

Field day programme held at KVK

KRISHNAGIRI, March 19, 2014 - A field day programme on stress tolerant natural enemies was held at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Papparapatty, in Dharmapuri district recently. A release from KVK said that the programme was jointly organised by the National Bureau of Agriculturally Important Pests (NBAIL), Bangalore. A trial has been conducted by NBAIL under the National Innovative Technology Project (NAIP) in collaboration with KVK, Papparapatty, on stress tolerant natural enemies viz. Trichogramma, Chrysolperla and Trichoderma. Trichogramma chilonis is an egg parasitoid and using the existing strains is not effective due to insecticide applications. A multiple insecticide tolerant strain of this parasitoid was tested on tomato and brinjal. It showed a positive result and there was a 30 - 40 per cent cut down in the pesticide cost. To popularise the technology, the field day was conducted at Alamarathupatty. Sudhir Kochhar, National Coordinator, NAIP, presided over the programme. He said that the real success of the technology lied in sustained use by the farmers on field. Abraham Verghese, Director, NBAIL, explained the importance of pesticide- tolerant strain of Chrysolperla Zastrowi for control of sucking pests and salinity-tolerant Trichoderma harzianum for biological management of plant diseases. A leaflet on the technology was released in the function and the samples of the strains were distributed to the participants.

'Improve storage facility for agriculture produce'

DHARMAPURI, March 19, 2014 - Though we have achieved green revolution by increasing agriculture production, the need of the hour is to improve the storage facility for agriculture produce to increase their shelf life, said K. Tamilmani, Director, General (Aeronautical), Defence Research and Development Organisation, Bangalore, here recently. Addressing at the annual day function of the Jayalakshmi Institute of Technology in Thoppur, Mr. Tamilmani said that the nation needed engineering capabilities to improve agriculture infrastructure facilities. He called upon the students to uphold professional ethics as it would help them grow in their life. Presiding over the function, C. Subramanian, college chairman, exhorted the students to fix a target to achieve their goal. S. Raghunathan, principal, spoke.

Reinstate agriculture

Soon packaged food will start running out and you need to have rebooted agriculture for yourself. **The Millennium Seed Bank**, located in Wakehurst, West Sussex, is the largest plant conservation project in the world and would offer the perfect backup file for civilisation. Simple tools such as ploughs and harrows could be scavenged, or created by repurposing steel items with a simple forge. Without industrially synthesised fertilisers, your best option for replenishing nitrates in the soil is by rotating leguminous plants with your cereal crops.

Farmers confront Moily on GM crop trials issue

I have not approved such trials: Union Minister



Union Minister M. Veerappa Moily responding to farmers who marched onto his residential premises in Bangalore on Tuesday.— Photo: K. Murali Kumar

BANGALORE, March 19, 2014 - Confronted by farmers on the issue of permission given for field trials of genetically modified (GM) crops, Union Minister for Environment and Forests M. Veerappa Moily on Tuesday said that “he

only examined the file concerned and returned it without approving any such trials.”

Mr. Moily was reacting to farmers associated with the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) and South Indian Co-ordination Committee of Farmers’ Movements (SICCFM) who marched onto his residential premises here and staged a dharna to condemn permission granted to regulators to go ahead with clearances for GM field trials.

The farmers’ protest was in response to the announcement by Mr. Moily at a press conference in New Delhi on February 27 that field trials of GM crops, including GM varieties of rice, wheat, maize, would be permitted.

“If the Minister’s statement is true, then the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), which is meeting on March 21 to give further approvals for GM crop trials, should desist from giving clearances as the former Minister Jayanti Natarajan’s orders will still be binding on it,” said KRRS president K.T. Gangadhar.

He pointed out that Ms. Natarajan had, in her letter to the Prime Minister on July 9, 2013, said that it was important to await the judgment of the Supreme Court in the matter, and had accordingly issued directions to the authorities concerned.

KRRS working president Chukki Nanjundaswamy warned that farmers would come back in greater numbers to resume the protest.

