

“Quarries can be converted into fish farms”

CHENNAI, March 17, 2014 - This idea is one of several recommendations to be presented to State and Centre

: Abandoned stone and mine quarries could be converted into ponds for fish culture, say scientists and aquaculture experts. It is among several the recommendations that will be presented to the State and the Central government.

The recommendations are the result of a seminar that discussed methods to develop fisheries in water deficient regions. Experts say that though Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan are water-deficient, there is enough scope to grow fish. According to Madan Mohan, assistant director general of Indian Council of Agriculture Research, a third of the 4,000 billion cubic meter of rain in the country is received in just four months and most of it is lost as we do not judiciously save it.

The government could evolve a policy to develop water bodies to store rainwater. This water could in turn be used for fisheries development and then recycled for agriculture. The suggestion has come after several enterprising farmers successfully experimented with the method.

These farmers, who showcased their success at the seminar organised by Fisheries Technocrats Forum, said they had made a happy compromise by apportioning their farms to accommodate a fish farm. They had earned profit from their produce.

The Forum has also offered suggestions to tackle industrial pollution of rivers. Pollution could end if the government recognised fisheries as an industry. The government could evolve a strategy to revive water bodies and ponds which could be used for fish culture. The water used for fish culture could then be recycled and used for agriculture too.

It pays to make full use of rain water with community support. Not just rainwater pools created in abandoned quarries and mines or in seasonal but also extensive waterlogged areas which remain unused or underused could be used for fish farming, the experts have said.

The recommendations will be forwarded to State and Central governments, the State planning commission, the National Fisheries Development Board and research and development institutions.

R. Soundararajan, chairman of the Forum says more meetings would be organised with farmers “to teach them to adopt systems to channelise and store water from water flow in wet season and recycle efficiently for multiple use. We know it is hard to change the mindset instantly but change is a must.”

“Though Tamil Nadu, Punjab... are water-deficient, there is enough scope to grow fish”

Farmers’ body urges new MPs to protect farmland, ensure food security

TIRUCHI, March 17, 2014 - The Federation of Agriculture-based Non-governmental Organisations has appealed to the contestants for the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls to ensure protection of agricultural lands to ensure the food security of the country and livelihood of farmers.

In a memorandum sent to all recognised political parties, P. Narayanan and V. Jawahar Arumugam, coordinators of the federation, said the winners in the Lok Sabha polls should

strive for converting the wasteland into arable lands by impressing the Union and State government to draft and implement special schemes.

The memorandum said that agro-based industries should be set up in rural areas to check exodus of people to urban areas.

It wanted special programme and subsidy support for farmers producing crops under rain-fed and lift irrigation techniques.

Explaining the importance of bio-fertilisers, the memorandum pleaded for promoting organic farming. Attractive subsidy for organic farmers and sale of organic farm produce in urban areas would go a long way in achieving the desired results. Farmers going in for solar power for their agricultural pump sets should be granted cent per cent subsidy.

The memorandum wanted implementation of various schemes with active participation by the non-governmental organisations.

The federation wanted attractive price to be fixed for fruits, vegetables, oil seeds, on the lines of sugarcane, and paddy. Capacity building initiatives should be taken up to motivate rural youth towards agriculture. Local bodies should be involved for the implementation of Constituency Area Development Fund, it said.

Mobile fish stall creates waves



Flying off the shelves: Plates of rice and meenkuzhambu and fried fish are sold to customers near the Collectorate —Photo: D. Gopalakrishnan

KANCHEEPURAM, March 17, 2014 - A mobile fish food stall, conceived and implemented by a group of women from Vaiyavoor, near here, has received good patronage from food lovers in and around District Collectorate campus.

Enquiries reveal that these women, hailing from the families involved in lake fishing and the fish trade in and around Kancheepuram for several years, approached the Tamil Nadu State Apex Fisheries Cooperative Federation (TAFCOFED), a unit under Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department, for assistance with the venture.

Officials there helped the group of 15 women in setting up a fish stall at their hamlet and provided them a van with funds under the National Agriculture Development Programme. The group, which works in three batches, procures varieties of inland fish and also marine fish from the market at Kancheepuram and prepares *meenkuzhambu* (fish curry) and deep fried fish on all working days.

