

Agri Centre gets ISO certification

For the first time, a block-level agricultural extension centre in the district has been awarded ISO 9001:2008 certification.

Joint Director for Agriculture Jaisingh Gnanadurai said here on Thursday that the extension centre, functioning in Kalligudi block, had been awarded the certification after a systematic assessment done by Tiruchi-based TVE Certification Services. The centre caters to 20,939 farmers in 47 villages in the block. It sells agricultural seeds, bio-fertilizers, and provides technical expertise to farmers.

Farmers urge action against Arcelor Mittal

Land losers, from Veni Veerapur, Kuditini, Haraginadoni, Kolagallu, Yerangali and surrounding villages, have urged the Deputy Commissioner not to allow Arcelor Mittal and Brahmini Steels to fence the land allotted to them for setting up industries.

The land losers, mostly farmers, in a memorandum said that these two companies were yet to implement their assurances to set right the injustice meted out to the farmers regarding compensation.

This assurance was given at a meeting held at Bangalore in the last week of February in which elected representatives, officials, farmers and company representatives were present.

Meanwhile, these companies were going ahead with fencing around the land allotted to them. All the required materials for fencing had been stocked, which according to the land losers amounted to breach of trust.

While urging the Deputy Commissioner to intervene in the matter and get them adequate compensation, the land losers have requested him to stop the fencing work until the demands were met.

Managing the monsoon

Aberrations in monsoon behaviour are not uncommon. What is new is the difficulty in forecasting caused by factors coming under the generic title, 'Climate change.'

Forecasts by the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum and the India Meteorological Department indicate that the south-west monsoon rainfall may be deficient. Also, there is a possibility of the evolution of an El Niño event during June to September. There is a 45 per cent probability that central, west, north-west and south India will receive below normal rainfall. There is also a 40 per cent chance that eastern States like Odisha, West Bengal, the north-east, and most of Jammu and Kashmir may get normal rains during the south-west monsoon period. Paddy arrivals in the market are also sluggish, indicating that actual production is either lower than the estimated production of 107 million tonnes of rice, or that some of the stocks is being held back in the anticipation of a higher price.

Enhancing water security: In the current scenario of climate change, predictions of extreme weather events are becoming difficult. In March-April this year, we had unexpected hailstorms and heavy rainfall in parts of central and north-west India. Outside India also, most of California is experiencing extreme drought with storage levels in the major reservoirs as well as lakes well below historic levels. Australia experienced what has been described as the Millennium drought which led to the growth of water markets and to renewed emphasis on water security measures.

In India, unlike in the United States and Australia, agriculture is not just a food producing enterprise but also the backbone of the livelihood security of nearly 60 per cent of the population. Therefore, there is no time to relax in the area of taking anticipatory steps to safeguard food, water, energy and livelihood security in rural India, in the event of an erratic monsoon. We should initiate proactive steps immediately to ensure food and drinking water security for not only people but also for the over one billion farm animal population. Aberrations in monsoon behaviour are not uncommon, having been with us throughout our agricultural history. What is new is the difficulty in forecasting caused by factors coming under the generic title, "Climate change."

The recent report of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change has warned of higher mean temperatures and a rise in sea level if we do not take action on cutting down greenhouse gas emissions. The low carbon pathway of development still remains a topic for academic discussion rather than for political and practical action. International prices of food and other agricultural commodities tend to remain volatile. The right to food enshrined in the National Food Security Act can be implemented only with the help of our farmers, unlike the right to information which can be implemented with the help of files. Right now, the government has enough stock to fulfil the legal obligation of providing 5 kg of wheat, rice or millets per month to nearly 75 per cent of our population. With one widespread drought, the current food stocks may disappear. Even this year, market arrivals of paddy have been as low as 42 per cent in West Bengal, 34 per cent in Bihar and 23 per cent in Odisha. Hence, there is no time to relax in the areas of food production and safe storage

Need for a grain storage policy: Fortunately, we still have a large untapped production reservoir in most foodgrains even with technologies available on the shelf. What is important is the mobilisation of group endeavour among farm families with small holdings in areas such as plant protection, water harvesting and post-harvest technologies. The new government must accord priority to both water security and water use efficiency. Water harvesting in homes, farms and factories must become mandatory. Tamil Nadu has already initiated steps in this direction. The rain-cum-solar energy centre functioning in Chennai is a source of credible public information on rainwater harvesting and solar energy use. Such centres need to be replicated in all our cities, towns and block headquarters.