“If what he is saying is correct, then we want him to give instructions to the regulators not to clear any field trials in the upcoming meeting of GEAC,” she said.

The KRRS and SICCFM declared that they will not only step up the campaign against GM crops and their promoters in the coming days but will also make this an election issue.

They also urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to desist from permitting any field trials of GM crops in the State.

Farmers’ plight likely to impact polls

Declining water levels, slow progress of delta modernisation project raise farmers’ hackles in Godavari and Krishna delta

ELURU, March 19, 2014 - It appears that the plight of farmers will have a considerable impact on the general elections and the local body polls, especially in the Krishna and Godavari delta regions. While erratic power supply has been a major worry for farmers in the upland region, declining water levels in the Godavari and the poor condition of canal system owing to the slow progress of the delta modernisation project threaten the paddy prospects to the Godavari and Krishna delta ryots.

Threat looming large

Farmers have taken up paddy cultivation in 6 lakh acres in West Godavari district including the 4.5-lakh acre under the Godavari Western delta and 23,000 acres under the Krishna-Eluru canal ayacut.

With water scarcity hitting them hard, farmers are staging protests demanding adequate water supply from the canals for the tail-end and high level patches in the Godavari delta at different places. Further, the peasants under the Losari Main Channel, Bhimavaram branch canal and I. Bhimavaram canal, with a total ayacut of 15,000 acres, have been up in arms against the enforcement of crop holiday by the administration to accelerate the modernisation works during this rabi.

The drop in water levels poses a serious threat to the standing crops in the delta area. Under the Krishna-Eluru canal project, slow progress of modernisation works is raising farmers' hackles. Of the total ayacut of 1.15 lakh acres under the Krishna-Eluru canal ayacut, paddy is cultivated in 23,000 acres in West Godavari and 7,000 acres in Krishna district. But the Irrigation authorities have failed to irrigate even the limited patches, in spite of the abundance of water in the Krishna, thanks to poor condition of the canal. According to official information, works worth only Rs. 10 crore were executed in the last five years as against the Rs. 210 crore sanctioned by the government for its modernisation.

The delay has already caused a series of floods, leading to extensive crop damage in both the deltas.

In addition to this, the government has enforced crop holidays twice, forcing the farmers to forego their crops as part of the move to facilitate the project works. Yet, the ambitious project has failed to inch ahead so far.

📌 ***Works worth Rs. 10 crore executed, against Rs. 210 crore sanctioned for canal modernisation***

📌 ***Two crop holidays enforced for speeding up the works have become farmers' worry***

Water level

Mettur - The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 49.01 feet on Tuesday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 353 cusecs and the discharge 500 cusecs.

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Tuesday stood at 50.25 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 58.45 cusecs and 204.75 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam.

The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 73.22 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 28 cusecs and no water was discharged.

Kanyakumari

The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 7.15 feet, 37.5 feet in Perunchani, 3.05 feet in Chittar I, 3.58 feet in Chittar II, 3 feet in Poigai and 42.14 feet in Mamabazathuraiyaru.


Weather

Chennai - INDIA






Today's Weather

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

Tomorrow's Forecast

	Thursday, Mar 20
	Max
Sunny	32°
	Min
	25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday Mar 21	Saturday Mar 22	Sunday Mar 23	Monday Mar 24	Tuesday Mar 25
				
33° 23°	33° 23°	29° 23°	29° 23°	29° 24°
Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Overcast	Overcast	Overcast



After drought, the deluge

SUMMARY

Farmers in worst-hit Beed had hoped that a good harvest this year would help them repay loans.

Radhabai, a 30-year-old daily wager from Ekdara village of Beed district, was plucking cotton on March 8 when the overcast sky opened up. Heavy rain with tennis ball-sized hailstones forced her to take shelter under a tree. "Heavy wind dislodged a branch of the tree that fell on her head. She died on the spot and was lying there for hours. We got to know only when someone informed us," said her husband, Bhagwant Gawade. Ten days since her death, Radhabai's children Ashwini, 13, and Rama, 17, are trying to cope with the tragedy. "That day, we had asked her not to go to the fields. But she said it will help her earn an extra 100 rupees," they said.

