

## Farmer goes organic; yield up



Application of an organic liquid fertilizer made of chicken poop has enabled a farmer at Pallapalayam here to enhance the productivity of sugarcane crop on his four-acre field.

Considered cost-effective by an expert team of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), the fertilizer applied over the last six months, has increased the number of offshoots of the crop, creating the possibility to harvest canes in excess of 80 tonne an acre.

By using the organic fertilizer, the expenditure of Nallagovindasamy, did not exceed Rs. 25,000 an acre.

The yield would be 20 tonne to 30 tonne more an acre in the farm owing to the switch over from chemical fertilizers, said B.J. Pandian, Director In-Charge, Water Technology Centre, TNAU, on Wednesday, after examining the crop.

The organic liquid fertilizer was being tested on banana crop at the university, said Mr. Pandian, who is also the Nodal Officer for TN — IAMWARM (Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation and Water-Bodies Restoration and Management) project.

At the current growth rate, each cane in the field would weigh up to 1.5 kg.

Crop-growth normally seen after eight months could be seen in the sixth month at the farm, P. Kalaiselvan, Professor of Agronomy, TNAU, said. Increase in the number of offshoots was another advantage the fertilizer could bring about.

Compared to four to five offshoots when cultivated with chemical fertilizer, there were 10 to 20 offshoots a plant at the farm. said Prof. Kalaiselvan.

Samples of canes were found to weigh between 1kg and 1.5 kg.

Each of the well grown canes would weigh up to 2 kg at the time of harvest, K. Kumarasamy, Soil Water and Crop Management Consultant, said.

According to Durairaj, who supplies the fertilizer for Rs. 50 a litre from his production unit at Tiruchengode, the product brought down manpower requirement for cultivation at the farm since it was applied through drip irrigation.

The fertilizer named GOLF (Green Organic Liquid Fertiliser) was mixed in the proportion of 10ml a litre of water.

The manufacturing unit procures chicken coop rich in nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium from poultry units in the region.

## Korai growers in Kaur left high and dry

Farmers in Karur district who raise *korai* grass have urged the State government to take steps to abolish the reign of middlemen and [brokers](#) who siphon away the profit of cultivators.

The grass grown on large tracts of land are yet to be harvested due to a deadlock in pricing. Korai, the fibre grass which is famous for matting in India, is widely cultivated along the right banks of the Cauvery River in the district.

It is cultivated in more than 2,500 acres of land in Paramathi, Vangal, Kuppuchipalayam, Achammapuram, Nanniyur, and N.Pudur. This once fertile stretches have been ravaged by industrial pollution and the farmers who were cultivating paddy, banana, sugarcane, and turmeric had to turn to *korai* to withstand the pollution. At present, more than 15,000 farmers and farm labourers were engaged in korai cultivation.

After harvest, the grass is bundled and despatched to the mat manufacturing units in Karnataka, West Bengal, and Rajasthan, and Salem, Omalur, Musiri, Kurinjipadi, Vaniyambadi and Kayathar within the State.

Farmers claim that they were not getting adequate price for their produce as middlemen siphon of the meagre profits, and the prices too have remained stagnant for years.

Most farmers, who have come under the umbrella of Korai Grass Farmers Association, at a meeting at Nerur in Karur district here, complain that they are kept in the dark about the actual pricing and often end up losing the bargain.

President of the Association Chinnadurai pointed out that it was the agents who procure the grass from the farmers in the fields and take them to the mat

weaving units and fix price according to their whims and fancies leaving the growers with no scope for bargaining.

The State government must create a regulatory mechanism on the lines of those for sugarcane and salt for korai grass, he said.

Farmers have stopped supply of korai grass since first week of March as the prices were not affordable and have demanded at least Rs.1,500 per bundle for 54 inch stem, Rs. 1,400 per bundle for 48 inch stem, and Rs. 900 a bundle for stems lesser than that.

### **Water level**

The water level in the Periyar dam stood at 110.90 feet (permissible level 136 feet) on Wednesday with an inflow of 15 cusecs and a discharge of 100 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 31.94 feet with no inflow and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 833 mcft. There was no rainfall recorded during the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Wednesday, PWD officials here said.

### **Water level at Mettur**

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 49.27 feet on Wednesday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 357 cusecs and the discharge 500 cusecs.

### **Coconut farmers get growth-aiding bacteria**

A bioinoculant laboratory that helps develop microorganisms for healthy and robust coconut and cocoa seedlings, has come up at the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) here.