The latest technologies for using the available water in the most efficient manner possible should be adopted. On fertilizer use efficiency, there are technologies such as those developed by the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) in the U.S. which can help improve the efficiency of urea use by about 50 per cent. Methods of managing the triple alliance of pests, pathogens and weeds must be popularised.

Besides causing food and water shortage, deficient rainfall adds to the problem of energy shortage. In every calamity lies an opportunity for progress. Harvesting of the sun in homes, offices, fields and factories should also become mandatory; it can help increase energy supply in rural and urban areas. At the post-harvest stage, a national grain storage policy with these three components must be adopted — we should promote the use of small storage bins, like the Pusa Bin, at the farm level. Second, we should implement the rural godown scheme for safe storage of foodgrains and perishable commodities at the village level. Such a rural godown scheme was introduced as early as 1979, but the programme has yet to take off in a manner that can make a difference to preventing the loss of food items at the village/block levels. Third, we should establish a national grid of ultramodern foodgrain silos in at least 50 locations in the country, each capable of storing about a million tonnes. Unfortunately, there is still a mismatch between production and post-harvest technologies, with producers and consumers unable to get the full benefit of higher production.

For the food and water security of farm animals, we need to earmark potential areas for establishing cattle camps where the animals can be looked after during a drought emergency. These camps should have access to water. A suggestion I had made over three decades ago that we should identify and establish groundwater sanctuaries at appropriate places is yet to be implemented. These are concealed aquifers which should be tapped only when absolutely essential. Like a wildlife sanctuary, they should be protected from exploitation. The establishment of such sanctuaries — at least one each in the 130 agroclimatic zones generally identified in our country — will help us to save precious cattle and other farm animals, both from distress sale and starvation deaths.

Coarse cereals and food security: As the speaker in the “Sardar Patel Memorial lecture” series on All India Radio, which I delivered in 1973, I had suggested that we should develop drought, flood and good weather codes to minimise the adverse impact of unfavourable monsoons and to maximise production in a good monsoon year. The drought code consists of a series of dos and don'ts during deficient rainfall. As in the case of drought and flood codes,

seed banks consisting of seeds of alternative crops should be maintained. Seed reserves are as important for crop security as grain reserves are important for food security. For example, during the recent and severe drought in California, it was found that some of the earlier crops like millets had survived with a reasonable yield, while wheat or rice could not withstand the severe drought.

Fortunately in our National Food Security Act, there is provision to procure and supply under the Public Distribution System, local grains like ragi, bajra, jowar and a whole series of minor millets. Since such crops require milling, they have been referred to as coarse cereals. They should be referred to as climate smart nutri cereals. They are now being provided at Rs.1 per kg — an extremely attractive price from the point of view of resource poor consumers. Such underutilised crops are now known to be rich in macro and micronutrients and could help in the fight against protein hunger caused by the deficiency of protein in diets and hidden hunger caused by the deficiency of micronutrients such as iron, iodine, zinc, Vitamin A and Vitamin B. If the Food Security Act is backed by a nutrition literacy movement, the demand for climate smart nutri-cereals will grow. This will help in promoting the cultivation of crops which may do better under drought conditions.

Toward climate smart farming: In each of the major agroclimatic zones, at least two members (a woman and a man) of every panchayat or local body should be trained to be climate risk managers. They can help the rest of the community in implementing the provisions of the proposed drought, flood and good weather codes. The government has recently introduced a national policy on agroforestry. Agroforestry combines the benefits of carbon sequestration and local food security. The inclusion of fertilizer trees in agroforestry systems can help build soil carbon banks.

This year is the International Year of Family Farming. Family farming is both a way of life and a means to livelihood. India has probably the largest number of family farmers. Our aim should be to make every family farm a climate smart farm, equipped with the knowledge and technologies essential to manage the expected El Niño triggered adverse rainfall conditions.

(Prof. M.S. Swaminathan is founder chairman and chief mentor, UNESCO Chair in Ecotechnology, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai, and former Member of the Rajya Sabha.)

