

TNAU digitises 7.80 lakh pages of rare documents

COIMBATORE, March 28, 2014 - The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University had digitised 7.80 lakh pages of rare documents, Vice Chancellor K. Ramasamy has said.

Speaking at the inauguration of a national workshop on 'Bringing Library Resources to Users' Desk', he said that the University staff engaged in the digitisation project digitally captured the pages for preserving and providing easy access to help agriculture-related work in India. Mr. Ramasamy said that the digitisation of records was possible because of the University benefitting from the NAIP – ICAR e-granth project, the objective of which was to strengthen digital library and information management.

Urging all faculty to make best use of the TNAU's e-books, he suggested that they download at least two e-books for each course to use them for teaching. He also wanted faculty and research scholars to write review articles to gain a standing in the profession.

R. Vijayaraghavan, Special Officer, Publications and Public Relations, said that times have changed so much that people no longer went to the libraries.

Farmers want withdrawal of PMP Act

COIMBATORE, March 28, 2014 - The Farmers Association has urged the Chief Minister to take expeditious steps for the withdrawal of the Petroleum and Mineral Pipeline Act of 1962 (PMP Act) as it was proving to be anti-farmers.

In a memorandum, association president V.T. Balasubramanian and general secretary P. Kandasamy said that only recently farmers went through hardship, when the Centre's Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) proposed a Liquefied Natural Gas pipeline by a Maharashtra-based firm.

The pipeline was for 300 km at a cost of Rs. 250 crore.

The project envisaged pipelines under the Rights of Usage classification under the PMP Act. Under this project, farmers would not be able to use their lands for any other purpose and compensation was also not commensurate with the value of the land.

Hence, there was a plea to lay the pipelines along the Highways or railway line. Conceding to the demand of the farmers, the State issued an order in favour of the farmers. GAIL challenged the same and it was now pending before the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, another proposal had been mooted for laying LPG pipeline from Kochi to Salem by the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB).

The association welcomed this project as it would prove to be beneficial to the people here. But to its dismay, there was a move by the PNGRB to get the Rights of Usage under the PMP Act.

Hence, the association urged the Chief Minister to take steps to withdraw the Act.

Ernakulam District Agri-Horticulture Society

TARGET: To bring about better awareness about the environment and promoting the idea of a greener, cleaner world.

Two-day workshop on GIS

MYSORE, March 28, 2014 - Sri Jayachamarajendra College of Engineering (SJCE), Mysore, is conducting a workshop titled 'GIS and modelling – applications in environmental engineering' on March 28 and 29 on the college campus. The workshop will focus on the application of GIS in air and water quality modelling, water supply system, and watershed protection, a press release said.

The workshop would be a platform for postgraduate students, faculty and practising engineers to provide ideas, knowledge and understanding on environmental modelling and the role of GIS. The workshop was being funded by TEQIP Phase-II. SJCE is one of the institutions in the State to receive second phase of World Bank-sponsored TEQIP funding.

Delegates

Over 100 delegates from various institutions and organisations are expected to take part in the workshop.

R.R. Navalgund, Vikram Sarabhai distinguished professor, ISRO, Bangalore, and B.G. Sangameshwara, JSS Mahavidyapeeta Joint Director (Academic), will be the chief guests. SJCE principal Shakeeb-Ur-Rahman will preside over the programme. Professors Manoj Kumar and Pushpa Tuppada, who are coordinating the workshop, may be contacted on 9886544263 or 9591083451.

Water level

The level in Periyar dam stood at 110.50 feet on Thursday with an inflow of 100 cusecs and a discharge of 100 cusecs. The level in Vaigai dam was 29.17 feet with no inflow and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 695 mcft.

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 48.96 feet on Thursday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 1,327 cusecs and the discharge, 1,986 cusecs.

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Thursday stood at 48.20 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 66.20 cusecs and 54.75 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam.

The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 71.84 feet (118 feet).

The dam had an inflow of 28 cusecs and 300 cusecs of water was discharged.

Kanyakumari - The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 9.20 feet, 37.05 feet in Perunchani, 2.98 feet in Chittar I, 3.08 feet in Chittar II, 2.70 feet in Poigai and 41.99 feet in Mamabazhathuraiyaru.