Heavy rains and hailstorm have been lashing Beed over the last fortnight. Farmers across 943 villages are experiencing one of their worst economic losses. Six deaths have been reported so far. Primary survey by the agriculture department revealed that crops spread over 55,000 hectares in Beed have been destroyed.

District Collector Navalkishore Ram said that all standing crops of jowar, wheat, onion, cotton, etc have been destroyed, and it was perhaps the first time in 30 years that Beed had seen a hailstorm of such magnitude. "Parli, Majalgaon, Gevrai, Dharur, Vadwan, Shirur Kasar and Ambejogai talukas have the worst hit blocks. Hailstorms are being reported almost

every day," he said, adding that preliminary loss is estimated to be around Rs 50-60 crore. "Out of the 55,000 hectares, 4,500 hectares had orchards of lemon and mango and that loss is huge," Ram said.

Majority of the farmers here had not opted for any crop insurance policy. Standing near what was once his golden yellow field of wheat, Parashuram Rathod, a resident of Talkhed village in Majalgaon taluka, said, "Last two years we faced drought and this year hailstorm has destroyed our standing crop. I had managed to harvest wheat, but there was no time to take it to the granary. How will I repay my loan of Rs 4 lakh?"

"My son wants to join B Pharma course. I had taken a loan of Rs 8 lakh. With my crops damaged, how will I pay his fees?" said Pandit Chavan of Govindwadi in Majalgaon taluka. The roof of Sunita Chavan's house was blown away. "Neighbours took my children to a nearby temple, while my mother-in-law and I took shelter under a cot. The hailstorm lasted for two hours. My house was filled with hailstones and a portion of the cowshed had collapsed," she said.

The families of those who died were given immediate compensation by the district collector, but so far no relief has been announced for the injured.

Bhaskar Khande of Shahpur said that it took five days for the talathi to visit the village and prepare a panchnama. "The talathi did not visit the fields, he sat at one place and completed the panchnama," he complained.

Political leaders — including Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar and BJP vice-president and sitting MP Gopinath Munde — have also visited the district. However, due to the model code of conduct prior to the polls, none of these leaders made a mention of compensation. The impending polls have led to a delay in the disaster management efforts of the district collectorate, as the same officials are also responsible for election preparations.

Beed will go to polls on April 7. "If we are not given compensation, we will not vote this year," said some villagers.

THE HINDU Business Line

37% tea unsold at Coonoor sale

Coonoor, March 18:

Due to slack demand, 37 per cent of 13.11 lakh kg offered at Sale No: 11 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction remained unsold.

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, and Crosshill Estate tea, auctioned by J Thomas and Co., topped CTC market at Rs. 200 a kg. Shanthi Supreme got Rs. 187, Vigneshwar Estate Rs. 185, Deepika Supreme Rs. 182 and Hittakkal Estate Rs. 180. In all, 66 marks got Rs. 125 and more.

Among orthodox teas, Chamraj topped at Rs. 245 a kg followed by Prammias Rs. 225, Kairbetta and Kodanad Rs. 223, Havukal Rs. 213, Corsley Rs. 210 and Highfield Estate Rs. 209. In all, 49 marks got Rs. 125 and more .

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 55-58 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 110-170 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs. 64-67 for plain dusts and Rs. 130-185 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Export purchase was limited to plainer less-priced teas. Pakistan bought selectively for Rs. 67-86.

Upcountry buyers bought brighter-liquoring teas in a less-competitive market.

Jeera crackles on higher arrivals, low demand

Futures sink below Rs. 10,000/quintal, down 20% since January



Ahmedabad, March 18: Jeera (cumin seed) prices have dropped sharply on higher arrivals and weak demand in the last few weeks. Prices have slipped by 12-14 per cent in the spot market in past one month. Arrivals have surged to over 70,000 bags (each 50-kg) in spot markets amid weak demand.