At a recent function inaugurated by S. Ayyappan, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (ARE ) secretary , two of the best performing bacteria samples were formally released to help farmers.

While the first is the Kera Probio, a talc-based bioinoculant containing the PGPR *Bacillus megaterium* for coconut, the other is Cocoa Probio containing *Pseudomonas putida*, meant for cocoa.

Ravisankar, a farmer from Vorkady, received the Kera Probio packet and Chouta, from Meenja was given the Cocoa Pro Bio packet by Dr. Ayyappan.

N.K. Krishna Kumar, Deputy Director General (Horticulture) Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR), released draft genome sequences of three PGPR bacteria that promoted multiple plant growth properties that led to increased growth of coconut, cocoa and arecanut.

The function also saw a technology module for collecting neera, from coconut palm was showcased and the product 'Kalparasa' (health drink extracted from coconut inflorescence) was also launched.

Two publications from CPCRI – cataloguing the experiences of organising scientist-farmer interface programmes and on technologies for higher productivity and income from coconut farming – were also released by Dr. Ayyappan.

D.C. Chowta, award winning farmer, shared his observations in using technologies for coconut and areca nut-based integrated farming, especially cultivation of dwarf coconut varieties for tendernut purpose to generate higher income. Jojy P. Daniel, a progressive farmer from West Eleri in the district, shared his experiences on adopting integrated disease management technologies for the control of bud rot disease in coconut.

## Take new paths to reap benefits, farmers told

Kerala Agricultural University Vice Chancellor P. Rajendran has called for taking uncharted paths to explore the potential of the agriculture sector in Kuttanad.

He was inaugurating the 'Technology Week' observance organised by The Agricultural Technology Management Agency and Krishi Vigyan Kendra at the Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS) campus in Kumarakom on Wednesday.

According to Dr. Rajendran, there has not been much significant progress for small-scale farmers in the region in recent times. Moreover, the farming community in the Kuttanad region could no longer restrict its options to paddy farming. It was in this context that several new components including fish farming, duck farming and animal husbandry were gaining prominence, he said.

Dr. Rajendran said farmers could reap greater benefits by collective efforts. "Through such collective measures, the farming community would be able to establish their own [market](#) outlets, thereby enabling them to receive more profits through their increased bargaining capacity. These groups should also aspire to set-up efficient storage facilities that could be used to tide over market fluctuations," he said. He added that although there was limited scope for diversification in the region, farmers could work towards value-addition of products to ensure greater benefits. Agencies such as Krishi Vigyan Kendra must propagate awareness on such options, Dr. Rajendran said.

## Coconut prices come as hard as its shell

Be you the daily consumer or the religious, coconut prices here are going to hit you as hard as its shell. Well, that is if you get hold of one.

Stocks of tender and husked coconuts have plummeted in the district, and average prices have doubled in the last one month.

### Shortage

Sellers who maintain thin stocks are pricing an average-sized husked coconut at Rs.25-30, while a tender coconut of the same size will come for not less than Rs.25.

Several provision stores have even stopped selling coconuts, with there being no takers.

Those who run coconut *mandi*s attribute the reason to two aspects. Stocks from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are not sufficient, with their demand being met domestically.

Sampath Kumar, a coconut supplier from RT Nagar in Bangalore, told *The Hindu* that an average sized coconut is sold at Rs.16-17, making it Rs.25 and more in Chittoor.

### Hoarding issue

Hoarding of stocks could be another big reason, traders observed.

On the other hand, some traders said it is the onset of the election season that has led to the dearth of husked coconuts stocks.

With a lot of sentiment attached to the coconut, political leaders, mostly in the southern States, are in need of them before jumping into the fray for the elections. In rural areas, such sentiment would be even more frenzied.

Andhra Pradesh would be in dire need of them, given that multiple elections – those to the local bodies, Assembly and Parliament – are being held together.

Enthusiastic candidates and their supporters even go the extent of breaking coconuts thousands at the temples of their beloved deities.

Many devotees at various temples in the district are, however, limiting themselves to purchasing camphor, flowers and incense for the *puja* s.

### **Mix of crop and animals in farms helps increase income**

The ability to extract maximum returns from a small area and making use of the available resources and technologies are key factors in improving income for farmers.

If some animal components can also be added to the crop production schedule, the chances of a better income increase.