Workshop on wetland conservation

KANNUR, March 28, 2014 - A one-day workshop on the conservation and management of the Kavvayi-Kattampally wetlands of north Kerala will be held here on March 29 under the aegis of the Malabar Natural History Society and the Forests and Wildlife Department. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests B.S. Corie will inaugurate the workshop at the Forest office complex at Kannothumbal here at 10 a.m.

Topics

The workshop includes sessions on management action plan for the Kavvayi wetlands in Kasaragod district, human and geographical perspectives on the conservation of the

wetlands, mangrove flora and their conservation, wetland biodiversity of north Kerala, resources utilisation of the two wetlands and the legal aspects of wetland conservation.

Workshop on biodiversity

KALPETTA, March 28, 2014 - Applications have been invited for an 18-day free residential workshop organised by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) here on Biodiversity conservation for students, who have appeared for Class X examination in March 2014, in the State.

The programme is intended to provide basic knowledge in the broad area of biodiversity conservation and biotechnology.

It will be held at the Agro biodiversity centre of MSSRF at Puthurvayal near Kalpetta from April 25 to May 13, the organisers said.

The workshop consists of interactive lectures, laboratory work, institutional visits, field trips and individual projects.

The number of seat is limited to 30 and the applications should reach the MSSRF's office before 15 April.

More information can be had from the Director, Community Agro biodiversity Centre, M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Puthurvayal P. O, Kalpetta- 673 121or (phone : 09497307958).

Most juice outlets in Kochi function by flouting food safety norms



Quality of water and other ingredients used is suspect

Fruit shops in the city continue to violate the guidelines prescribed by the Food Safety Commissioner, with the department officials unable to check flouting of norms. A scene from a city juice shop in Kochi on Thursday.— Photo: K.K. Mustafah

KOCHI, March 28, 2014 - Locating a juice shop in the city fully complying with the guidelines prescribed by the Commissioner of Food Safety may be a Herculean task this summer. With shops mushrooming in every nook and cranny in Kochi, Food Safety officials seem groping in the dark on how to curb the violations.

Even though reports on use of contaminated ice have come down gradually, they admitted that the majority of the shops store ice in thermocol boxes against the prescribed rules. As per the guidelines, ice should not be stored in polystyrene boxes, but in freezers or ice boxes.

Many juice shop owners now claim that they use water supplied in cans by private manufacturers of bottled drinking water. But there is little check on whether these suppliers meet the safety standards.

Food safety guidelines recommend that the water being used should be from a source of impeccable quality and the quality of the water source should be tested every six months at a government-approved analytical laboratory. Shop owners should also keep these reports in the shop.

A ride along the main city roads reveals that only a few shops adhere to another major guideline recommending prominent display of the licence or registration details as per the Food Safety and Standards (FSSA) Act, 2006.

Use of low quality milk, especially that brought from outside the State, is also rampant in juice shops offering milk shakes.

The Food Safety Department has no clues on whether the shops were storing milk in freezers well beyond the expiry period.

Customers can report cases where they found juice being prepared in unhygienic environments.

They should also ensure that shop owners clean the implements used for preparing juices mainly mixers, juicers and strainers after every use.

The Food Safety guidelines also prescribe that the refrigerator and freezer should be cleaned regularly and the last date on which it was cleaned should be displayed on the fridge.

All food items, including water, in the shops should be stored in covered containers of food grade quality. The fruits should be of good quality, with no trace of fungus. The fruits should be washed and refrigerated.

All employees in juice shops should have medical fitness certificates. They should strictly follow hygienic practices in handling food. Those with any skin conditions or infectious diseases should not be allowed as employees in food businesses.

Workshop at KUFOS on aquaculture practices

KOCHI, March 28, 2014 - A State-level workshop on diversification of aquaculture practices in Kerala: challenges and opportunities will be organised on March 29 by the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS).

The workshop, being organised with the support of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) will be inaugurated by KUFOS vice chancellor B. Madhusoodana Kurup at the University campus at 10 a.m.

Scientists, fish farmers, fisheries officers, activists and students will participate in the workshop, according to a press release.

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Rain: 0

Humidity: 74

Wind: normal

Friday, Mar 28

Max Min

33° | 23°

Sunrise: 06:08

Sunset: 06:20

Barometer: 1013

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Saturday, Mar 29

Max Min

34° | 23°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday

Mar 30



35° | 24°

Partly Cloudy

Monday

Mar 31



31° | 23°

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday

Apr 1



31° | 23°

Cloudy

Wednesday

Apr 2



31° | 24°

Overcast

Thursday

Apr 3



30° | 25°

Overcast

THE TIMES OF INDIA

GADVASU organises training programme for J&K farmers

LUDHIANA: The Department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Extension Education of Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU) organized a specialized training on goat farming from 24-26 March, 2014 for the farmers of Jammu and Kashmir. The special training is being sponsored by Indian Army.