Sour turn in India-EU trade

The ban imposed by the European Union on the import of Alphonso mangoes and four varieties of vegetables from India until December 2015 after some consignments were found infested with “non-European fruit flies” has naturally upset India. As the biggest producer of the golden fruit, India sends about 70,000 tonnes of mangoes abroad every year. Yet, merely insisting that the 28-member bloc’s action is “unilateral... without any meaningful official consultation,” as Commerce Minister Anand Sharma has done, will not do. The EU had notified India in March of its concerns. Whether the Agricultural and Processed Food

Products Export Development Authority, which is tasked with ensuring that items of export are compliant in terms of sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards as set down by importing countries, was able to fully address them effectively, remains unclear. It is also to be noted that scores of consignments of mangoes and vegetables shipped in 2013 had been found to be contaminated. Periodic problems that come up with respect to shrimp exports over contamination concerns, are relevant here. India certainly needs to put in place fool-proof mechanisms for the examination and certification of export commodities to remove such taints once and for all. Necessary correctives need to be worked out with the involvement of technical and scientific bodies in order that in the lucrative but competitive export markets the country would establish its reputation as a reliable partner meeting health and phyto-sanitary standards.

On its part, the EU should ensure that any cause for a perception of its decision being an unfair one which smacks of a punitive approach and that would potentially jeopardise India-EU trade, is avoided. As the Minister has pointed out, the ongoing negotiations for a broad-based India-EU trade and investment agreement is based on the premise of trust and understanding to put in place a more liberal trade regime. Brussels should note Indian domestic concerns and invoke the necessary correctives on the basis of an appropriate assessment of risks. If it is indeed possible that sections of the EU bureaucracy see here a leveraging factor in the context of talks on a Free Trade Agreement, as also other bilateral issues, that will amount to unfairness. Although Europe is not a major market for Indian mangoes — it accounts for 16 million tonnes annually — any ban typically pulls down prices. About 80 per cent of the exports from India go to West Asia. What India should do is to strengthen its bargaining position by raising export standards and leave no quarter to be found remiss. The entire ecosystem for exports, involving farmers, packers and exporters of agri-commodities, should be geared to meet the quality and safety requirements of countries across the world.

A silent killer that's not an election issue



The problem of kerosene and biomass use, which kills millions of Indians at home each year, is being shamefully neglected

In March, the World Health Organization released its latest study which estimated a total of 7 million deaths worldwide in 2012 caused by exposure to air pollution — one in eight of all global deaths. Indoor air pollution was linked to 4.3 million of the deaths that occurred in homes which depend on biomass or coal for cooking.

In August 1997, on the eve of India celebrating 50 years of independence, the Energy and Resources Institute, in a

detailed study assessing the country's record of environmental protection and conservation of natural resources during that period, found that a total of 2.5 million premature deaths took place in 1997 alone as a result of air pollution, both indoor and outdoor. The majority of these were caused by pollution indoors that stemmed from cooking on inefficient cookstoves burning largely inferior forms of biomass. India is currently voting in its general election – the world's largest democracy began voting on 7 April and finishes on 12 May – but if the record of previous governments is any indication, environmental issues are unlikely to be a priority. There is, no doubt, a credible framework of legislation in place in India to support any attention given to environmental issues, but the institutions and processes that translate intent into action remain weak and ineffective.

(On the subject of climate change, the government announced its a national action plan in 2008, the provisions and contents of which were put together over the following two years in a rigorous exercise involving governments of all states, members of civil society and various thinktanks. However, the implementation of the plan remains far below stated targets and goals.) Apart from the serious and widespread problems of water pollution – both on the surface and below the ground – erosion and degradation of soil, and loss of forest density and biodiversity, the problem of air pollution in several parts of the country is alarming. While outdoor air pollution gets some attention from the public and decision-makers, indoor air pollution, which afflicts at least two-thirds of Indian homes, remains neglected.