The University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Bangalore is implementing a pilot project called “Holistic development of schedule caste and schedule tribe farmers for livelihood improvement” of resource poor farmers in highly populated taluks of Southern Karnataka, covering around eight thousand farm families.

### **Aim**

“The project aims to strengthen the livelihood of vulnerable farm families through diversifying crop production and reducing input cost,” says Dr. K. Jagadeeshwara, Dean and Principal Investigator of the project, College of Sericulture, Chintamani, Chickballapur district.



The project seems to have been able to create a positive impact on the farmers' lifestyle. The average income in the region before implementation of project was roughly about Rs. 20,549 a year from crops and Rs. 9,447 from animals for a farmer. But after implementation there has been an increase of Rs. 44,718 in crop production and Rs. 54,630 from animals in a year according to the Vice Chancellor Dr. K. Narayana Gowda. Mr. Ravinaik, one of the beneficiaries, is a young, uneducated farmer from Hosakoppa village located 20kms from Davanagere city and owns about five acres. His entire family of six members was totally dependent on the income from this area.

### **Major crop**

Paddy was the major crop grown, with vegetables in a small area. Just when he was contemplating to migrate to the city in search of a job he came to know that the University was implementing a project for farmer families through his village community leaders. He decided to take part in the project as one of the beneficiaries and attended several training programmes like vermicompost production, cattle and sheep rearing, etc

Besides providing technical inputs, Mr. Ravinaik was given timely inputs, particularly high yielding paddy seed varieties in the region, since the farmer mainly cultivated paddy as his major crop. As per the advice of project staff Mr. Ravinaik adopted the package of practices like SRI method and doubled his yield, according to Dr. Jagadeeshwara. From his vermicompost unit he was able to generate about 1.5 tonnes of vermicompost worth Rs. 4,000 which he used as manure for his paddy crop grown in an acre.

After harvest in five to six months he got a net income of Rs. 15,000. From one HF cow given to him through the project he was able to get a net income of Rs.

16,632 for six months by selling the milk and from three bannur sheep his net income was Rs. 18,140 in a year.

### **Net income**

“In 365 days I got a net income of about Rs. 46,500 and I was contemplating to leave this work and seek a manual job in a garment factory for Rs, 3,000 a month,” says Mr. Ravinaik.

Similarly, another farmer Mr. Narashimaiah was supported by providing him with hybrid seeds, horticultural plants, vegetable seeds, a cow, three piglets and three sheep. He was guided to plant in such a way as to cultivate always a combination of annual and seasonal crops along with animals. In addition the farmer also planted high quality mango and sapota trees in 20 cents and adopted organic mulching. A water storage tank was profitably used for fish rearing.

The farmer got Rs.13,000 to 14,000 from crops ( mixed cropping groundnut, maize and ragi) and Rs. 18,300 from his cow, Rs. 8,245 from his pigs, Rs. 7,450 from sheep. In total he got average of Rs. 47,000 to 48,000 a year.

### **Important aspects**

“One of the important aspects in this project is that it has been able to prevent urban migration to nearby cities for livelihood security. The beneficiaries have been encouraged to continue rearing animals and also grow the fodder for them in their own fields. By doing so the soil gets fertile from their wastes, farmers get income from the animals and there is no shortage of food for the animals,” says Dr. Jagadeeshwara.

For more details contact Dr.K.Jagadeeshwara, Dean, College of Sericulture, Chintamani - 563 125, email: [disericulture@gmail.com](mailto:disericulture@gmail.com), phone:08154-290546, mobile: Mob.09449866914.

## Central team to assess crop damage due to rains

NEW DELHI: With unseasonal rains and hailstorm damaging standing crops in many parts of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, the Centre on Wednesday rushed a team of officials to both states to assess the overall damage and extent of loss to the farmers.

The officials, who will tour the affected districts from March 13 to March 15, will submit their findings to a high-level central committee which is to take a call on a financial package for both the states after taking permission from the Election Commission.

The Committee, constituted by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, comprises agriculture minister [Sharad Pawar](#), rural development minister [Jairam Ramesh](#), finance minister P [Chidambaram](#) and home minister Sushil Kumar Shinde.

Pawar on Wednesday indicated that the members of the committee may also visit the affected areas in the states.

"Conclusions will be drawn on the basis of report submitted by the committee ... The committee will decide how much more assistance should be made available to the states concerned," Pawar was quoted as saying in an NCP statement.