RS Sahota, Director of Extension Education informed that with the changing life style and eatery habits, people have started diversifying from the traditional patterns of livestock rearing. He added that after getting such training from the university, the unemployed youth can start their own enterprise, which on one hand can provide the needed employment and on the other hand bring diversification in agriculture.

Jaswinder Singh Bhatti, Head of Department and Course Director said that trainees were given knowledge about housing, nutrition and feeding management practices.

"Apart from these issues, they were trained to handle newborn kids and methods of weaning, care and management. Participants were also given training on the value addition of goat byproducts. Role of regular vaccination, de-worming and hygiene in prevention of

diseases was stressed," Bhatti said. "The farmers were trained to differentiate between healthy and sick animals".

S K Kansal, course coordinator said that all the farmers learnt new techniques enthusiastically.



Eating peaches may slow breast cancer growth and spread

[Press Trust of India](#) | Washington | March 27, 2014 3:28 pm



Two to three peaches a day can help slow breast cancer. (Thinkstock)

SUMMARY

Peaches have compounds that could be a novel addition to therapies that reduce the risk of metastasis, the primary killer in breast and other cancers.

Compounds in peaches can inhibit the growth of breast cancer cells and their ability to spread, scientists have found.

Researchers from Washington State University and Texas A&M said the compounds could be a novel addition to therapies that reduce the risk of metastasis, the primary killer in breast and many other cancers.

The compounds could be given as an extract or, judging from the doses given to mice in the study, two to three peaches a day.

"I would do three peaches a day," said Giuliana Noratto, WSU assistant professor of food science.

The study also underscores the value of good nutrition in preventing cancer, she said.

"Having enough fruits and vegetables that can provide these compounds in our diet, we might have a similar preventive effect," said Noratto.

In 2009, Noratto and her colleagues at Texas A&M published a study showing that peach and plum extracts suppressed breast cancer cells cultured in petri dishes.

For the new study, the researchers implanted breast cancer cells beneath the skin of mice. The technique, called a xenograft, is often used to look at the growth of breast cancer cells in a living animal, mimicking the interactions by which tumours form and progress.

After giving the cells a week to establish, the researchers fed the mice varying doses of peach polyphenols, compounds that help plants ward off the damaging effects of the sun's ultraviolet radiation.

"There are several studies showing that these compounds act as antioxidants and can therefore protect DNA against damage that can produce cancer," said Noratto.

Other researchers have seen the phenomenon, Noratto said, but she and her colleagues wanted to know if the compounds might start a cascade of signals that could induce the cancer cells to commit suicide.

"We didn't even think about metastasis at that time. The surprise was we analysed lungs and beside the fact that the peach compounds inhibited the growth of the tumour, they also inhibited the metastasis levels on the lungs," Noratto said.

Moreover, after 12 days the researchers saw that mice fed with high levels of polyphenols had tumours that grew less and without much of the blood vessel formation that can help cancer cells spread to other parts of the body.

The tumours in those mice also had less evidence of enzymes involved in the spread and invasion of cancer.

The doses given to mice, if scaled up to a 60-kg person, could be supplied by two to three peaches a day or a dietary supplement of peach polyphenol extract powder.

The study was published in the Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry.



Join Global Effort to Save Power

With power consumption in the state rising in tandem with the mercury levels this summer - the daily consumption even touching an all-time high of 68.09 million units on March 22 - switching off seems the only way to go. In fact, if you switch off all non-essential lights and other electrical equipment between 8.30 pm and 9.30 pm this Saturday, you will also be part of the "the world's biggest people's campaign" against global warming and climate change. For that is when Earth Hour 2014 is scheduled to be held.

Organised every year by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Earth Hour is a global campaign where individuals, households, communities and businesses are encouraged to switch off all non-essential lights for one hour as a symbol of commitment to the planet. It was started in Sydney, Australia in 2007 and has ever since grown to thousands of cities across the planet.

