

## A farmer who has made a difference

---



*Jai Prakash Singh has won many awards for his work to preserve native seeds*

*Jai Prakash Singh. — Photo: Special arrangement*

A Varanasi farmer, Jai Prakash Singh, is a proud recipient of three awards — two from former Presidents in 2002 and 2009, and the Plant Genome award from the government for his outstanding role in preserving hundreds of native seed varieties.

The farmer has to his credit about 460 paddy, 120 wheat, 30 pulse and four mustard varieties, many of which have been approved by the government to be used by other growers.

They include a wheat variety that yields more than seven tonnes from a hectare and a long-duration paddy variety that can be harvested in 130 days (long-duration paddy generally takes about 150 to 160 days to harvest). Many agriculture and research institutions across the country have conducted research on his findings.

The farmer distributes his seeds and gets a signed document from buyers saying they will sell the seeds at the same price to others.

“This is an endeavour on my part to ensure that seeds are available at an affordable price to many small and poor farmers,” he says.

### **‘More needs to be done’**

Mr. Prakash, however, is not happy with the government’s attitude towards native seed preservation.

“The government must realise that preserving and using native seeds are the hope of our country’s future if it is serious about overcoming food shortage. The importance given to GM seeds and the cost of their cultivation make me wonder if all my work in the last 25 years was worth it.”

Mr. Prakash recently participated in a National Seed Saviours exhibition in New Delhi where hundreds of native seeds from different parts of the country were exhibited.

## Summer brings with it slices of joy

---



*As the temperature rises, watermelons, oranges and muskmelons, among others, arrive at city markets with a nominal price tag —Photo: M. Srinath*

CHENNAI, March 18, 2014 - The harsh summer months that Chennaiites dread are here. So is the best time to savour the seasonal fruits at affordable rates. At the makeshift roadside stalls, which have cropped up at strategic locations,

large heaps of watermelons vie with oranges and muskmelons for shoppers' attention. Even those who do not account for fruits in their monthly budget do not mind stopping for a slice of juicy watermelon on a hot afternoon.

Watermelons, oranges and muskmelons are among the fruits in demand as they come with a nominal price tag. The Koyambedu wholesale fruit market is flooded with these fruits and mosambi (sweet lime), which comes cheaper compared to last year. Traders said that about 100 tonnes of mosambi from Andhra Pradesh arrive at the market here, daily.

One kg of mosambi is sold for Rs.20-Rs.30, depending on the quality, in the wholesale market. Last year, it was priced at up to Rs. 50 a kg during March.

While the 'namdari' green-striped watermelons with juicy red pulp still rank high in taste and preference, the Koyambedu market and some high-end retail shops have hybrid varieties such as 'mithila' (with yellow pulp) and 'kiran' (with dark red pulp). Every day, different parts of Chennai get about 300 tonnes of watermelons from Andhra Pradesh and the Tindivanam belt in Tamil Nadu, say traders.

'The fruit is priced at Rs. 8-Rs. 12 a kg in the wholesale market, and in the retail market, the price is marked up by Rs. 10.

Grapes, too, are priced at a nominal rate.

S. Srinivasan, a wholesale fruit merchant, said, unlike before, watermelons were available throughout the year now. However, consumers have to wait for a few more days for tasty watermelons to arrive.

Though 'banganapalli' mangoes have started arriving at Koyambedu, Chennaiites have to wait for this month-end for better quality fruits and more varieties, he said.

## Vaccination for cattle

---

KRISHNAGIRI, March 18, 2014 - Administering vaccine for 3.65 lakh cattle in the district against Foot and Mouth Disease is on in full swing and it will continue till March 21.

Under the scheme, calves above the age of 4 months are being vaccinated and 110 special teams are involved in the work. Till March 16, as many as 2,58,743 cattle have been vaccinated, according to a release. -Staff Reporter.