The finished products are then sold to customers at the District Collectorate from 12.30 p.m. to 2. 30 p.m.

The group is able to sell around 100 plates of rice with *meenkuzhambu* at a rate of Rs. 40 per plate and an equal amount of deep fried fish priced between Rs. 10 and Rs. 20, depending on the size and variety of the fish. A sum of Rs. 30 lakhs was spent to set up the stall at Vaiyavoor and to purchase two vans – one each for the inland fisherfolk and marine fisherfolk, officials said.

Seminar on GM crops

THRISSUR, March 17, 2014 - A two-day national seminar on 'GM Crops: prospects and issues' will be held at Kerala Agricultural University on March 17, & 18. G.M. Nairn, Dean, School of Biological Sciences, Central University of Kerala, will inaugurate the seminar.

'Poly-house farming in dire need of govt. backing'

NALGONDA, March 17, 2014 - A highly motivated farmer from Nalgonda district, Barisetti Balaraju, 35, is successfully growing orange, red and green capsicum, and European cucumber in his one-acre poly-house farm using greenhouse technology at Marrur village in Nakerkal mandal.

Claiming that he is the lone farmer in the district who successfully cultivates and produces vegetables in poly-house farming in the district, Mr. Balaraju, who is a graduate, said poly-house farming is profitable but for it to be completely successful, the government needs to support the farmer.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Balaraju said that though the government currently offers 35 per cent subsidy, not many farmers come forward to take up poly-house farming as they are unable to invest even the remaining 65 per cent.

Marketing of produce was a challenge, he said. It was hard finding middlemen in Hyderabad to sell the produce. Where middlemen were available, at least 40 per cent profit had to be given to them, he added.

Mr. Balaraju, who started greenhouse cultivation in January 2013, is now able to at least breakeven.

"I sell cucumber to the middlemen at Rs.24 per kg and capsicum at Rs.40 per kg, but in turn, they sell them at Rs. 40 per kg and Rs. 70 per kg respectively," the farmer said

He asked political parties preparing for elections in Telangana to include subsidies and marketing facilities for poly-house farming in their election manifestoes.

Malls fleece vegetable buyers



People forced to pay double the price than in rythu bazaars

Vegetables at Swaraj Maidan Rythu Bazaar in Vijayawada. —Photo: Ch.Vijaya Bhaskar

VIJAYAWADA, March 17, 2014 - If you are visiting a mall or supermarket in the city to buy vegetables think twice before stepping in as you may end up burning a hole in your pockets. When compared to prices of vegetables offered in Rythu Bazaars, you may have to shell

out more than double the price for the veggies.

The provision stores in residential colonies and pushcart vendors on roadsides too have their own price structure which falls between that of malls and rythu bazaars. For instance, a kg of tomatoes are offered for Rs. 6 in Rythu Bazaars, while malls and supermarkets charge Rs.12 for a kg of tomatoes.

Same is the case with carrots, cabbage, ladyfingers and other vegetables. In Rythu Bazaars, a kg of carrots is offered for Rs.14, a kg of cabbage for Rs.6 and a kg of ladyfingers for Rs.12. The same is priced at malls and supermarkets at Rs. 26, Rs. 13 and Rs.26 respectively.

"In the pretext of freshness and hygiene, malls fleece buyers. It is only the comfort of buying vegetables in the close vicinities that drives buyers to visit malls. On any given day, I would prefer Rythu Bazaars over malls and supermarkets," says Venkateswara Rao, a visitor at Swaraj Maidan Rythu Bazaar.

Taking a cue from Hyderabad, authorities here too wanted to introduce mobile rythu bazaars offering fresh vegetables in residential colonies. These mobile bazaars on vans would be driven to different localities daily to offer vegetables at doorstep for households. But for some reason, the plans did not take off till date.

Mobile rythu bazaars

“We are operating a mobile Rythu Bazaar in Patamata and there is a proposal to operate at least two more but things got sidelined as higher authorities are occupied with election-related work. Hopefully once the new government is formed, more mobile Rythu Bazaars will hit the roads,” claims a senior official of marketing department.