"It is very relevant for a state like Kerala which is reeling under a severe temperature rise, and also has the subsequent problems like water resources going lean and KSEB's decision to go in for load-shedding," said Renjan Mathew Varghese, director of WWF-Kerala, which is organising a slew of programmes in the days running up to March 29.

"KSEB figures show that observing Earth Hour makes a difference in consumption by 160 MW," he said.

For 2014, cine actor Suresh Gopi is the brand ambassador for Earth Hour in Kerala, and the various programmes in connection with the event are being organised by WWF in association with Department of Environment and Climate Change, Energy Management Centre (EMC), NIMS Heart Foundation and NI Group of Institutions, JCI and other like-minded individuals and institutions.

In Thiruvananthapuram, WWF is organising various publicity campaigns from Wednesday to Saturday. There will be awareness campaigns on the three preceding days at various public venues such as Statue Junction, Palayam, CESS Akkulam, Museum compound and Shangumugham beach. KSEB and EMC has provided CFLs for the campaign which will be distributed based on the interactive awareness programmes organised, Varghese said. There also will be a 'cyclathon' at Manaveeyam Road on Saturday from 6.30 am to 8 am.

The major Earth Hour event will be organised at Gandhi Park on March 29 from 6.30 pm to 9.30 pm with the 'Switch Off' and 'Candle Light Vigil' from 8.30 pm to 9.30 pm. Speaker G Karthikeyan will be the chief guest at the main event. The theme for 2014 Earth Hour is 'Switch Off + Make the Switch to Renewable Energy.'

THE HINDU Business Line

Spicing up your chocolate



Kochi, March 27: Spices Board is in discussions with leading chocolate manufacturers to market its spice-flavoured chocolates both in domestic and international markets.

Good response

A Jayathilak, Chairman, Spices Board, said that discussions are on with companies such as Amul, Nestle, Cadbury's and other chocolate manufacturers in this regard.

The Board has already sent samples to chocolate manufacturers and there has been an encouraging response, he said.

Going places

He told reporters that the Board is now selling spice-flavoured chocolates in six flavours – cinnamon, cardamom, cumin, chilli, clove and Mace – packed in gift boxes at the Spices India store in Lulu Mall.

Considering the huge response from

customers, the Board is in the process of setting up a similar store in Dubai on a franchise mode.

Plans are also afoot to launch innovative cosmetics products, spice fragrances, candles, spices soap and textiles using spices, he added.

According to him, Indian spices are considered to be the world best spices with more than 50 per cent share in the global market.

Other initiatives

The Board will focus on launching a Brand India campaign for promotion of processed, value-added, innovative branded products.

Among the new initiatives being planned by the Board is domestic promotion of cardamom and other value-added products and revamping the cardamom marketing system.

Pepper losing sting

The Chairman also hinted that the area under pepper cultivation is dwindling in the country thereby showing a decline in quantity.

Against a production of one lakh tonnes 10 years ago, the figure now stands at 50,000 tonnes due to labour problems and plant disease.

Coonoor tea volume marginally up

Coonoor, March 27: A volume of 13.13 lakh kg, some 43,000 kg more than last week, is being offered for Sale No: 13 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association to be held on Thursday and Friday.

Of this, a volume of 8.91 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 4.22 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades. As much as 12.37 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.76 lakh kg, orthodox variety.

In the leaf counter, only 0.39 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 8.52 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.37 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 3.85 lakh kg, CTC.

This week also, the auction is taking place amidst uncertain export orders due to hostile political situation in Russia-Ukraine belt and hence the trade in CIS and Eastern Europe.

“Nearly a quarter of India’s tea exports goes to the CIS. Exporters’ participation is vital for Nilgiri tea industry’s prospects,” Tea Board Member S Ramu told *Business Line*.

‘BIS certification helps rubber growers meet quality norms’

Kottayam, March 27: There is a growing demand for quality products in domestic and international markets and BIS certification assures quality, said Sheela Thomas, Chairman, Rubber Board.

She was inaugurating a meeting of the BIS licensees of Natural Rubber (NR) processing units organised by BIS-Kerala Region in association with the Rubber Board at Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII), Kottayam.

Varghese Joy, Head, BIS-Kerala Region, said that BIS had simplified the process involved in certification and the procedures could be completed in a short period.

A separate meeting has also been conducted for NR processors, who have not taken BIS license.