More than 300 million people in India have no access to electricity, and those that do still do not have a stable supply. As a result, kerosene lamps and candles are used widely in many Indian homes, with high levels of air pollution affecting hundreds of millions. Women and children are particularly vulnerable because they spend more time at home. Perhaps even more serious is the dependence of around 700 million people on the burning of biomass in their homes, using inefficient stoves that emit large quantities of smoke, leading to high doses of air pollution. Fortunately, some solutions have been devised. As part of its Lighting a Billion Lights campaign, the Energy and Resources Institute has reached almost 3,000 villages in India and Africa, introducing the decentralised use of photovoltaic panels. An important aspect of this campaign is that a local female entrepreneur is trained to set up a central charging station in a village using solar panels on roofs. She charges lightweight, LED solar lanterns, with a socket for charging mobile phones. After charging the lanterns for the whole village in the daytime, she rents them out at night. This provides the entire village with clean, efficient and reliable lighting, based on a sustainable, market-oriented model. Similar programmes have been launched with improved stoves in a large number of villages, reducing indoor air pollution drastically.

Unfortunately, elected governments in India have largely failed to come to grips with the problem of indoor air pollution, and those campaigning in the ongoing election show scant understanding of this pervasive problem. With irrational subsidies on kerosene, the transition to cleaner fuels in many Indian homes may, therefore, remain slow. Fortunately, with falling solar power prices and the demonstrated success of the Lighting a Billion Lights campaign, many NGOs and even the private sector are now emulating the lights model. This promises well for the future.

Hassan farmers prefer growing ginger over potato this year

The area under potato cultivation in Hassan district may decrease this year , as many farmers find ginger more beneficial, considering the monsoon forecast of less than normal rainfall in June. Hundreds of farmers, who cultivated potato last year, have already opted for ginger this year.

Last year, potato was cultivated in 21.5 ha in the district. This year, 27,000 tonnes of seed potatoes have already reached cold storage centres in Hassan.

The seed potatoes available in go-downs are enough for cultivation in 20,000 ha. According to Horticulture Department officials, last year, ginger was cultivated in about 8,000 ha. This year, it might go up to 12,000 ha. “The major factor attracting farmers towards ginger is the price. Ginger growers have got, by and large, a good price throughout the year. In the case of potato, however, they are not sure of good yield, given the monsoon forecast,” Shakeel Ahmed, Deputy Director of Horticulture Department, said on Wednesday. The Horticulture Department, based on suggestions from scientists, has resolved that the best time for sowing potato seeds is between May 15 and June 15. “Potato growers are worried over the yield, in the view of the poor monsoon forecast.

Those without irrigation facilities are more anxious,” the official said.

Many borewells have gone dry due to drought in the last two years.

Besides these factors, farmers are worried about blight that could attack their crop.

The district administration will make arrangements to sell seed potatoes to farmers in the first week of May.

However, it has not taken a decision on fixing price for seed potatoes.

The election code of conduct has come in the way of holding meetings with elected representatives, as both Deputy Commissioner V. Anbukumar, who is the Returning Officer, and Shakeel Ahmed, who is an Assistant Returning Officer, cannot attend such meetings.

Dr. Ahmed said that seed potatoes transported from Punjab were not certified. However, this time, about 5,000 quintals of certified seeds are available. “Certified seeds are available in Hubli. If any farmer is interested in purchasing certified seeds, the department will help him procure them,” he said.

Haryana procures nearly 56 lakh tonnes of wheat

Nearly 56 lakh tonnes of wheat has so far arrived in various mandis of Haryana during the current procurement season.

The government agencies have procured 55.57 lakh tonnes of wheat, a Food and Supplies Department spokesperson said.

HAFED has purchased highest 20.53 lakh tonnes of wheat followed by 15.85 lakh tonnes procured by Food and Supplies Department, he added.

Similarly, Agro Industries Corporation has bought 4.96 lakh tonnes, Haryana Warehousing Corporation 5.62 lakh tonnes, CONFED 1.38 lakh tonnes and Food Corporation of India 7.22 lakh tonnes during the current procurement season.

The maximum wheat arrived in the mandis of district Sirsa at 7.72 lakh tonnes, followed by Karnal with 6.11 lakh tonnes. PTI

Organic mango mela in Bangalore

Naturally ripened mangoes grown in certified organic orchards have arrived in the city, much to the delight of mango lovers.