## Water level

---

The water level in Periyar dam stood at 110.70 feet on Monday with an inflow of 100 cusecs and a discharge of 100 cusecs. The level in Vaigai dam was 31.23 feet with no inflow and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 775 mcft. There was no rainfall during the last 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Monday.

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 49.07 feet on Monday, against its full level of 120 feet.

The inflow was 389 cusecs and the discharge, 500 cusecs.

## Tea price for March

---

UDHAGAMANDALAM, March 18, 2014 - The minimum price of 1kg raw tea leaves in The Nilgiris will be Rs. 13.86, in Idukki in Kerala Rs. 10.93, and in Wayanad in Kerala, the price will be Rs. 11.39 for March. If the price worked out under the price sharing formula was higher, factories should pay the price to suppliers, said R. Ambalavanan, the Executive Director, Tea Board, in a pressnote here on Monday.

# Sapling planting programme

---

MYSORE, March 18, 2014 - More than 500 fruit-bearing and medicinal plants will be planted on the Mysore zoo campus on Tuesday, as part of a shramadhan being organised by the Government Ayurveda Medical College and Hospital here. More than 150 volunteers from eight States will participate. Ramakanth, director, Institute of Wood Science and Technology, Bangalore, will brief volunteers on environmental issues. Mysore Zoo executive director B.P. Ravi will be present. — Special Correspondent

## Mango masti

---



*Observe the mango tree, now that summer is round the corner.*

Have you have planned your summer vacation? The mango tree has! See how the mango trees are preparing to help you to face the summer. Stop awhile and observe the changes. See the tiny white flowers. Notice that each bunch looks like a cone, the flowers at the base are held by longer stalks than the ones at the apex. This arrangement is important as pollinating insects can move freely. Despite the numerous flowers only a few withstand the weather conditions.

### **Watch it grow**

The flowers face upwards while the mango fruit faces downward. The flower

stalk makes a 180° turn when changing from flower to fruit. Mangoes will be hidden among the leaves and this protects them from the sun's heat.

This summer make sure you enjoy fresh mango juice. You can also preserve mangoes by drying it in the sun. This can be used for future use such as pickles, mango pulp and so on.

Pick up a fallen flower. With the help of your teacher separate the flower into sepals, petals, stamens and pistil. Use a hand lens to observe the pistil. This insignificant small base of the pistil becomes a mango.

## Minor irrigation projects to support rural water scheme

---

BHUBANESWAR, March 18, 2014 - With depletion of groundwater recognised as a big concern in Odisha, the State government has decided to explore possibilities of utilisation of surface water of minor irrigation projects to support rural water supply.

### **High level meeting**

At a high level meeting of Rural Development Department, it has been decided that the minor irrigation projects including existing and proposed check dams should support for rural drinking water supply.

The meeting also emphasised that there should be facility and provision of out-let point for drinking water supply at the upstream side of the check dam.

It was directed that while preparation of feasibility reports of proposed check dams, care should be taken to incorporate the provision of water supply intake points.

In fact, RD Department had identified 283 proposed check dams for sustainable pipe water supply schemes.

In Bhanjanagar division in Ganjam district, highest 81 proposed check dams have been identified for the proposed rural water supply systems.

Bolangir and Bargarh have 48 and 32 respectively which could support rural water supply system.

Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar and Sambalpur have good number of potential check dams for the drinking water supply schemes.

According to the Ground Water Census Report, there has been a substantial depletion of ground water in 24 out of the 30 districts in the State.

hindustantimes


## Weather

Chennai - INDIA






Today's Weather

**Tuesday, Mar 18**  
Max 31° | Min 22°  
Clear  
Rain: 0  
Humidity: 89  
Wind: normal  
Sunrise: 06:14  
Sunset: 06:19  
Barometer: 1013

Tomorrow's Forecast

 **Wednesday, Mar 19**  
Max 31° | Min 22°  
Sunny

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday Mar 20	Friday Mar 21	Saturday Mar 22	Sunday Mar 23	Monday Mar 24
				
33°   23° Sunny	33°   23° Overcast	29°   24° Overcast	29°   23° Overcast	30°   23° Overcast

## Despite green Holi, 3, 000 trees cut in Surat

---



SURAT: According to an estimate, wood of 3,000 trees is used for lighting Holi in the city. During Dhuleti, the consumption of water is five times more than normal days in the city, sources said.