Jeera prices have dropped from Rs. 12,054 on February 12 to their the lowest levels in recent months at Rs.

10,556.

Similarly, in the futures jeera slipped below on Tuesday Rs. 10,000 on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange. During the day, jeera March contract touched the low of Rs. 9,890, down 16 per cent from Rs. 11,810 a month ago.

Since January, prices in the futures market have fallen by over 20 per cent from Rs. 12,535 for the March contract.

“This is a market trend to bottom out before arrivals peak. Prices have fallen sharply in the past one month. However, this is not the bottom as yet,” Jagdeep Garewal, analyst at Kunverji Commodities in Ahmedabad told *Business Line*.

“We see further downfall in jeera prices to the tune of about 2-4 per cent in the next 10-15 days,” said Garewal adding that demand is likely to pick up once the prices stabilise at the lower levels. Experts said that jeera production is expected in the range of 6.5-7 million bags, up from about 5 million bags last year.

Weak exports

Exports have remained weak, although shipments have risen to record in the first nine months of the current fiscal. Over one lakh tonnes of jeera have been exported during April-January. According to the Spices Board data, cumin exports were 79,900 tonnes in 2012-13. “Arrivals have touched 70,000 bags a day at Unjha. We expect it to be higher by 20,000 bags from the peak arrivals. However, exports and domestic demand are weak so there is supply pressure on the prices,” said an exporter from Unjha.

Record acreage may stop onion from pinching your purse

Chennai, March 18: At least 15 per cent of the late kharif onion crop is feared to have been affected by the recent hailstorm and rain in growing areas of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

But a higher area under the rabi crop could save consumers from paying more for onion later this year.

“Hailstorm in growing areas of Maharashtra has affected onion that is ready for harvest. Only 10-15 per cent of the late kharif crop is on the field with the rest already harvested,” said RP Gupta, Director, National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation.

In Madhya Pradesh, rain is reported to have damaged the onion crop to some extent. "We think there could be at least 30 per cent loss in rabi onion. But the saving grace is that this time, the area under rabi onion is high," said CB Holkar, member of National Cooperative Agricultural Marketing Federation.

"Some of the rabi onion crop due for early harvest could have been affected. Our loss estimate includes that," said Gupta.



Output projection

For the current season ending June, the Agriculture Ministry had estimated onion production at 19 million tonnes (mt) against 16.81 mt last season.

"Our projection is that the crop now could be 10-15 per cent lower than the 19 mt estimated by the Ministry," Gupta said.

This means, the country could be producing between 16.15 mt and 17.10 mt of onion against the forecast of a record production.

A record 17.5 mt was produced in 2011-12.

This season, a record 10.88 lakh hectares have been brought under onion against 10.51 lakh hectares last year.

"The production estimate is based on the

situation prevailing now. We hope the weather will be conducive for the rabi onion. If there is any unseasonal rain, then the quality of rabi onion will be hit," said Gupta.

Rabi onion, harvested during April-May, has a larger shelf life and helps in keeping prices under control till the early kharif onion arrives in September.

"If the quality is hit, then we could face problems like last year when prices began to shoot up from July," said Gupta.

Prices may not rise

"We don't think the crop loss will lead to spurt in prices, thanks to better production. Last year's record prices encouraged a higher acreage," said Holkar.

Last year, onion prices surged to a record of over Rs. 100 a kg in retail outlets, while in markets near growing areas such as Lasalgaon in Maharashtra's Nashik district they ruled around Rs. 60.

On Monday, the modal price or the rate at which most trades take place was Rs. 725 a quintal after having topped Rs. 1,000 on March 10.

Exports

With export enquiries for onion being normal, its shipments are unlikely to have any impact on prices.

"That exports will not result in higher prices can be gauged from the fact that the Centre has allowed private parties to ship onions last week," said Gupta. So far this fiscal, some 11 lakh tonnes of onion valued at Rs. 2,644 crore were shipped against 18.22 lakh tonnes at Rs. 2,294 crore in 2012-13.