Organic varieties Badami, Raspuri, Mallika and Banganapalli, sourced from Hospet in Bellary, have been brought by the Jaivik Krishik Society for the organic mango mela. The mela was inaugurated by nutritionist H.S. Prema at Jaivik Krishik Mall in Lalbagh Botanical Gardens on Thursday. Over 1.5 tonnes of organic mangoes are on sale at the mela. Traditional favourites Alphonso, Sendura and Daseri are expected to arrive in the coming weeks. While Raspuri and Banganapalli are sold at Rs. 80 per kg, Mallika and Badami are priced at Rs. 90 and Rs. 120 a kg respectively.

G.U. Harish, manager of Jaivik Krishi Mall, said that the price of organic mangoes had increased by about 20 to 30 per cent over the last year.

Organic mangoes are being sold in Jaivik malls at Lalbagh Botanical Gardens; AECS Layout in Ashwathnagar; MEG Layout in Nandini Layout; and Banashankari 2nd Stage. For details, call 9986083656.

Delay in mango arrivals puts traders on the edge



Mango season is yet to begin this year due to erratic monsoon and adverse climatic conditions. Normally, mangoes flood the market in April and the arrivals peak in May.

Traders are a worried lot as fruit arrivals have not begun though May started. Bethamcharla, Veldurthi, Orvakal and Dhone mandals are the mang-growing areas in the district.

The fruit grown in Kurnool district was considered superior quality, while Banginapalli has origins in Kurnool district.

Rama Swamy, a long-standing mango dealer, told *The Hindu* that flowering and flush have given hope and enthusiasm to farmers and traders.

Flowering is considered the basis for auctioning the mango crop.

Traders lease the orchards after assessing the flowering and possible yield. But the bloom initially misled the traders this year.

The high temperatures and untimely rains caused a severe damage to the orchards. The high temperatures caused water stress for the trees during the peak flush season.

Mr. Rama Swamy said the season was likely to start in the first week and end by June this year. The prices are also expected to rule high this year.

The arrivals were not more than 20 to 30 tonnes while during the peak season they are around 200 tonnes per day in the Kurnool market. Most of the crop harvested in Kurnool district is directed to the Hyderabad market.

WATER LEVEL

madurai

The water level in Periyar dam stood at 109.60 feet on Thursday with an inflow of 285 cusecs and discharge of 100 cusecs.

The level in Vaigai dam was 22.24 feet with no inflow and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 369 mcft.

The amount of rainfall recorded (in mm) during the 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Thursday: Periyar 80 , Thekkady 69 Gudalur 11, Shanmuganadhi 6, Uthamapalayam 22, Veerapandi 32, Vaigai dam 4, Manjalaru 4, Sothuparai 14, Peranai 12, Kuppanampatti 2, Andipatti 41.8, Madurai 60, Sathayar dam 43.2, Mettupatti 73, Kallandiri 2, Chittampatti 17.6, Pulipatti 3, Melur 13.8, Thaniyamangalam 25.5, Idayapatti 10 and Viraganoor 31.5.

TIRUNELVELI


The water level in the Papanasam Dam on Thursday stood at 33.75 feet. The dam had an inflow of 3.24 cusecs and 104.75 cusecs of water was discharged.

The level of Manimuthar Dam stood at 63.16 feet. The dam had an inflow of 11 cusecs and 200 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam.

Kanyakumari

The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 15.85 feet, 37.25 feet in Perunchani, 3.28 feet in Chittar I, 3.38 feet in Chittar II, 1.70 feet in Poigai and 41.17 feet in Mamabazhathuraiyar.

Chennai - INDIA




Sunny

Friday, May 2
 Max 33° | Min 28°

Rain: 0
 Humidity: 75
 Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:47
 Sunset: 06:24
 Barometer: 1008






Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Saturday, May 3
 Max 37° | Min 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday May 4	Monday May 5	Tuesday May 6	Wednesday May 7	Thursday May 8
				
36° 27° Partly Cloudy	35° 27° Partly Cloudy	35° 27° Partly Cloudy	35° 27° Partly Cloudy	35° 27° Partly Cloudy

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Tea volume increases at Coonoor auction

The leaf and dust auctions at the Coonoor Tea Trade Association will be held on Friday. This is the third consecutive week when both the auctions are being held on a single day – last week due to elections and the previous week due to Good Friday, the auctions were held on a single day.