BIS signed an agreement with the Rubber Board in 1999 and the two organisations have been jointly carrying out the certification of concentrated latex and Block Rubber .

Spot rubber rules flat

Kottayam, March 27: Spot rubber was almost steady on Thursday. Major consuming industries are not expected to rejoin the buyers’ queue and hence a change in the market may be ruled out.

Sheet rubber was quoted unchanged at Rs. 149 a kg.

The grade was flat at Rs. 148.50 and Rs. 145.50 respectively, according to the Rubber Board and dealers. April futures improved marginally to Rs. 146.60 (146.51) May to Rs. 150.44 (Rs. 149.93), June to Rs. 152.75 (Rs. 151.83) and July to Rs. 153.95 (Rs. 153.30) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) weakened to Rs. 140.29 (Rs. 141.41) at Bangkok.

April futures closed at ₹245.9 (Rs. 144.87) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg): RSS-4: 149 (149); RSS-5: 145 (145); Ungraded: 141 (141); ISNR 20: 142 (142) and Latex 60%: 111 (111).

NSEL gets FMC nod for e-series settlement

Mumbai, March 27: Commodity market regulator Forward Markets Commission has approved financial closure of e-series contracts entered on the scam-hit National Spot Exchange.

To protect the interest of over 33,000 e-series investors, the Commission has no-objection to re-materialisation or financial closure of the e-series contracts, said FMC in a letter to NSEL on Thursday.

The FMC observed that the forensic auditors' report by Chokshi and Chokshi has not brought out any adverse finding with specific reference to the e-series contracts.

"While carrying out the financial closure of e-series contracts, a public announcement of such scheme may be made by NSEL and also publish it on the exchange's website," it said.

The request for financial closure shall be processed by the exchange after seven working days from the publication of such scheme, it said.

The FMC has also observed that there was no settlement default in e-series contracts and physical stock of the metal matched with the stock data of depositories.

IBMA account

The Assistant Excise and Taxation Commissioner of Ludhiana directed HDFC Bank to unfreeze bank accounts of Indian Bullion Market Association, a subsidiary of NSEL. The Association's accounts were frozen after the tax authority found members claiming additional benefits with erroneous calculation of accounts. NSEL's 14th payout of Rs. 99 lakh was released today by IBMA to its trading members.

Spices exports up 27% in volume terms

Kochi, March 27: Riding on the excellent export performance of mint, chilli and seed spices, India's spice exports has registered a 41 per cent growth in terms of rupee value during April-December 2013.

The period witnessed a total export of 571,680 tonnes of spices and spice products valued Rs. 9,433 crore against 449,926 tonnes valued at Rs. 6,696 crore during the same period previous year.

An increase of 27 per cent has been registered, both in terms of volume and dollar terms of value.

The steady growth of spice exports reiterates the unshaken global demand for Indian spices.

Recession-proof

The conspicuous export performance of mint, chilli, value-added products and seed spices points to a promising future for the Indian spice industry,

A Jayathilak, Chairman, Spices Board India, told reporters here. To a question, he said spice is the only one sector which is recession-proof as people's eating habits has not changed world over during the slowdown period.

Newer markets

Central and South America as well as African markets have emerged as the fastest growing markets for spices against the traditional US and Europe regions which are already saturated, he said.

He pointed out that 92 per cent of the target in terms of volume and 91 per cent in terms of value, set for spice exports during FY 2013-14 has been achieved.

The seed spice basket had registered 78 per cent increase in volume and 89 per cent in value compared with April-December 2012.

A total volume of 1,93,625 tonnes of seed spices valued at Rs. 1,906 crore has been exported against 1,09,067 tonnes valued at Rs. 1,008 crore in the previous year.

Jeera, the champion

Amongst the seed spices, cumin registered a prominent increase of 89 per cent in volume and 83 per cent in value with a total export volume of 96,500 tonnes valued at Rs. 1,282 crore. Mint and mint products, which includes mint oils, menthol and menthol crystals, topped the item-wise list, in terms of value, with an export turnover of Rs. 2,202 crore and 17,850 tonnes in volume. Chilli netted a foreign exchange worth Rs. 1,846 crore with a total export volume of 2,05,500 tonnes.

Value-added products such as spice oils and oleoresins fetched Rs. 1,242 crore by exporting 8,665 tonnes. Pepper and cardamom (small) marked an increase of 41 per cent and 23 per cent respectively in value, with a corresponding export volume of 15,350 tonnes and 2,080 tonnes. The exports of pepper and cardamom (small) were valued at Rs. 651 crore and Rs. 164 crore respectively.