"Exports are at a normal 1-1.5 lakh tonnes a month currently," said Holkar.

Spot rubber prices rule unchanged

Kottayam, March 18:

Physical rubber prices continued to rule unchanged on Tuesday.

According to observers, there were no genuine sellers or buyers in the market and most traders seemed to be waiting for the procurement process to gather momentum. Volumes were extremely dull.

Sheet rubber finished flat at Rs. 149.50 a kg, according to traders.

The grade was quoted at Rs. 149 and Rs. 146 respectively, by the Rubber Board and dealers. April futures declined to Rs. 150.90 (Rs. 153.01) May to Rs. 153.80 (Rs. 155.99), June to Rs. 155.70 (Rs. 159.07), July to Rs. 153.60 (Rs. 157.64) and August to Rs. 155 (159.50) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) weakened to Rs. 141.72 (143.28) at Bangkok.

March futures closed at ¥242.2 (Rs. 145.99) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

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

Sugar may extend rally on increased buying

Lower-than-expected output, summer demand, exports set to keep market firm



New Delhi, March 18: Sugar prices which had dropped to five-year-lows in early-February have reversed their trends in the last few weeks.

Prices at Kolhapur and Muzaffarnagar, the country's two major terminal markets, have increased by 12 per cent

in the last six weeks. They are seen to trade firm in the days ahead as the current crushing season heads for closure in about a month's time.

Industry sources attribute the rebound in sugar prices to a host of factors such as the lower than anticipated domestic output, pick up in summer demand and the Government's move to incentivise exports of raw sugar.

Besides drought in Brazil – the largest sugar producer – and an anticipated El Nino affecting the crop in Thailand and Australia are seen supporting prices globally.

"The market sentiment has improved and there is increased buying by the trading community and even consumers," said Abinash Verma, Director-General of the Indian Sugar Mills Association.

"The market is moving up and people are taking positions. The stock pipeline with the trade that had turned dry in the past one-and-half years is getting filled up," he said.

The timing is important given that mills, especially in Uttar Pradesh, have piled up huge cane arrears. Improved sugar realisations will help them pay growers and incentivise them to plant cane for the next season. Cane planting in Uttar Pradesh is done during March-May. If they cut the area under sugarcane, it will impact not only the crop to be crushed next February-April, but also the subsequent "ratoon" that should be ready for harvest in November-December next year.

Praful Vithlani, owner of Jagjivan Keshavaji & Co – sugar broking house in Mumbai, said the market got a boost due to the weather conditions in Brazil and Government's notification of subsidy for raw sugar exports. "As of today, it looks like the bullish trend is likely to be sustained," Vithlani said confirming the renewed buying interest from the trade and stockists.

ISMA expects sugar output for the 2013-14 season to be five per cent lower than the earlier estimate of 23.8 million tonnes. Till mid-March, the production was lower by eight per cent at 19.38 million tonnes.

"The summer demand is supporting the pick-up in market," said M G Joshi, Managing Director of the National Federation of Sugar Co-operatives. The increase in raw sugar prices globally is also aiding the trend, he said.

However, ISMA's Verma said the price increase was still not good enough for millers to cover their costs. Sugar prices had been ruling lower in the last 12 to 14 months. Prices were

down by about Rs. 6000 a tonne since August last year on surplus availability as exports were not viable with the decline in global prices. However, the prices have moved up now. In Muzaffarnagar, the prices have increased from Rs. 2,950 a quintal in early February to the current level of Rs. 3,307, while in Kolhapur they have increased to Rs. 2,943 from Rs. 2,656. However, retail prices for the consumer have not changed but may soon follow suit.

Business Standard

Sugar output still shows effect of late crushing



India's [sugar](#) output had fallen eight per cent this season until Saturday, compared to a year before, due to the earlier delay in commencing of [cane crushing](#).

Data from the Indian Sugar Mills Association ([Isma](#)) showed 19.4 million tonnes of output till last Saturday, compared with 21.1 mt in the corresponding period last year. Isma lowered its production forecast for this

season by five per cent to 23.8 mt, as compared to 25.1 mt in the previous one.