Price of vegetables is double in malls compared to rythu bazaars

Water level

The water level in Mettur Dam stood at 49.12 feet on Sunday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 389 cusecs and the discharge, 500 cusecs.

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Sunday stood at 51.20 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 28.82 cusecs and 200 cusecs water is discharged. The level of the Manimuthar dam stood at 73.17 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 36 cusecs with no discharge of water.

Kanyakumari - The level in the Pechipparai dam stood at 6.85 feet, while it was 36.92 feet in Perunchani, 3.08 feet in Chittar 1, 3.18 feet in Chittar 11, 3.10 feet in Poigai and 42.16 feet in Mamabazathuraiyaru.



Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Monday, Mar 17

Max 31° | Min 22°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 89

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:15

Sunset: 06:19

Barometer: 1015

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Mar 18

Max 33° | Min 21°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday
Mar 19



32° | 22°

Partly Cloudy

Thursday
Mar 20



28° | 23°

Overcast

Friday
Mar 21



29° | 23°

Overcast

Saturday
Mar 22



30° | 24°

Overcast

Sunday
Mar 23



30° | 24°

Overcast

Vegetable Oil Imports Likely to Witness an Increase

Although the country's vegetable oil imports fell by 40 per cent in February due to the hike in the export duty levied by Indonesia, experts believe that it is only a blip in the ever-increasing import trajectory of vegetable oils.

According to estimates, the country imported 10.4 million tonnes of vegetable oils in the previous oil year (November 2012- October 2013) and the import is only expected to shoot up by the end of June in the current oil year, Dr BV Mehta, executive director of Solvent Extractors' Association of India, has said.

The cost incurred by the government in importing vegetable oil is next only to crude oil and gold imports. "The edible oil consumption of the country per year is 180 lakh tonnes and we produce about 72 to 75 lakh tonnes a year. To bridge the shortfall every year we import millions of tonnes of oil. Last year it was 10.4 million tonnes and in the current year it might rise to 11 million tonnes. This would cost around Rs 60,000 crore which is very high. It is important to increase our indigenous production," he said.

In comparative terms, the revenue garnered from growing oil crops is much below than that of other food or cash crops resulting in low production of oil in the country. "Farmers prefer other crops because of good revenue. In fact, in places like Gujarat which are conducive to oil plantations, farmers are shifting to cotton and food crops.

The government has to be proactive in encouraging farmers in this direction by providing high-yield oil seeds. Further, efforts are to be made to develop good storage techniques and facilitate crop rotation," he added.

There is a need to bring together business enterprises, regulatory bodies and research organisations in chalking out plans to decrease the huge oil imports of the country, RBN Prasad, head of the Centre for Lipid Research of the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, said.

He was speaking at a one-day business meeting on 'Oils, fats and allied industries: Research and development and regulatory issue' that saw participation of members of oil industries from across the country at the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT) here on Saturday.

"While at one-level, the vegetable oil industry is making rapid progress due to technological interventions, on the other hand there is a challenge to meet the increasing demand of quality conscious consumer and stringent food laws imposed by the government," he added.

WHO Sets 7 kg Limit for an Individual

It is to be understood that no oil is good or bad, no matter whatever oil one consumes, one needs to burn the extra calories. "According to World Health Organisation recommendations, ideally an individual should consume only 7 kg of oil annually. However, an average Indian consumes 14 kg of oil in a year," he observed.

Vegoil imports down 40% in Feb



Hit by duty disparity in Malaysia, Indonesia

Mumbai, March 16: Vegetable oil imports fell to a three-year-low in February due to an inverted duty structure followed by the exporting countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia.

Imports were down 40 per cent at 5,78,975 tonnes against 9,69,175 tonnes in February last year, according to data from the Solvent Extractors' Association.

It consisted of 5,69,544 tonnes of edible oils and 9,431 tonnes of non-edible oils. The overall import of vegetable oils between November and February dropped six per cent to 34,96,807 tonnes (37,35,263 tonnes).