A volume of 13.17 lakh kg is being offered for Sale No: 18 to be held on Friday. This is as much as 2.76 lakh kg more than last week.

Of this, a volume of 8.51 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 4.66 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades. As much as 12.17 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only one lakh kg, orthodox variety. In the leaf counter, 0.53 lakh kg make up orthodox and 7.98 lakh kg CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.47 lakh kg account for orthodox, while CTC 4.19 lakh kg.

A volume of 1.74 lakh kg of teas unsold in previous weeks is being re-offered this week.

In the leaf auction last week, among corporate buyers, Hindustan Unilever Ltd and Tata Global Beverages Ltd bought good medium varieties. In the Dust auction, Indcoserve showed some interest on smaller grades. There was fair demand for brighter liquoring teas from upcountry buyers. Overall, internal buyers were less active. Exporters chose mostly plainer grades. The prices averaged Rs. 78.17 against Rs. 73.32/kg in the previous week.

Academic apathy towards commodity markets

There has been less than essential attention to research on commodity derivative markets in India. The cream of the academic community has ignored this market, resulting in quality of research being way below international standards.

As a result, while academic research has progressed substantially in India in other domains of economics and finance, there has hardly been a paper published in a top-tier journal by an academician from an Indian institution on commodity economics.

Trained financial economists, somehow, feel that Indian commodity markets are afflicted with fewer complexities of institutional structures, low depths, comparatively simpler and lesser number of traded instruments, too many regulations, and few product innovations.

These do not really render much potential for publication in international finance journals.

Therefore, often policy questions on Indian financial markets are dealt with through subjective perceptions and some initial findings based on overtly simplistic mathematics without really delving into the crux, complexity, and theory underlying the problem.

Research on commodity derivative market in India dates back to the 1930s, with research on cotton futures market in Mumbai by Prof ML Dantwala. In the 1960s, Venkataraman published his book on the theory of futures trading. At around the same time, a host of

articles and books were published on commodity derivatives markets in India, authored by Pavaskar.

Regional Concentration

Most of this research was concentrated in the western part of the country. This is because of the existence of the buoyant commodity derivatives markets along with knowledgeable traders in the Mumbai-Ahmedabad belt – presenting a “lethal” combination of attraction for researchers in the western part of the country.

The erstwhile nature of the research remains significant even today, considering the historical documentation of the working of the markets.

They reveal hard work in the collection and analysis of field-level data, sound knowledge of the markets, and simple expositions revealing a very high teaching content.

No doubt that the “masters” of yore in western India knew their subject and would make it understandable to the general public with utmost ease.

However, there is doubt if such research, mostly published in non-peer reviewed mediums, would have qualified for publication in top international journals of today, where publication has to comply with a certain standard of quantitative rigour.

Unlike the universities and institutions in Delhi (or even Kolkata), economics programmes in many other parts of the country realised the need for rigorous quantitative tools such as applied mathematics, and econometrics much later. The rigour of research in DSE or ISI were so very competitive and comparable with the US universities that George Akerlof visited ISI Delhi in the 1960s and conducted his research on the “Market for ‘Lemons’” that was supposed to fetch him the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2001.

However, that did not help in creating much interest about research on the dynamics of commodity markets in the elite Indian academia.

Drying out of Research

While commodity derivative research never really took off in Delhi, even in western India, the interest practically dried down after the 70s, triggered by the ban on commodity futures trading.

This ban was driven by the feeling that such trading was in contravention with the philosophy of socialistic pattern of development, and inflationary.

There did not seem to be any valid academic assessment to buttress such a contention. In any case, commodity research practically died in absence of a commodities derivative market.

With the revival of commodity trading through setting up of national level commodity exchanges in the new millennium, there was a renewed interest in research in this domain.

Most of these researches have borrowed the enquiry framework of the equity market without really delving into the nuances of the commodity markets.

As a result, what is taking place is way below par in both quality and quantity terms.

No doubt, there is a considerable need to promote fundamental and theoretical research for development of these markets. The immediate stakeholders – the commodity exchanges and the Government – have to play a role here.

