastern region of India can reach about 670 lakh tonne by 2017-18 from the current level of over 580 lakh tonne as the region holds tremendous potential to emerge as 'Rice Bowl of India', as every quintal increase in yield would push rice production by over two metric tonnes," the study added.

Eastern India contributes almost 55% area under rice that is over 23 million hectares, besides, this part of the country has abundant natural resources including land, water and bio-diversity, thus, an integrated holistic approach coupled with a well-planned strategy is imperative to realize targeted average agricultural growth rate of about four% in the eastern region," it added.

Neighbouring West Bengal spearheads the eastern India in [paddy](#) production to the tune of about 150 lakh tonne followed by eastern Uttar Pradesh (140 lakh tonne), Odisha (70 lakh tonne), Bihar (68 lakh tonne), Chhattisgarh (63 lakh tonne), Assam (47 lakh tonne) and Jharkhand (34 lakh tonne).

The industry body said that if the gap between potential yield and actual yield in rice can be bridged in India, the eastern region can achieve a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of about ten% in rice production.

"Rice and fish production needs to be up-scaled in eastern region as it plays a significant role in socio-economic structure of farmers in the region, beside increased production of rice and fisheries resources will also lead to growth in marketing infrastructure and spur job creation in post-harvest, marketing and other related spheres," said DS Rawat, national secretary general of Assocham while releasing the study.

"Greater dependence on unpredictable monsoon, recurring drought and floods, low intensity during Kharif season, poor growth in spread of high yielding varieties, injudicious use of fertilizers and other agri-inputs, low seed replacement rate coupled with weak

extension machinery and poor credit facilities are major challenges faced by the region as it grapples with sluggish productivity and production growth rate," said Rawat.

In its study, Assocham has suggested for using hybrids, inter-cropping, increased mechanization, use of micro nutrients, extension support and demonstration centres that are key to raise productivity.

"Apart from rice (paddy) suitable evaluation of promoting other crops like maize, pulses and oilseeds should be undertaken for optimum utilization of land and local needs in the region," said Rawat.

"There is also urgent need for efficient management of water resources as eastern India is prone to rampant drought and floods", he added. Assocham has recommended that focused research involving hybrid seeds in developing transgenic rice should be undertaken to address problem of nutrients, pests, diseases, drought and floods.

Besides, objective evaluation of bio-products together with extension of necessary subsidy is imperative to make them cost-effective and favorable for farmers as they are environment friendly and help in reducing toxicity and carcinogens. Market linkages is another important factor highlighted in the Assocham study as increased production should be supported by remunerative price to the farmers, accompanied by suitable mechanism for procurement in identified eastern states.

Stating that infrastructure is a pre-requisite to achieve the second green revolution in India, the industry chamber has suggested for conservation and conversion of water resources in the rural sector, timely and efficient [flood control](#) systems, production of low-cost bio-pesticides and farm equipment and centres for agro-machinery services and agri-inputs.

For reducing the agricultural wastage it has suggested for creating a scientific storage, grading and cleaning centre. More than 20% of agricultural goods are wasted at various points when farm products move from farm till consumers' door-step.

It has also emphasized there is also a need to develop farmer friendly value addition process for better price realization, stabilization and consistency in quality. A cluster development approach is required to create modern marketing infrastructure for better realization for farmers with value addition and reduced agri wastage, the industry body added.

## Potato down 2% on reduced offtake

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[Potato](#) futures prices declined 2.06% to Rs 1,158 per quintal today as speculators offloaded positions on weak trend in the spot market.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), potato for March delivery fell by Rs 24.40, or 2.06%, to Rs 1,158 per quintal, with a business volume of 68 lots.

For delivery in April, potato traded lower by Rs 21.70, or 1.81%, to Rs 1,173 per quintal, with a trade volume of 31 lots.

Marketmen said fall in potato prices was mostly due to offloading of positions by speculators, driven by subdued demand in the spot market amid increased supplies in the physical market.

## Cardamom down 0.5% on subdued demand

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[Cardamom](#) prices fell by Rs 4.70 to Rs 782.30 per kg in futures trade today as speculators offloaded holdings due to subdued spot demand at prevailing levels.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), cardamom for delivery in March eased by Rs 4.70, or 0.59%, to Rs 782.30 per kg in a business turnover of 199 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in April traded lower by Rs 4.30, or 0.52%, to Rs 814.20 per kg with a trading volume of 130 lots.

Market analysts said offloading of positions by traders amid a weak trend in spot market on subdued demand mainly led to the fall in cardamom prices at futures market.

## Palm oil up 1.6% on pick-up in demand

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[Crude palm oil](#) prices were up by 1.66% to Rs 611.60 per 10 kg in futures trading today as participants created speculative positions following rising demand in the spot markets amid firming trend in overseas markets.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), crude palm oil for delivery in March rose by Rs 10, or 1.66%, to Rs 611.60 per 10 kg in a business turnover of 244 lots.

Likewise, the oil for delivery in April was up by Rs 7.70, or 1.28%, to Rs 607 per 10 kg in 196 lots.

Analysts said speculative positions built-up by participants following pick-up in spot demand and firming trend in overseas markets mainly led to rise in crude palm oil prices at futures trade.

Globally, palm oil for delivery in May jumped 2.10% to trade at over 17 months high at 2,860 ringgit (\$873) a tonne on the Bursa Malaysia Derivatives Exchange on speculation that dry weather in the main palm and soybean growing areas may weaken prospects for global oil production.

## Coriander down 1.4% on low demand

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[Coriander](#) prices fell by 1.45% to Rs 9,333 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators reduced their positions on the back of subdued demand in the spot market.

Besides, adequate stocks availability in the physical market on sufficient arrivals from producing belts also put pressure on coriander futures.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, coriander for delivery in April fell by Rs 137, or 1.45%, to Rs 9,333 per quintal with open interest of 40,970 lots.



The price for May delivery declined by Rs 139, or 1.44%, to Rs 9,498 per quintal with open interest of 30,920 lots.

Market analysts said adequate stocks availability in the physical market against subdued demand mainly led to the fall in coriander futures prices.

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