Preliminary reports sent by the affected states say Maharashtra faced damage of crops on around 12 lakh hectares of cultivable land, Madhya Pradesh suffered losses in nearly 26 lakh hectares of area.

Madhya Pradesh reported damage of wheat, gram and lentil (masoor) while Maharashtra faced damage to grapes, onions, wheat and pomegranate.

Though standing crops in other states like Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat too suffered damage in unseasonal rains, the magnitude of loss was not as high.

Officials in agriculture ministry said central teams may also visit these states, if needed. "Any decision on giving compensation to affected farmers and making announcement for the same will be taken only after getting required permission from the Election Commission (EC)," said an official.

He said the permission from the EC was needed due to model code of conduct which had been in force across the country due to the coming general elections.

It is learnt that the Maharashtra government has already got the EC's nod to call a cabinet meeting on Thursday for discussing compensation to the affected farmers in the state.

**When economy grew at 7.5%, wages rose 2.5%**



Elections can be won or lost on one key thing: how people feel about their economic well-being. That in turn depends on how much families are able to

earn. Although India has experienced healthy economic growth of about 7.5% per year for the past decade, have the benefits of this 'trickled down', as was predicted by economists at the helm of affairs?

Not much, if you go by incomes and wages, especially at state levels. Over the 12-year period from 1999-00 to 2011-12, rural incomes adjusted for inflation grew by just 24% and urban incomes by 35%. That translates into an annualized growth in real incomes of about 2.5% for urban areas and 1.8% for rural areas, well below the rates at which the economy was growing in this period.

Since there is no income survey in India, the closest one can come to finding out how much Indian households are earning is through the accepted practice of using consumer expenditure surveys conducted by the [National Sample Survey Organisation](#) (NSSO). According to the most recent such survey in 2011-12, the average monthly expenditure of a person was Rs 1,287 in rural areas and Rs 2,477 in urban areas. For a family of four, that translates to Rs 5,148 in rural areas and Rs 9,908 in urban areas.

These are averages, which hide wide variation across states and even wider variations between poor and rich. At the national level, 60% to 70% of the population survives below these averages. Eight of the country's 17 big states (with over 2 crore population each) had incomes below the national average for rural areas and nine of them were below the national average for urban areas.

Unsurprisingly, states with very low incomes included Chhattisgarh, Bihar, MP, Odisha and Jharkhand while the top states were Haryana, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Karnataka was quite high in urban income rankings but lower in rural ones while Tamil Nadu was the other way round.

Surprisingly, in Gujarat, a relatively developed state both in terms of agriculture and industry, the average monthly income of Rs 2,472 per person was lower than the national average. For rural areas, Gujarat's average income was slightly higher than the national average at Rs 1,430. In fact, between 1999-2000 and 2011-12, Gujarat has slid down the rankings because its rural income grew at 14% per year compared to a national average of 15% and its urban income grew at 12% compared to 13% nationally.

According to [Census 2011](#), one of the biggest occupations is agricultural labourers, numbering some 8.6 crore as main workers and another 5.8 crore as marginal workers. Their numbers have increased by about 34% since 2001. What kind of wages do these bottom-of-the-pyramid dwellers get?

The average daily wage for a male unskilled labourer in rural areas was Rs 192, ranging between a high of Rs 493 in Kerala and a low of Rs 129 in Gujarat. Generally, wages for various agricultural operations like ploughing, sowing, weeding, transplanting and harvesting were around Rs 200 per day for men and about Rs 150 for women, on an average. Again, there are wide variations between states in these wage rates recorded by the [Labour Bureau](#) every month from a sample of 600 villages.

For non-agricultural casual labour like construction, the national average was Rs 139 per day in rural areas and Rs 170 in urban areas, according to [NSSO](#). In rural areas, top wages for such work were found in states like Haryana, Punjab and Tamil Nadu while the lowest wages were in Chhattisgarh, MP, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

Regular and salaried employees get much higher wages. In rural areas, their wage averaged about Rs 300 per day and in urban areas about Rs 450 per day nationally. Haryana, Assam, Jharkhand and Karnataka had some of the highest wages while Gujarat, Chhattisgarh Tamil Nadu and Punjab had the lowest in urban salaried employees.

Relentless price rise has decimated earnings of families across all states. Given that reality, governments in states that have managed to generate better incomes for people might find it easier to beat anti-incumbency sentiments in the coming elections than those that haven't.