Exporting countries have reduced export duty on refined oils to encourage refining in their country. This has led to capacity utilisation of Indian edible oil refinery companies falling to 30 per cent in the last two years.

Before the inverted export duty imposed by Indonesia in October 2011, refined palmolein used to cost \$60-80 a tonne higher than the crude palmolein. However, now the finished product, refined palmolein, is cheaper by \$15-20 compared with the raw material crude palm oil. The import of crude palm oil in February fell to 2.69 lakh tonnes against 6.70 lakh tonnes a year ago.

Between November and February, import of refined oil was up 46 per cent at 7,05,475 tonnes (4,83,291 tonnes), while crude oil was down 14 per cent at 27,15,257 tonnes (31,63,239 tonnes).

As of March 1, edible oil stock at various ports is estimated at 4,75,000 tonnes. It consists of 2,40,000 tonnes of crude palm oil, 1,10,000 tonnes of refined palmolein, 50,000 tonnes of degummed soyabean oil, 65,000 tonnes of crude sunflower oil and 10,000 tonnes of canola rape oil and about 7,70,000 tonnes in the pipelines. Inventory – both at ports and transit – was reduced by 2,70,000 tonnes to 12,45,000 tonnes, due to lower imports in the last two months.

Non-edible oil imports in February were down 37 per cent at 9,431 tonnes (14,999 tonnes), while they were down 14 per cent at 76,075 tonnes (88,733 tonnes) in the first four months of the oil year (November to October).

Business Standard

Mango growers stare at a bitter harvest

[Mango](#) growers are staring at a bitter harvest this year, due to crop damage after the recent bout of unseasonal weather. An erratic climate has damaged the crop, in various stages of maturity across the country, and some estimates suggest a fall of up to 40 per cent in yield from major mango-producing regions. [Exporters](#) also fear the crops salvaged might not be acceptable to foreign buyers, due to quality issues.

The damage has been across five states — Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat and Maharashtra. These together account for two-thirds of the country's total [mango production](#), according to the National [Horticulture](#) Board.

Production could see a drop from 1,800 million pieces in 2012-13, according to reports from across the country.

FRUITLESS LABOUR?

State-wise production of mango (in million pieces)

| State | Output |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Andhra Pradesh | 351.48 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 384.08 |
| Karnataka | 186.83 |
| Bihar | 124.18 |
| Gujarat | 96.59 |
| Odisha | 71.52 |
| West Bengal | 66.15 |
| Tamil Nadu | 88.96 |
| Maharashtra | 50.30 |
| Jharkhand | 51.56 |
| Others | 147.98 |
| Total | 1,619.64 |



Source: National Horticulture Board

The crop in UP and Bihar, in flowering stage at this time of the year, has been badly hit by inclement weather. According to Haji Siraj Mehndi of the All-India [Mango Growers](#) Association, flowers are either damaged or have become weak. This could result in poor-quality output of 'dussehri', a variety grown in that region. Shiv Saran Singh, president of UP Nursery Sangh, says almost 30 per cent of the mango crop has been damaged by rain and hailstorm.

Estimates from western India suggest 40 per cent of the crop was hit by hailstorm and unseasonal rains in [Junagadh](#), Saurashtra, home to the popular [Kesar mango](#).

Harsukh Jarsaniya, secretary of the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee in Talala, Junagadh, says: "Kesar mango has suffered damage here and in surrounding areas."

Similar damage has been seen in southern Gujarat's Dang and Tapi belt as well, besides Maharashtra's Konkan region.

Continuing bad weather could exacerbate the situation, say local people. Sanjay Vekaria, a farmer from Kodinar in Junagadh, says: "Nearly 50 per cent of the crop has been affected in the Saurashtra area. If this continues, there is fear of disease and pests affecting plants." This will also delay arrivals and put pressure on prices, he adds.

Vidyadhar Joshi, who owns a mango farm with over 2,000 trees in Devgad, a place known for its Alphonso mangoes, sees yields falling this season. Production of mangoes in Maharashtra's Konkan region is expected to drop drastically to 25,000 tonnes from an average 45,000 tonnes last year. Prices have already

moved up on account of lower production estimates.