Doctoral level fellowships should be offered jointly in the institutions and universities by the exchanges and the regulator, apart from the commissioned research projects.

Capacity building for research actually takes place at the doctoral phase, and such steps will help a long way in giving a new lease of life to commodity derivative research.

The writer is Chief Economist at Multi Commodity Exchange of India Limited. Views are personal.

How data can address food security



Global country risks, weather uncertainty, crop failure, lack of hedging instruments, increased capital costs, lack of insurance mechanisms and logistical bottlenecks are just a few of the issues that lead to volatility in prices of agricultural commodities.

This volatility, combined with a steady increase in demand for food around the world, has forced us to accept that food security is a national issue without borders.

From a food demand standpoint, two key changes are happening.

First, more people are coming out of poverty in various parts of the world, creating demand led by an associated income effect. Second, rising population is driving up demand.

On the supply front, while there have been improvements, the steadiness exhibited on the demand side has, unfortunately, seldom been complemented on the supply side. Invariably, there have also been a lot of supply shocks forcing us to face the prospect of scarcity in agricultural produce.

Land investments

To address the issue above, governments have included Food Security on their national agendas and even created sovereign funds to invest in agricultural commodities.

In my opinion, this hasn't yet provided a robust solution, as these investments thus far have mainly gone towards land ownership.

For example, the West Asian countries own considerable land in South America and in the Black Sea region. As we have observed, neither does land ownership guarantee actual supply of agricultural goods, nor is it the optimal decision for incentivising growth in production. In short, capital allocation in this manner is relatively inefficient and can easily lead to inefficient future outcomes.

Analysing data

Data analytics can solve this inefficiency problem.

A keen review of data can tell us what assets to invest in and where to invest, so that people can be secure in having food on their table and know in advance how much their meal is going to cost them.

To illustrate my point, let's take the example of bread and West Asia. While bread is a staple food in the region, wheat is barely grown in that part of the world. West Asia is a net importer of wheat, and it pays the world market prices to acquire wheat for bread production.

As the West Asia is petroleum-rich, it can afford to subsidise bread for its population.

To protect its interest in wheat, its governments have many options, including: 1) getting into long-term wheat supply agreements with a producer, like US/Russia/Ukraine, 2) buying arable land in South America to help secure wheat supply 3) owning ports and having control wheat distribution logistics. These are only some of the options at hand.

In the current time, in order to make the best choice, the region would ideally need to employ a bit of clairvoyance given the opacity inherent in this type long-term strategy planning. Barring that ability, what the region needs to do is look into critical data surrounding each of these options and make a predictive model of possible outcomes to determine which of the options is the most suitable.

In this model, the risks need to be quantified: risks associated with foreign policy decisions, for example can hurt wheat supply; yield reductions can increase prices and reduce wheat quality; improper logistics or a sudden increase of freight costs can hurt wheat purchases; and so on.

Factoring all of these risks and making an optimal decision based on myriad data inputs would be inordinately time consuming using even an expert's brain, we can agree. And yet, human decisions, supported often with only heuristics, still drive the majority of these far-reaching food policy decisions today.

Analytical output

The power afforded by data analytics, as we have seen in other areas of policy and private sectors, can help solve the food security puzzle.

In the case described above, we would take all of the data on wheat we have – historical yields, prices, protein quality, origins, freight charges, water content, and weather forecast, and generate probabilistic scenarios of where the wheat that the West Asia demands will be grown in the world with a high probability of good-yield, the best prices, and logistical advantage.

Given this analytical output, decision-making for the governments becomes easier, and it is rooted in a calculated view of the future, with a greater confidence of prudent choice for investments in wheat origination.

If we now consider the whole world as a massive multiple of the wheat and West Asian scenario just discussed, it is clear the applications of data analytics in food security planning would have corresponding, positive multiplier effects on a global scale.

We would reduce lead times, increase yields, decrease wasteful inventories, reduce volatility of prices and bring the food from the producer to the consumer in much more efficient manners.

An irony we face as a global community is that we have ample food in the world being produced, but unfortunately it still often does not reach the people who need it, or when or if it does, it is at an unaffordable price.

As we look to the future, it is clear that data analytics and smart applications of information-based decision support in this arena will help both solve the ongoing food issues we contend with as well as give us a much greater chance of achieving food security.