Operational sugar mills have recently intensified crushing, resulting in an improvement from the deficit of 11 per cent in the output till a fortnight earlier. Isma says 428 mills remain operational, as compared to 362 mills at the same time last year.

Sugar output down 8.5% till Mar 15 of this year: ISMA



The country's [sugar](#) production has declined by 8.5% to 19.38 million tonnes till March 15th of the current marketing year due to lower [output](#) in key producing states, according to industry body [ISMA](#).

The production stood at 21.1 million tonnes in the corresponding period last year.

Indian Sugar [Mills](#) Association (ISMA) has revised overall sugar production forecast downward by five% to 23.8 million tonnes for the ongoing 2013-14 marketing year (October-September). Last year, the output was 25.1 million tonnes.

In an official release, ISMA said the gap in sugar production is narrowing down. About 428 sugar mills were still crushing sugarcane as on March 15 of this year, as against 362 mills in the year-ago period.

According to latest data, sugar mills in top two producing states -- Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh -- have produced less sugar so far. A similar situation prevailed in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.

Sugar production in Maharashtra was 6.41 million tonnes till March 15 of this year, down from 7.23 million tonnes in the year-ago period.

Sugar output in Uttar Pradesh was down at 5.07 million tonnes from 5.89 million tonnes, while sugar production in Gujarat remained lower at 9,70,000 tonnes from 9,91,000 tonnes in the review period.

Production in Andhra Pradesh too was lower by 4% at 8,80,000 tonnes till March 15th of this year, while the output in Tamil Nadu was down at 8,00,000 tonnes as against 11,50,000 tonnes in the same period a year ago.

However, sugar production in Karnataka was up by eight% at 3,45,000 tonnes in the review period.

During the October-February period of this year, mills manufactured around 1.1 million tonnes of raw sugar. About 6,00,000 tonnes of raw sugar has been exported, ISMA said.

The industry body said that mills dispatched 10 million tonnes of sugar for sale in domestic market between October and February of this year, as compared to 9.6 million tonnes in the year-ago period.

Tea exports rise marginally in 2013



[Tea exports](#) during 2013 increased by a mere 2% at 212 million kilograms as compared to 208 million kilograms in 2012, according to data by Indian Tea Association ([ITA](#)).

Production of tea during 2013 increased 6.6% at 1,200 million kilograms over 1126 million kilograms in the previous calendar year.

[Imports](#) had fallen in 2013 to 20 million kilograms from 21 million kilograms in 2012, the ITA estimates showed.

Consumption during 2013 had increased marginally by 2.6% at 926 million kilograms from 903 million kilograms in 2012.

Average auction prices during 2013 showed a higher trend at Rs 128.27 per kilogram as compared to Rs 125.25 per kilogram in 2012.

[CIS](#) countries remained the top destination for exports, followed by Iran, Pakistan and United States.

Chana up 1.5% on good demand, limited supply

[Chana](#) prices rose by 1.56% to Rs 3,320 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators enlarged their holdings on account of good demand in spot markets amid limited supplies from producing belts.



At the [National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange](#), chana for April delivery rose by Rs 51, or 1.56%, to Rs 3,320 per quintal, with an open interest for 87,080 lots.

Similarly, chana for delivery in May increased by Rs 40, or 1.20%, to Rs 3,359 per quintal, with an open interest of 39,260 lots.

Market analysts said besides good demand, reports of damage to crop due to recent rains in growing regions, particularly Madhya Pradesh, influenced chana prices in futures trade.

Cardamom up 2.6% as spot demand picks up



[Cardamom](#) prices rose 2.68% to Rs 835 per kg in futures trading today as speculators created positions, driven by pick-up in demand in the spot market.

Further, restricted arrivals from producing regions also supported the uptrend.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), cardamom for delivery in April rose by Rs 21.80, or 2.68% to Rs 835 per kg in business turnover of 570 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in May edged up by Rs 21.60, or 2.56%, to Rs 865.30 per kg in 83 lots.