"In March 2013, 352 tonnes of mangoes arrived in various markets of the country and the average price was Rs 3,390 a quintal. Today, only 65 tonnes of mangoes have arrived, and the price is around Rs 4,550 a quintal," said Ajit Gogate, chairman of Devgad Taluka Amba Utpadak Sahakari Sanstha, a society of 700 farmers growing Alphonso in Devgad taluka of

Andhra Pradesh, which faced unseasonal rainfall, is also feeling the pinch. According to the first estimates by the state's horticulture department, the output could be 4.54 million tonnes, marginally higher than that last year. This, however, might be revised downwards, say sources. The level of damage in some areas is estimated to be 50 per cent. Within the state, coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions together account for 70 per cent area of cultivation and production, while the rest comes from Telangana.

"Retail prices for the initial arrivals should be higher, as traders may speculate against the backdrop of unexpected damages in the first week of March," said state horticulture commissioner M Papi Reddy.

Last season, the average retail price of Hyderabad's most-preferred Banginapalli and Rasalu had varieties stood at Rs 40-50 a kg and Rs 50-60 a kg, respectively. Meanwhile, exports are expected to be hit on account of poor quality of crop. The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority data show the country exported 55,585 tonnes of fresh mangoes across the world in 2012-13. These were worth Rs 265 crore. However, Abbas, a leading Mango exporter and promoter of Nafees Nursery, says exports could see a decline this year.

He adds rain-soaked mango flowers are rotting and inviting insects. This will further damage the crop. Between April 2013 and December 2013, India exported mangoes to 65 countries. Ten per cent of India's total mango exports went to the European Union, while the largest share (54 per cent) was of the United Arab Emirates. Stringent quality checks by the EU have also been affecting exports there.

Tea production down 6% to 20.63 mn kg

Tea production fell by 6 per cent to 20.63 million kg in January due to lower output in southern states. Tea production was 21.92 million kg in the year-ago period, according to the [Tea Board](#) data.

Output in Assam, the largest tea-producing state, marginally increased to 0.83 million kg in January this year as compare to 0.80 million kg in the year-ago period. Similarly, in another major tea producing state of [West Bengal](#) production rose by to 2.85 million kg from 1.95 million kg.

The combined production of tea in southern states of Tamil Nadu, [Kerala](#) and [Karnataka](#) decreased to 16.79 mn kg from 19.12 mn kg. Assam, West Bengal and South India account for about 90 per cent of total tea output in the country.

As per the Indian Tea Association estimates, tea production increased by 6.5 per cent to 1,200 million kg last year, against 1,126.33 million kg in 2012. India is the world's second-largest producer and biggest consumer of tea.

The country's total tea output was up by 3.62 per cent at 1,135 million kg in 2012-13.

India's veg oil imports fall to 3-year low in February

In February, [vegetable oil](#) imports fell a staggering 40 per cent month-on-month to 969,175 tonnes, a three-year low, according to data by the [Solvent Extractors'](#) Association.

The fall was primarily due to the fact that [crude palm oil](#) imports fell to 269,000 tonnes from to 670,000 tonnes in the corresponding month last year.

In February last year, vegetable oil imports stood at 578,975 tonnes. During the first four months of this oil year (November 2013 to October 2014), overall vegetable oil imports fell a marginal six per cent to 3.5 million tonnes (mt) from 3.74 mt in the year-ago period.

Traders and [refiners](#) largely import crude palm, refine it locally and blend it with other edible oils, before retailing it. They also import refined oil (refined, bleached and diodised palmolein) for direct packing and retailing in case the difference between the price of crude and palm oil is about \$60 a tonne.

Before the inverted export duty imposed by Indonesia in October 2011, the price of refined, bleached and diodised palmolein was at least \$60-80 a tonne higher than that of crude palm oil. Now, however, refined, bleached and diodised palmolein is \$15-20 a tonne cheaper.

Imports account for about 55 per cent of India's annual [edible oil](#) consumption of 18.5 mt.