## Business Standard

### Govt frees up onion export



The government on Wednesday allowed open [export](#) of all varieties of onions against the earlier practice of canalising them through [State Trading Enterprises](#) (STEs) to enable faster shipment of the commodity.

"Export of [onion](#) has been made free. Earlier, export of onion was permitted through STEs," the commerce department said in a notification issued.

Among the canalising agencies for export of onion are Nafed, Spices Trading Corporation, Maharashtra State [Agriculture](#)Marketing Board, and AP State Trading Corporation, among others.

Earlier this month, the government had abolished the export floor price of onions as domestic prices dropped to Rs 6-7 a kg in the wholesale markets. The government had imposed minimum export prices (MEP) on onion in September 2013 and then it was raised several times to curb exports and boost domestic supplies as retail prices had shot up as high as Rs 100 a kg in major parts of the country. India had to even import onion to control price rise.

In 2012-13, the country had exported 1.82 million tonnes. India's annual onion production is estimated at 18.9 million tonnes in 2013-14, while in 2012-13 it was around 16.8 million tonnes.

## THE HINDU BusinessLine

### Coconut, copra price to go up

Increased demand for coconut in the State and lower arrivals of copra from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have tended to push prices upward, say traders.

A survey by the Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell, Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development Studies at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has revealed that the nut is ruling around Rs. 24500 a tonne in Pollachi market.

An average sized nut is said to be hovering between Rs. 14 and Rs. 16, and this is expected to go up in the coming days.

“Production is usually low during this season. This coupled with acute shortage of copra due to poor arrivals from the neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka states has resulted in sharp increase in price levels. Copra is ruling at Rs. 89–90 a kg in the State,” the TNAU source said. Coconut production in TN has halved in



2012-13 compared to the earlier year. This is basically because of drought, say trade sources. Meanwhile, farmers in an around Pollachi area (a major coconut growing belt) told this correspondent that they had felled coconut trees because of acute shortage of water and farm labour. “The price of the nut was also not remunerative, compelling us to look at other options,” said TP Karunakaran, President of Thimmanguthur panchayat.

### **Bids for Indian wheat top floor of \$260/tonne**



**New Delhi, March 12:**

State trading entities – MMTC and PEC – have received improved response from global buyers for wheat tenders that were opened on Wednesday.

But the bids were lower than the ones fetched during December-January.

For the 80,000 tonnes offered from Kakinada port, MMTC has received highest bid of \$281.05 a tonne, sources said.

This is higher than the floor price of \$260 a tonne set by the Government.

MMTC has received a total of eight bids for the Kakinada tender and all the bids are higher than the floor price.

PEC has received the highest bid of \$282.10 a tonne for the 70,000 tonnes of wheat offered from the Kandla Port on the West Coast.

The Government-owned agency received a total of nine bids for the latest tender all of which were higher than the floor price. The latest tenders were part of the Government's plan to export two million tonnes of wheat from the Central pool stocks in the current financial year to make storage space for the new crop.

### **Black Sea crisis**

Trade sources attributed the improved response to the volatile trend in global wheat prices following unrest in Ukraine and weather woes in the US.

Wheat shipments from the Black Sea region have slowed down considerably, following the Ukraine crisis.

Besides, the current not-so-favourable weather in India is also seen influencing the prices as the unseasonal rain in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh are likely to delay the harvest.

However, the bids received are lower than Dubai-based Al Ghurair Group offer of \$283.60 a tonne for 25,000 tonnes on January 10. Swiss firm Glencore had then offered \$282.69 for 55,000 tonnes.

So far, the highest bid for export tenders has been \$287.10 by Thailand-based Phoenix Commodities for the 35,000 tonnes of wheat offered by PEC Ltd from Vizag port.

Bids for export tenders have been higher than the floor price of \$260 a tonne ever since the Centre cut it from the initial \$300 on October 31.

Though the Government has projected a wheat crop size of 95.6 million tonnes(mt) this year, unseasonal rain accompanied by hailstorm across the key growing regions of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Haryana in the recent days have impacted the standing crop and may affect the yields.

### **Crop loss**

In Madhya Pradesh, where the crop was almost ready for harvest, hailstorm has shrunk the crop size by about 20 lakh tonnes, according to the State Government estimates.

The crop losses in the other States are yet to be quantified.

Wheat stocks in the Central pool stood at 24.2 mt as on February 1, more than twice the buffer and strategic reserve norm. Wheat exports in the current fiscal are estimated to touch about 5 mt from both the private and public stocks.