Three years ago, a group of environment lovers started a campaign for solar Holi. They asked people to not waste wood by lighting a bonfire, and also save water.

"We have been lighting a symbolic lamp at a public place and women folk used to perform Holi puja there. However, this year we are not organizing the symbolic puja," said Darshan Desai of Prayas, a non-government organization that works in the area of environment protection.

"We used to set up a huge bonfire of 50 feet diameter. We used two tonnes of wood to keep the bonfire alighted for at least two days. However, now we have a bonfire of 10 feet diameter and use only 20 kg of wood. The money saved is spent on slum children," Haresh Shah, a resident of a society in Adajan, said.

"People have certainly become more conscious, especially the younger generation. However, it is difficult to convince the old to not follow the tradition. We have adopted a middle path and ask people to cut down on consumption of wood and water during Holi," Desai said.

## Sugar factories paying us less than Rs 2,000: Farmers

---

BELGAUM: No warning of penalty or punishment has reportedly struck fear in the hearts of sugar factory owners in the district. Farmers allege that despite the government having directed them to pay a remuneration of Rs 2,500 per tonne of sugarcane, factory owners are refusing to toe the line.

They are paying only Rs 2,000 or in some cases, even less than that, claims Mallikarjun Vali, a sugarcane grower and leader of farmers. "Chief minister Siddaramaiah had during the assembly session in Belgaum assured us that action would be taken against those factory owners who fail to pay up Rs 2,500 per tonne. But no action has been initiated against the violators. The government has not protected farmers' interests and has failed to keep its promise, made on the floor of the House."

Farmers planned to stage a protest across the district, but shelved the plan owing to the model code of conduct being in force, says Vali.

"It isn't just the Congress, but the BJP, too, has failed us," he complains.

The government had announced an incentive of Rs 150 per tonne of sugarcane in addition to the factories' remuneration after Vittal Arabhavi, a 60-year-old broke farmer from Kankanwadi village in Raibag taluk, committed suicide in front of the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha on November 27 last year while the assembly session was on. The support price, therefore, rose to Rs 2,650 per tonne of sugarcane. Siddaramaiah warned factory owners of stringent action under the Karnataka Sugarcane (Purchase and Supply Control) Act, 2013, if they fail to pay their remuneration of Rs 2,500 in full.

A few weeks ago, the district administration distributed Rs 95 crore towards payment of the incentive of Rs 150 per tonne of sugarcane to all farmers. After getting farmers' details from their respective factory owners, it directly credited the money in the farmers' bank accounts.

But, the incentive of Rs 150 per tonne has brought little cheer to farmers since factory owners are still allegedly shying away from making their payments.

Deputy commissioner N Jayaram says sugar factory owners have assured him that they will follow the government's order to a tee. "I had a meeting with them a few days ago. They promised to follow the government's directive. If they fail again, it will be brought to the notice of the government and based on its order, action will be initiated against the errant owners."

North Karnataka contributes nearly 70% of sugarcane produced in the state. Last year, 3.5 crore tonnes of sugarcane were produced in the state. Among 58 sugar factories in the state, 48 are in North Karnataka. In Belgaum district alone, there are 18 such factories. The district has the largest sugarcane production in the state. It contributes nearly 1.30 crore tonnes of sugarcane every year.