Analysts said fresh positions built up by speculators on the back of rise in demand in the spot market against restricted arrivals from growing regions, mainly influenced cardamom prices at futures trade.

Potato down 0.3% on reduced offtake



[Potato](#) futures prices declined by 0.33% to Rs 1,178 per quintal today as speculators offloaded their positions amid adequate stocks in the physical markets on increased arrivals from producing regions.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), potato for March delivery fell by Rs 4, or 0.33%, to Rs 1,178 per quintal, with a business volume of 9 lots.

For delivery in April, potato traded lower by Rs 3.80, or 0.31%, to Rs 1,197 per quintal, with a trade volume of 17 lots.

Marketmen said fall in potato prices at futures trade was mostly owing to offloading of positions by speculators amid subdued demand in the spot market amid increased supplies in the physical market.

Palm oil up 0.3% as demand picks up



[Crude palm oil](#) prices rose by 0.30% to Rs 590.30 per 10 kg in futures trading today as speculators indulged in creating fresh positions supported by pick-up in spot demand.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), crude palm oil for delivery in April rose by Rs 1.80, or 0.30%, to Rs 590.30 per 10 kg in business turnover of 338 lots.

Likewise, the oil for delivery in March up by Rs 1.50, or 0.25%, to Rs 589.20 per 10 kg in 92 lots.

Analysts said fresh positions created by speculators driven by rising demand in the spot market mainly led to rise in crude palm oil prices at futures trade.

European Union threatens to ban import of Indian fruit, vegetables

India's agri commodity [exports](#) are under threat in major global markets over non-adherence to quality specifications prescribed by key international agencies. In less than three months of the current calendar year, India has received its second warning note.

After Australia issued a serious advisory to Indian exporters over deteriorating quality of milk and its derivatives a few weeks ago, the [European Union](#) (EU) has now warned India over the poor quality of its fresh fruits and [vegetables](#). Late last year, Saudi Arabia had threatened to ban Indian fresh fruits and vegetables, following which Indian exporters had adopted quality norms prevailing in the global market.

As recently as March 14, export promotion body, the Agricultural Produce Export Development Authority ([Apeda](#)), had issued an advisory to Indian fresh [fruit](#) and vegetable exporters to adhere to global quality norms.

“The EU has raised serious concerns regarding the interception of harmful organisms in fresh fruits and vegetables exported to the European region. The EU has also threatened to take stern action (including a ban) unless the situation improves. We have assured the EU that India is fully committed to providing safe and pest-free exports of fresh fruits and vegetables to the EU and all necessary steps are begin taken in this direction,” said B K Boyal, director of Apeda in its advisory.

India has steadily increased its fresh fruit and vegetable exports to the EU in the past three years. From the level of Rs 129 crore worth of shipments in 2010-11, India's exports of fresh fruits and vegetables shot up sharply to Rs 165 crore in the financial year 2012-13. But, India is estimated to surpass Rs 200 crore during the current financial year in terms of fresh fruit and vegetable exports.

The warning from the EU has come at a time when India is looking to increase its exports all-round to raise foreign currency income and reduce the current account deficit.

“India has committed that effective April 1, 2014, all exports of fresh fruits and vegetables to the EU would be routed through Apedaapproved pack houses wherein inspections, examinations/testing of export consignments will be conducted under the supervision of plant quarantine personnel,” Boyal said.

Indian exporters have already received such warnings in the past over its groundnut and sesame seed exports to the EU.

“As on date, we have no information on any export ban on our grapes to the EU,” said Ashok Sharma, chief executive, Mahindra and Mahindra Agri and Allied Business.

Apeda, according to an official, has already conducted extensive sensitisation programmes to apprise the trade about the impending scenario. The authority has, therefore, warned that exports of fresh fruits and vegetables to the EU would be routed only through the pack houses recognised by it.

“Though the quantity of exports is not big enough to worry, the threat will percolate to other markets, which would have a negative impact on India’s overall agri exports,” said the official.