Out of the total exports, the contribution of organic spices is less than two per cent. Considering it as a vast area to develop, the Chairman said that the Board is promoting branding of organic spices as well as encouraging organic farming with a buy-back arrangement from farmers.

Cane planting likely to fall 10-15% in UP

Cane arrears of UP mills during 2013-14 season

Sector	Value of Cane		Payment Due (1)	Payment Made (2)	Arrears (1-2)
	SAP*	SAP**			
Private	14,805.08	13,735.33	12,158.38	4,686.58	7,471.80
Cooperative	1,631.50	1,514.37	1,350.12	795.05	555.07
State Govt	67.30	62.46	55.01	45.24	9.77
Total	16,503.89	15,312.16	13,563.52	5526.87	8036.65

Position as on March 24; *At Rs 280/quintal; **At Rs 260/quintal payable as first instalment.

Shamli, March 27: With official cane payment arrears of mills in Uttar Pradesh (UP) crossing Rs. 8,000 crore – the actual figure may be a couple of thousand crores more – farmers here are in no mood to take up plantings for the next crushing season.

A cross-section of growers whom *Business Line* spoke to in Baghpat, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Saharanpur and Bijnor – all in the western UP cane heartland – indicated they would plant 10-15 per cent less area relative to last year.

Cane plantings in UP happen during March-May, with harvesting taking place after about 11 months the following February-April. The same plant-cane also yields a 'ratoon', automatically sprouting from its root stubbles and ready for crushing after 9-10 months. Lower plantings this time would, in other words, impact sugar output not only for 2014-15 (October-September) but also the season after that.

The basmati option

"Last year, I planted cane in my entire 40 *bighas* (one acre is 4.75 *bighas*). This year, I am only doing 32 *bighas*," said Jitender Singh Hooda.

In the remaining eight *bighas*, this farmer from Kheri Bairagi village in Shamli tehsil has already undertaken nursery bed sowing of Pusa-1509, a new high-yielding short-duration basmati variety maturing within 90 days of transplanting.

"I can harvest this by mid-July and then go for a regular Pusa Basmati-1 crop for transplanting towards the month-end. I hope the experiment will succeed," noted Hooda. He isn't the only one. "There is 25 per cent less cane planting in our area. Many of us are growing Saathi (a 60-day coarse rice) and Pusa-1121 basmati after that," informed Vilayat Khan, who farms 30 *bighas* at Butrada village in the same tehsil.

Fodder and poplar

Chhatrapal Singh, a 95- *bigha* farmer of Bahsuma in Meerut's Mawana tehsil, reckoned cane acreage to be 20 per cent less this year.

"I have set aside 20 *bighas* to grow jowar (sorghum), *makka* (maize) and bajra (pearl-millet) only for fodder. I will follow this with Pusa Basmati," he stated.

In Muzaffarnagar and Saharanpur, many farmers are also taking to planting of poplar trees that mature in five years and have a ready market in the plywood industry around this belt.

"This year, I have planted poplar in two out of my 10 *bighas*. If the situation in cane does not improve, I may go for another two *bighas* next year," said Dharmender Kumar from Nagla Pithora in Muzaffarnagar.

Payment woes

All this diversion is due to sugar mills owing huge cane payment arrears to farmers. UP factories have till now bought over Rs. 16,500 crore worth of cane, based on the State Advised Price (SAP) of Rs. 280 a quintal for the 2013-14 season.

As against this, they have made actual payments of about Rs. 5,500 crore, leaving outstandings of almost Rs. 11,000 crore, not counting the Rs. 213-crore dues of the previous season.

The cane arrears are lower if only the cane value based on the first instalment of Rs. 260/quintal is taken. The UP Government has allowed mills to pay this rate within 14 days of taking cane delivery and settle the balance Rs. 20 before the end of crushing operations by early-May.

"I got my last payment on May 5, 2013," complained Satvir Singh Panwar, who jointly cultivates 200*bighas* with his three brothers at Shabga in Baghpat's Baraot tehsil and supplies to the UK Modi Group-owned Malakpur mill.

Panwar, however, admitted that replacing cane isn't easy. "Cane fits into our crop cycle very well, as the tops yield fodder for our buffaloes between the time wheat is sown in December and harvested in April," he explained.