## 'Farmer Women fair should be re-launched'

---



*At the Kisan Mela at PAU campus on Saturday. Gurmeet Singh*

### **SUMMARY**

***The festival would celebrate the power of women in field of agriculture with exclusive presentations, competitions for women farmers.***

Till early 1990s, Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) used to organise a one-day Farmer Women's Fair at different locations in Punjab to promote women farming and

entrepreneurs. The festival would celebrate the power of women in field of agriculture with exclusive presentations, competitions for women farmers.

However, with passage of time while the number of kisan melas being organised by varsity increased from eight to 16 in a year, the only women's fair was scrapped.

Talking to Newline, Sarjit Singh Gill, who worked as director extension education department of PAU till 2006, said, "It is hard to remember when the last farmer women's fair was held but as far as I remember it was before 1994. It used to be an exclusive event with flood of activities for women. We organised it at various places like Kapurthala, Moga, Muktsar and other stations.

However, it's sad that it was discontinued due to paucity of funds and staff shortage." Now, kisan melas are also held at Faridkot, Tarn Taran, Bathinda along with Patiala, Gurdaspur, Ballawal, PAU campus in Ludhiana and that too twice a year.

Singh added that activities such as embroidery, cooking, healthy baby show, candle-making, crop produce competitions, salad making and various events were organised exclusively for women. Gurjit Kaur, a woman farmer from Nihal Singh Wala said, "We talk of women empowerment now but for PAU it was a tradition. It is surprising that instead of increasing women melas, they have been scrapped."

Jagir Kaur, another woman farmer who visited PAU mela on Saturday said, "Of the 16 melas, if only two days are dedicated to women fairs, it would be great."

On Saturday, the College of Home Sciences organised competitions such as crochet making, vegetables cutting, story writing and low cost nutritional recipes for women at PAU kisan mela.

## THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

### Mangoes to be Pricey, Substandard

---



One has to beware of the carbide-laden mangoes which are likely to flood the markets as farmers and traders have resorted to their artificial ripening using substances like calcium carbide as the natural ripening process of the fruit has been hit by the untimely rain in many places.

Mango-eating this summer may not be such a sweet experience due to the fact that one may have to not only shell out more money for the fruit but also make do with its substandard quality.

And, the worst of it all, one has to beware of the carbide-laden mangoes which are likely to flood the markets as farmers and traders have resorted to their artificial ripening using substances like calcium carbide as the natural ripening process of the fruit has been hit by the untimely rain in many places.

The unseasonal rain, accompanied by hailstorm, which lashed the state damaged several hectares of mango plantations.

“Generally, we see the first batch of fruits coming to the market soon after Ugadi -- that is, by the first week of April. But, this time prolonged winter and subsequent heavy rain have hampered the growth of the fruits. In fact, most of the fruits were damaged in the flowering stage. This will delay the arrival of the fruits in the market,” said Arif Rafee, Managing Partner of AR4 Organic Mango Farms.

More importantly, the adverse effects of the inclement weather will result in price hike of all varieties of mangoes. “Last year, the opening price of the most-preferred variety of Banginpalli was around Rs 70 a kg. This time, it could be around Rs 100-120 a kg.

Similarly, the prices of other varieties are also set to increase,” added a city-based trader. According to estimates, more than 20 per cent of mango plantations have been damaged resulting in deterioration of fruits.

“Especially, plantations in Telangana districts like Khammam, Karimnagar, Warangal and Nizamabad were damaged to a large extent.

Since more than 20 per cent of crop has been damaged there would a shortfall in total output,” said commissioner of horticulture M Papi Reddy.

## THE HINDU Business Line

### Mangalore’s unique chilli losing its sting

---



Farmers face labour shortage to cultivate the Harekala variety

No more bite Harekala chilli is used to spice up pickles and non-vegetarian dishes. A J Vinayak

**Harekala (Mangalore taluk), March 17:** Farmers are shying away from the cultivation of Harekala chilli, in spite of the good price it fetches in the market. The chilli, used in the preparation of pickle and non-vegetarian dishes, is

cultivated only on a few acres. Shortage of farm labour and the lack of interest among youths are the reasons why farmers are keeping away from its cultivation.