### **Crude oil prices fall in Asia**

Crude oil prices fell in Asian trade today ahead of the weekly US stockpiles report that will give an indication of demand in the world's biggest economy.

New York's main contract, West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for April delivery dipped 47 cents to \$99.56 in mid-morning trade, and Brent North Sea crude for April eased 20 cents to \$108.35.

The US Department of Energy will release its report later in the day and analysts expected inventories to have risen two million barrels in the week ended March 7 as the severe winter weather draws to an end, leading to weaker demand for heating oil.

Kelly Teoh, managing director at IR Resources, said that with the Ukrainian crisis and the winter weather in the US easing, investors would focus on economic data from the United States and China.

“In the short term, a lot of it has to do with (uncertainty over) the US economy... and China showing a slowdown,” Teoh told AFP.

Beijing said Saturday it had seen an unexpected trade deficit of \$22.98 billion in February as exports dived, fuelling fears about growth in the Asian economic giant.

Investors are also keeping an eye on political developments in oil-producer Libya after the country’s parliament ousted Prime Minister Ali Zeidan.

The vote of no-confidence in parliament came after a North Korean tanker laden with oil from a rebel-held terminal in eastern Libya broke through a naval blockade and escaped to sea despite the government’s threats to block it by force if necessary.

### **Rally in pulses takes a breather**



The bullish trend in pulses and pulse seeds took a breather on Wednesday with tur (Maharashtra) declining to Rs4,325 a quintal (Rs4,450). Tur (Madhya

Pradesh) ruled at Rs3,800-3,900. Amid decline in arrival of tur from Maharashtra due to inclement weather and increased buying support from millers, tur prices in Indore mandis have perked up by almost Rs300 over the past week . However, with decline in buying support at higher rate, tur (Maharashtra) prices on Wednesday slipped to Rs4,325.

Tur dal (full) ruled at Rs6,300-6,500, tur dal (sawa no.) Rs5,800- 6,000, while tur marka ruled at Rs6,600-6,900 a quintal . Moong ruled firm on improved demand and weak arrival with moong (bold) today being quoted at Rs7,200-7,400, while moong (medium) ruled at Rs6,500-6,800. Moong dal (medium) was at Rs8,600-8,800, moong dal (bold) at Rs8,900-9,100, while moong mongar ruled at Rs9,600-9,800.

Moong prices will likely to witness periodic rise and fall depending upon gap between demand and supply, till new summer crop hits local mandis, said a trader .

Weak arrival and strong demand in pulses also lifted urad and its dal with urad (bold) at Rs 4,500-4,600, while urad (medium) ruled at 3,800-4,200. Urad dal (medium) was at Rs 5,300-5,400, urad dal (bold) at Rs 5,500-5,700, while urad mongar ruled at Rs6,100-6,300 a quintal.

### **Hailstorm destroys over 90,000 hectares of crop in Yavatmal**

Untimely rains and a hailstorm destroyed crops and orchards spread over 90,000 hectares in Yavatmal district in the last fortnight, official sources said.

Crops of wheat and gram on 87,881 hectares of land was wiped out, while vegetables spread over 1,036 hectares was destroyed, sources in the Agriculture Department said.

“Fruits such as oranges, papaya and lemon were also destroyed, and the area under cultivation comes to over 882 hectares. The highest destruction was recorded in Pusad, where crops on 22,000 hectares was badly hit,” District Agricultural Superintending Officer D I Gaikwad said.

“Barring Maregaon tehsil, all the 15 other tehsils in the district have been affected by the natural calamity,” he said.

However, he was unable to spell out the exact damage caused by the rain and hailstorm that lashed across the district on February 22 and March 9.

According to the District Collector Ashwin Mudgal, almost all the tehsils in the district have been badly affected.

“I have ordered a spot panchnama by revenue and agriculture department officials and the report would be available by tomorrow evening,” Mudgal said, adding that the report would be submitted to the State Government for further action.

When asked if the Government could help the affected farmers at a time when the model code of conduct was imposed, the Collector said it was a natural disaster and there was no hindrance of the model code with regard to the grant of financial assistance to hard-hit farmers.

Meanwhile, MPCC President Manikrao Thakre has urged the State to grant instant relief to the hailstorm-hit farmers in Maharashtra.

In a press release here, Thakre said, “The untimely rains and hailstorm have destroyed farm produce and it is the duty of the State Government to provide instant relief to the affected farmers in Maharashtra.”