Besides, western UP has a serious problem of *nilgai* (Asian antelope) and wild boar attacks, making raising other crops, especially pulses and vegetables, difficult.

"They will destroy these crops in minutes. Sugarcane is hardy, while being *ola* (hail), *pala* (frost), *aag*(fire), *paani* (water) and *nilgai* -proof. I don't see cane area falling beyond 10 per cent even this time," Panwar added.

Business Standard

India targeting spices exports of \$2.3 bn in FY14

With global demand for [spices](#) and spices products rising, India is targeting [exports](#) of \$2.3 billion in 2013-14 fiscal even as Rs 9,433 crore worth spices were shipped during April-December last year.

The total volume of spices and spices products exported in the nine month period of April-December 2013 was 5,71,680 tonnes, valued at Rs 9,433 crore, a 41 per cent growth in rupee terms and 27 per cent both in volume and [Dollar](#) terms.

During the same period of previous fiscal, as much as 4,49,926 tonnes valued at Rs 6,696 crore (\$1232 million) was exported, Spices Board chairman [A Jayathilak](#) told reporters here last night. For 2014-15 fiscal also the board was targeting spices exports of \$2.3 billion, he said.

With Organic spices accounting for only less than 2 per cent in the export basket, the Board

would give thrust in this regard, especially in the North eastern region, he said, adding it has vast potential.

Sugar output seen jumping as subsidy boosts exports

[Sugar output](#) in India, the world's largest producer after [Brazil](#), is set to climb for the first time in three years as a [subsidy](#) for raw [exports](#) and abundant dam water spur [farmers](#) to increase planting.

Production may gain 5 percent to 25 million metric tons in the harvesting season starting October 1, said M G Joshi, managing director of the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Ltd., which accounts for 48 percent of the national output. The area under the crop will increase in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, the biggest growers, he said.

Prospects for higher Indian output may halt a rally in raw-sugar futures in New York and extend a global glut into a fifth year. A bigger Indian harvest will boost exports of subsidized raw sweetener, bridging any potential decline in supplies from Brazil due to dry weather.

"Farmers are opting for cane even if they are getting lower prices this year as there is assured demand and return for the crop," said Sanjeev Babar, managing director of Maharashtra State Cooperative Sugar Factories Federation, which represents 173 mills. "Reservoirs are full and good rainfall last year has improved moisture in soil."

India announced a cash subsidy for exports of as much as 4 million tons over two years and interest-free loans to mills to allow them pay arrears to farmers. Producers including Bajaj Hindusthan Ltd. and Shree Renuka Sugars Ltd. are betting on exports to prevent stockpiles expanding from a five-year high.

Competitive Crop

Farmers will stick with cane as no other crop is as competitive, according to Avdhesh Mishra, president of the Cane Committees' Association, a grouping of farmers. Even if payments are delayed, farmers know that mills will clear the dues, he said by phone from Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh yesterday.

Cane production in Maharashtra will probably jump 26 percent to 85 million tons in 2014-2015, Babar said. Sugar output may climb 17 percent to 9 million tons if the monsoon is normal, he said. Farmers planted the crop on 565,000 hectares as of March 19, compared with 482,000 hectares a year earlier, Agriculture Ministry data showed. The area in Uttar Pradesh was little changed at 1.22 million hectares, the data show.

"There is a turnaround in domestic sentiments after the government decided to subsidize exports of raw sugar and a downward revision in output" this year, said Sudha Acharya, a senior analyst with Kotak Commodity Services Ltd. in Mumbai. "The increased demand for summer also pushed up prices. Besides, the global rally in prices due to weather woes in Brazil helped Indian sentiments."

Rising Exports

Shipments from India may total about 2 million tons in the 12 months through September, Acharya said. Exports totaled 1.3 million tons between October and February, compared with full-year sales of 345,000 tons in 2012-2013, according to the Indian Sugar Mills Association.

Futures in New York rallied 14 percent in February, the biggest monthly advance since June 2011. The contract for May delivery rose 2.3 percent to 17.36 cents on ICE Futures U.S. yesterday. Futures in Mumbai climbed to 3,104 rupees (\$52) per 100 kilograms today, the highest since August.

Monsoon rainfall was the highest since 2007 last year, boosting water levels in the nation's reservoirs, the India Meteorological Department estimates. Water levels are 24 percent above last year, according to water resources ministry data.