“Five decades ago, we had a festival-like atmosphere here as people from various parts of the district used to visit our village to collect the chilli plants from the nurseries here,” says Jagannath Samani, a 60-year-old farmer from Harekala village.

Then Harekala chillies were grown on around 200 acres in three villages — Harekala, Ambalamogaru and Pavoor — of Mangalore taluk, and around 20 acres were earmarked only for nurseries, he adds. The situation is entirely different now. Manohar Shetty, farmer and Member of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, says the entire production of Harekala chillies is now limited to around four-five acres of land in these villages.



Added to the shortage of farm labour, youngsters are not keen to take up its cultivation. K Kishor, a 32-year-old farmer from Harekala, says he has been cultivating chillies for the last four years on two acres of land after his father passed away four years ago. Till then, his father was cultivating them.

“I am planning to bring down the area of cultivation from next year,” he says, adding that the shortage of farm labour has forced him to take this decision. “Now three women above 65 years work with me. I work till 7 p.m. in the field. It is difficult for me to continue with big parcels of land as chilli plucking needs patience,” he says. It is not that there is no market for this chilli variety. One kg of Harekala chilli fetches Rs. 250 in the market, when the normal chilli variety fetches around Rs. 120 a kg.

Kishor says though the price is good this year compared with last year, it is difficult for him to continue for long. The uniqueness of Harekala chilli is that it has good size, a bright red colour and produces good gravy when used in the preparation of pickle and non-vegetarian dishes, Samani says.

### **Nurseries**

Kishor says seeds are planted in nurseries in September, and the plants thus raised are planted in the field during November. Harvest begins in January and continues up to April. In spite of the depressing trends, some farmers are still hopeful. Considering the demand for this variety of chilli and its uniqueness, farmers such as Nandakumar Rai, Bhaskar and Manohar Shetty now plan to seek GI (geographical indication) tag for the chilli.

## Spot rubber prices rule steady

---



**Kottayam, March 17:** Spot rubber prices ruled steady on Monday.

Sentiments remained almost neutral and the market lost its direction in the absence of local guidance, as the domestic futures market was closed for Holi.

Transactions were low. Sheet rubber was quoted unchanged at Rs. 149.50 a kg by traders.

The grade finished flat at Rs. 149 and Rs. 146 respectively, according to the Rubber Board and dealers.

RSS 3 (spot) improved to Rs. 143.28 ( Rs. 141.02) at Bangkok. March futures closed at ¥242.5 ( Rs. 145.68) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

### **Spot rates**

Spot rubber rates ( Rs. /kg) were: RSS-4: 149.50 (149.50); RSS-5: 146 (146); Ungraded: 143.50 (143.50); ISNR 20: 143 (143) and Latex 60%: 111 (111).

## Cardamom gains flavour on lower arrivals

---

Average price tops Rs. 700/kg as export buying aids rally



**Kochi, March 17:** Exporters' buying kept cardamom prices steady to firm last week at the auctions. Sunday's auction witnessed an increase in prices with the average crossing Rs. 700 a kg. The uptrend continued on Monday at the Cardamom Planters' Association (CPA) auction held in Bodinayakannur.

#### **Supporting uptrend**

Upcountry buyers were also seen buying actively and it also supported the uptrend, market sources told *Business Line*. The individual auction average price, which had slipped to below Rs. 700 on most days last week, rebounded to above Rs. 700 on Sunday.

The decline in arrivals in recent days especially on Sunday changed the market sentiment. Supply of cardamom from estates/farms has come to an end and the material arriving currently is from the stocks held by farmers and primary market dealers.

Therefore, as the lean season has begun, the market is bullish, sources said.

Exporters bought an estimated 130 tonnes cardamom last week. Availability of exportable grade capsule of 7mm and above was comparatively low, but the available material was picked up.