Mango production hit by unseasonal weather

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[Mango](#), the most loved fruit among Indians will be less sweet this season as crop has seen a huge damage and prices are higher. even season is getting delayed.

Recent irratic weather has caused a countrywide damaged to the mango crop which has been in the various stages of maturity. Damage is more significant for Gujarat, Maharashtra where crop comes early while such reports are coming from another major producer Andhra Pradesh also. Western crop includes premium verity like Alphonso which fetches premium in export market.

According to data posted by the National Horticulture Board ([NHB](#)) on its website, two third of mangos are produced in five states like [UP](#), [AP](#), [Bihar](#), [Gujarat and Maharashtra](#). All these states have suffered damages in Mango crop.

The total production of mango in the country stood at 18 million tonnes in 2012-13 as compared to 16.19 million tonnes in 2011-12. 2013-14 estimates are not available.

UP, Bihar in northern India has also seen a huge damage but there the crop is in flowering stage. Trade estimates suggest close to 40% of mango fruit has reportedly been damaged in western India because of hailstorm and unseasonal rains in Junagadh in Saurashtra where

popular Kesar mango is grown and also in Dang and Tapi belt in southern Gujarat. Similar damages have been seen in Konkan region of Maharashtra.

Harsukh Jarsaniya, secretary of Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) in Talala in Junagadh, said, "The fruit of 'Kesar' mango has suffered damage here and surrounding areas."

Sanjay Vekaria, a farmer from Kodinar in Junagadh district said, "Nearly 40-50% of mango fruit has been affected in Saurashtra area. Weather is still not good and if it continues to be so, there is fear of disease and pests affecting the plants."

All these will also delay arrivals and put pressure on prices, he said.

However, in Maharashtra, mango production has also been hit because of unfavourable weather increasing production cost. Vidyadhar Joshi, a Devgad-(known for Alphonso) based mango grower from Konkan region of Maharashtra owns mango farm with over 2,000 trees. "we see yields falling this season," Joshi said. Production of mangoes in Maharashtra's Konkan region is expected to drop drastically this year to 25,000 tonnes. The average production in this region is close to 45,000 tonnes.

Ajit Gogate, chairman of Devgad Taluka Amba Utpadak Sahakari Sanstha, a society comprising 700 farmers growing Alphonso mango in Devgad taluka of Sindhudurga district in Maharashtra, said, "In March 2013, over 352 tonnes of mangoes arrived at various markets in the country, and the average price was around Rs 3,390 per quintal. Today, only 65 tonnes of mangoes have arrived, and price is around Rs 4,550 per quintal." This indicates how the season is likely to progress from now.

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) data showed the country has exported 55,584.98 tonnes of fresh mangoes across the world during 2012-13. These exports were worth Rs 264.72 crores.

During April 2013 to Dec 2013, India exported mangoes to 65 countries. Out of India's total mango exports, 10% went to EU countries. UAE's share was the largest, at 54% by. Stringent quality checks by EU

In Andhra Pradesh, which has also witnessed unseasonal rainfall, mango production is expected to take a plunge.

According to the first estimates prepared by the Andhra Pradesh horticulture department, the output is expected to be 4.54 MT (million tonnes), spread across 504,348 hectares (1 ha=2.5 acres). This however may be revised downwards, said sources. Level of damage in some areas is estimated 50%.

In 2012-13, the fruit output in the state stood at 4.4 MT spread over an area of 489,658 hectares.

Within the state, coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema region together constitute 70% area of cultivation and production, while the rest comes from Telangana.

Unseasonal rainfall in interior parts of the Andhra Pradesh last week impacted the fruit's prospects, as the plantation area covering 16,000 hectares in Karimnagar, Warangal, Nizamabad and some areas in Rayalaseema were affected, according to preliminary data on crop damage prepared by department of Horticulture.

"Retail prices for the initial arrivals should be higher as traders may speculate against the backdrop of unexpected damages in the first week of March," said commissioner of Horticulture M Papi Reddy.

In the last season, the average retail price of the mostly preferred Banginapalli and Rasalu (juice) in Hyderabad stood at Rs 40-50 per kg and Rs 50-60 per kg respectively.