Ruchi Soya expects sunflower oil imports to hit record high

India's [sunflower oil](#) imports are likely to jump 54% to a record high in the year to October 2014 as the world's biggest edible oil importer trims [palm oil](#) purchases to make room for the soft oil, said Dinesh Shahra, managing director of [Ruchi Soya](#) Industries Ltd.

The rise in sunflower oil imports would provide support to prices that are under pressure due to a record crop in top producer Ukraine, but will cap palm oil prices that have risen in the last two months on a likely drop in production in top two producing countries.

"We are expecting palm oil imports would drop significantly to around 7.4 million tonnes from 8.17 million tonne last year due to price spreads in favour of soft oils," Managing Director of the country's biggest edible oil buyer said.

India is likely to buy 1.45 million tonne sunflower oil in 2013/14, higher than the previous record purchase of 1.1 million tonne in 2011/12, Shahra said. India imports most of its sunflower oil from Ukraine and palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia.

The country's total edible oil imports are set to rise by 4% in 2013/14 to 10.8 million tonne due to higher imports of soft oils like sunflower and soyoil, he said.

The price gap between crude palm oil and crude sunflower oil narrowed to \$47 per tonne in February, compared with \$430 per tonne during the same period last year, according data compiled by Solvent Extractors Association.

Sugar up 0.6% on seasonal demand

Buoyed by summer season demand from bulk consumers and lower output reports, [sugar](#) prices rose by 0.67% to Rs 3,151 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators enlarged positions.

At the [National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange](#), sugar for delivery in May added Rs 21, or 0.67% to Rs 3,151 per quintal with an open interest of 41,590 lots.

Also, the sweetener for delivery in April gained Rs 20, or 0.65% to Rs 3,066 per quintal in 33,400 lots.

Analysts attributed the persistent rise in sugar prices at futures trade to increased offtake by bulk consumers, driven by beginning of summer season.

Potato up 0.6% on spot demand

[Potato](#) prices gained 0.60% to Rs 1,198.40 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators created fresh positions, driven by pick-up in demand in the spot market.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), potato for delivery in March gained Rs 7.20, or 0.60% to Rs 1198.40 per quintal in business turnover of 8 lots.

Potato for delivery in April also edged up by Rs 2.50, or 0.20% to Rs 1,233.80 per quintal in 40 lots.

Analysts said speculators created fresh positions as demand in the spot market picked-up amid restricted arrivals from producing regions that mainly led to rise in potato prices at futures trade.

Refined soya oil up 0.5% as demand picks up

Amid pick-up in domestic demand, [refined soya oil](#) prices rose 0.52% at Rs 698 per 10 kg in futures trading today as speculators created fresh positions.

At the [National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange](#), refined soya oil for delivery in May rose Rs 3.60, or 0.52%, to Rs 698 per 10 kg with an open interest of 1,20,370 lots.

Similarly, the oil for delivery in April moved up by Rs 2.80, or 0.40%, to Rs 708.05 per 10 kg in 76,770 lots.

Analysts said speculators created fresh positions following rising demand in the spot market that mainly influenced refined soya oil prices at futures trade.

Cardamom up 1% on strong demand

Amid strong domestic and export demand, [cardamom](#) prices rose by 1.02% to Rs 882.80 per kg in futures trade today as speculators created fresh positions.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), cardamom for delivery in May rose by Rs 8.90, or 1.02% to Rs 882.80 per kg in a business turnover of 254 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in April traded higher by Rs 4.70, or 0.54% to Rs 868.80 per kg in 605 lots.

Analysts said fresh positions built-up by speculators on the back strong domestic and export demand in the spot market against restricted arrivals from growing regions, mainly led to rise in cardamom prices at futures trade.

Palm oil down 0.1% on profit-booking

[Crude palm oil](#) prices fell 0.17% to Rs 575 per 10 kg in futures market today as speculators booked profits at prevailing levels amid sluggish demand in the spot market.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), crude palm oil for delivery in March declined by Rs 1, or 0.17% to Rs 575 per kg in business turnover of 58 lots.

However, the oil for delivery in April held steady at Rs 576.30 per 10 kg in 78 lots.

Analysts said besides profit-booking by speculators at existing levels, sluggish demand in the spot market mainly influenced crude palm oil futures prices.