Exportable variety fetched Rs. 775-800 and exporters bought at this rate. Bold capsules 8mm were traded at Rs. 850-875, while bold good colour bulk cardamom sold at Rs. 700 a kg, they said.

#### **Guatemala stocks**

Guatemala, another major producer of cardamom in the world, is reported to have exhausted its stocks and the material would be available only after the next crop harvesting in September/October.

According to the trade the next crop in Guatemala is estimated to be less. During the current season to July, arrivals are 16,652 tonnes against 9,531 tonnes during the same period a year ago.

Sales are 16,200 tonnes against 9,043 tonnes. The weighted average price as on March 16 was Rs. 607.47 against Rs. 758.41 during the same period a year ago.

On Sunday, arrivals at the Kumily auctions fell to 77 tonnes from 98 tonnes a week ago. The entire quantity was sold. The maximum price was Rs. 1,001.50 and minimum Rs. 462 a kg. The auction average moved up to Rs. 700.40 a kg from Rs. 687.72 a kg, Mr P C Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC said.

Prices of all graded varieties were steady last week and their prices in Rs. /kg last weekend were: AGEB 885-895; AGB 705-715; AGS 675-685; and AGS -1: 645-655. Weather conditions were favourable, even though there were no summer showers in the growing areas.

On the other hand, cardamom futures, traded on MCX, are likely to rise over the next few days due to shortage of exportable quality and active buying by exporters.

## Register poppy seed contracts, Centre tells importers

---

**Kochi, March 17:** All contracts to import poppy seeds should be registered with the Narcotics Commissioner, according to the Finance Ministry.

#### **Guidelines issued**

Guidelines to this effect were issued by the Finance Ministry recently, in a bid to stop the illegal imports of poppy seeds.

The guidelines were issued following a ruling by the Allahabad High Court bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud on November 29, 2013, on a public interest litigation filed by Ayurveda Sewashram Kalyan Samiti.

After the guidelines by the Finance Ministry, a petition was again filed by Sewashram in the High Court on February 25, saying that the guidelines do not prescribe any limit after ascertaining the production and stocks in countries where the spice is produced. However, the Bench, also comprising Justice Dilip Gupta, said that since the guidelines were issued only recently, it would consider it appropriate not to find fault, but expect the Central Bureau of Narcotics to perform its duties and obligations for the enforcement of the responsibility cast on it.

The bench disposed the petition on March 3. The National Policy on poppy seed emphasises that before registering import contracts, the Narcotics Commissioner must satisfy that the country from which the poppy seeds are proposed to be imported: (i) legally cultivates opium poppy; and (ii) can produce the quantity of seeds which are sought to be imported. The discharge of the functions by the Narcotics Commissioner must be consistent with the purpose of implementing the important stipulations, which have made in the Import Policy for protecting the nation against the serious consequences of an illegal trade in poppy seeds.

## Slack demand crushes soya oil

---

**Indore, March 17:** Slack demand in the physical market and weak soyameal buying dragged soya oil prices in the last one week by Rs. 15-18. Soya refined oil in the Indore mandis quoted at Rs. 685-88 for 10 kg on Monday, as a result ( Rs. 700-705 last week). Similarly, soya solvent also declined to Rs. 640-44 ( Rs. 660-65 last week) on weak buying support. Local mandis were closed on Monday on account of Holi. Soya oil has been rallying high for sometime on strong global cues and reports of damage to mustard crops in the country. However, the absence of demand at higher rates in the last few days, has pulled down the prices of both soya oil and soyabean in the local mandis. Soyabean prices ruled stable at Rs. 3,900-4,100 a quintal in private trading amid slack demand, even as the arrival remained negligible due to the closure of the mandis. Plant deliveries of soya oil also ruled firm at Rs. 4,050-4,250 a quintal.

## Why global cotton rallied last week

---

Domestic market unlikely to be influenced due to higher output



**Chennai, March 17:** “The rise in global cotton prices raises many questions. It looks oversold and we think the market is being manipulated by US shippers,” said A Ramani, a cotton industry analyst and an official of the Indian Cotton Federation from Coimbatore. “Globally, cotton prices have run up due to speculator interest. We don’t think it will have any effect in the domestic market,” said D K Nair, Secretary-

General, Confederation of Indian Textiles Industry.

Last week, cotton gained 1.05 per cent on the ICE US, New York, at 92.19 cents a pound ( Rs. 42,200 for a candy of 356 kg).

On Monday, cotton futures maturing for delivery in May ruled at 92.24 cents on the ICE US. In the last one month, the natural fibre has gained 3.60 per cent.

**Stocks in US**

“We think it is demand from China that is driving up global prices. US cotton quality is good and 80 per cent of the crop there has been sold out,” said Anand K Poppat, an official of the Saurashtra Ginners Association in Gujarat and an exporter. According to the US Department of Agriculture, stocks in US warehouses will be at a four-year low of three million bales (of 217.72 kg each) at the end of the season in July. Exports from the US is projected nearly two per cent higher at 10.7 million bales.

“No doubt, US export sales are high but no one is sure if it is genuine sale or transfer of stock to the Far-East. This could have been done because US shippers would have wanted prices to drop,” said Ramani.

China, the largest importer, bought 35 per cent less cotton in February and since the beginning of the year, its cotton purchases from overseas are 36 per cent lower compared with the same period a year ago.

“Chinese imports are substantially lower since the beginning of its lunar New Year. There is a big question mark over the Chinese factor,” said Ramani.

One problem with regard to China is the huge cotton reserve it holds. “Stocks with China are equivalent to what it consumes over one-and-a-half years,” said Ramani. “They (stocks) are a mind-boggling 70 million bales,” said Poppat.

That is almost equal to what India produced in the last two seasons together. Global stocks at the end of July are projected at around 95 million bales by the USDA. “The current global rally is not sustainable and prices will come under pressure,” said Ramani. It is borne out by the nearly 11 cents discount to December futures on the ICE US.

### **Higher production**

In the domestic market, prices could rule below Rs. 43,000 a candy. Currently, prices are hovering around Rs. 42,000 for Shankar-6 variety, the one in demand for exports. “Recent rains could affect the last round of cotton pickings but prices are seen on leash because of a higher crop,” said Nair.

Cotton production this season to September has been projected at 375 lakh bales (of 170 kg each) against 365 lakh bales last season. “Production could be higher, at least in Gujarat where the output is likely to be 130-135 lakh bales,” said Poppat. The Cotton Advisory Board has pegged Gujarat’s production at 116 lakh bales this season. Despite higher production, prices will rule stable in view of exports, projected at 90 lakh bales. Last year, 101 lakh bales were exported. Till February, 78 lakh bales have been shipped out.

“Besides China, we are exporting to Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Taiwan and Vietnam,” said Poppat. Bangladesh and Vietnam are currently offering higher prices for Indian cotton compared to others since they the advantage of cheap labour. Bangladesh is offering up to Rs. 44,600 a candy, while Pakistan is offering not more than Rs. 44,100. The Chinese are paying less than Rs. 42,200.

“Current domestic prices are just helping spinning mills to make both ends meet. Any further rise will result in losses,” said Nair.

## **Speculative capital back in agri market on weather woes**

---

**March 17:** Speculative capital is back in the agri-commodity sector, this time betting on adverse weather to hit farm output. Political tension between Russia and Ukraine has only helped exacerbate the speculative fervour.

Speculators had remained on the sidelines for over a year as prices of agricultural commodities ruled soft following a rebound in output.

They have begun to pour capital into agricultural commodities and are buying now with the hope that prices will rise later.

In the US, non-commercial participants have ramped up their net long position across agricultural commodities — said to be the highest since September 2009. The flow of funds has certainly pushed commodity prices higher.

Corn, wheat, soyabean, sugar, coffee, cocoa, palm oil prices have risen since the beginning of the year, not because of shortage, but on expectations that the output will decline because of weather concerns.

Brazil and South-East Asia, in particular, have been experiencing dry conditions since the beginning of the year.

The US has experienced an unusually severe winter. So there are concerns over yield loss. Apprehensions of a return of the El Nino are doing the rounds, pushing up speculative activity. To make matters worse, the Russia-Ukraine standoff has raised fears of potential supply disruption of grains and oilseeds from the Black Sea region.

The current situation is different from what we saw in the last quarter of 2013 when the outlook for 2014 was bearish with expected expansion of harvests for the second year in a row and plentiful northern hemisphere harvests hitting world markets. Now, as weather risks build, the speculative long positions on the bourses are also building, according to data released by CFTC, the market regulator.

### **Coffee, wheat**

Dry weather in Brazil is driving several agri-markets higher notably coffee, sugar and soyabean. Brazil is the world's largest producer-exporter of coffee, and with risk to the its crop, coffee prices have shot up by over 50 per cent. Record levels of fund short covering is said to be the primary reason.

Corn, sugar and soyabean prices, too, have risen, but less dramatically at about 10 per cent. In the case of sugar, funds are reported to have covered most of their net short and are now net long and market participants are anticipating a small deficit in 2014-2015 after three years of surplus.

## **Business Standard**

### **Tea exports dip 13.24 % in April-February**

---



[Tea exports](#) from [India](#), the world's second-biggest producer, dipped by 13.24 per cent to \$695.64 million during April-February this fiscal due to slowdown in global market.

The exports during the same period last fiscal stood at \$801.82 million, a commerce ministry official said. The official, however, said that demand in some countries such as Pakistan, Iran and Russia is gradually improving.

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the UK, Iraq and the UAE are major exports destinations for Indian tea.

In February, exports were up by 12.36 per cent to \$64.92 million against \$57.78 million in February last year. Further, tea exports to Pakistan, one of the biggest international markets for tea, are gradually picking.

Pakistan is one of the top three tea importing countries with a consumption of 220 million kg.

As per estimates, during January-December 2013, Pakistan imported 25 million kg of tea from India, compared to 20 million kg in the corresponding period of 2012. In 2012-13, India's tea exports were 216.23 million kg. The total output was 1,135 million kg in the same period.

On the output front, as per the data of the [Tea Board](#), during April-January period of the fiscal, the production was 1137.61 million kg. The main tea growing areas in the country are Assam, Darjeeling, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka.

## Mango growers stare at a bitter harvest

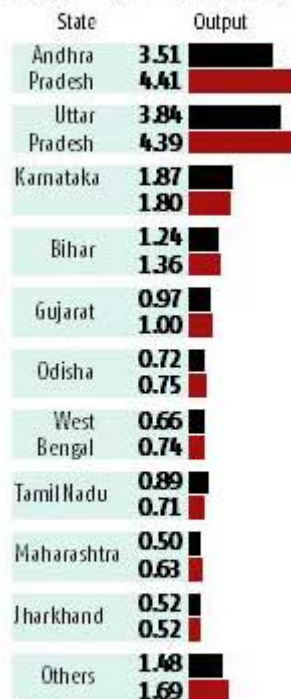
[Mango](#) growers are staring at a bitter harvest this year, due to crop damage after the recent bout of unseasonal weather. An erratic climate has damaged the crop, in various stages of maturity across the country, and some estimates suggest a fall of up to 40 per cent in yield from major mango-producing 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 18 million tonnes in 2012-13, according to reports from across the country.

### FRUITLESS LABOUR?

State-wise production of mango (in million tonnes)



total



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 Maharashtra's Sindhudurg.

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.

---