Rice loses steam on slack buying

Lack of buying interest pulled prices of Pusa-1121 rice varieties down while all the other aromatic and non-basmati varieties managed to maintain their previous quoted levels on Thursday.

Amit Kumar, proprietor of Ginni Rice, told *Business Line* that sluggish domestic demand coupled with easy availability of stocks is the prime reason behind the current situation of the market.

Market sentiments are low and any uptrend from here is unlikely, he said.

According to the trade experts, availability of stocks has improved but the domestic demand has failed to pick up. Bulk buyers are keeping themselves out of the market and placing orders according to their requirement only. Rice market may continue to rule around current levels and any major fluctuation is unlikely, said experts.

In the physical market, Pusa-1121 (steam) dropped by ₹200 and sold at ₹9,200, while Pusa-1121 (sela) quoted at ₹8,000, ₹300 down. Pure Basmati (raw) quoted at ₹12,450. Duplicate basmati (steam) sold at ₹7,500 a quintal.

Pusa-1121 (second wand) was at ₹7,350, Tibar at ₹6,400 while Dubar at ₹5,400 a quintal.

In the non-basmati section, Sharbati (steam) sold at ₹4,850 while Sharbati (sela) quoted at ₹4,300. Permal (raw) sold at ₹2,350, Permal (sela) at ₹2,320, PR-11 (sela) sold at ₹2,725 while PR-11 (raw) at ₹2,700. PR14 (steam) sold at ₹2,900 a quintal.

Rubber rules flat

Spot rubber closed unchanged on Thursday. The market was in a holiday mood and the National Multi Commodity Exchange was closed for May Day. Transactions were extremely low. Sheet rubber closed steady at ₹142.50 a kg, according to traders. The grade improved to ₹142 (141.50) and ₹139 (138.50) respectively, as quoted by the Rubber Board and dealers. RSS 3 (spot) weakened to ₹126.96 (127.77) at Bangkok. The

May futures slid to ¥204.8 (₹120.65) a kg on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber rates (₹/kg): RSS-4: 142.50 (142.50); RSS-5: 138 (138); Ungraded: 134 (134); ISNR 20: 131 (131) and Latex 60%: 114 (114).

Business Standard

Rice meant for poor ends up in black market



Seizure of Rs 5 lakh worth of [ration rice](#) last Sunday by the Mysore city police has unearthed black-marketing and smuggling of rice meant to be distributed to the poor and weaker sections in Mysore district.

City crime bureau staff seized 200 bags of 50 kg each from a lorry in N R Mohalla limits in the city and arrested a loader, in a joint operation along with the Food and Civil Supplies Department officials.

This led to the seizure of another 239 rice bags of 50 kg each following a raid on a godown near Old Kesare. They also seized empty gunny bags, a bag stitching machine, weighing machines and other articles. In all, the 439 bags of rice is estimated at Rs 5 lakh.

55.59 lakh MT of wheat arrives in Haryana mandis

In [Haryana](#), more than 55.59 lakh metric tonnes (MT) of [wheat](#) has so far arrived in various mandis during the current procurement season. While stating this here on Thursday, a spokesman of the Food and Supplies Department (FSD) said the government agencies have procured 55.57 lakh MT of wheat whereas, 1355 MT of wheat have been purchased by traders.

He said HAFED has purchased the highest 20.53 lakh MT of wheat followed by 15.85 lakh MT purchased by FSD. Similarly, Agro Industries Corporation has purchased 4.96 lakh MT; Haryana Warehousing Corporation 5.62 lakh MT; CONFED 1.38 lakh MT and [Food Corporation of India](#) had procured 7.22 lakh MT of wheat during current procurement season so far.

He said Sirsa district is leading in the wheat arrival, where 7.72 lakh MT of wheat has arrived in the mandis, followed by Karnal with 6.11 lakh MT.

Coriander down 0.9% on increased supply



[Coriander](#) prices moved down by 0.98% to Rs 9,354 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators offloaded positions amid increased supplies from producing regions.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, coriander for delivery in May lost Rs 98, or 0.93%, to Rs 9,354 per quintal with an open interest of 28,900 lots.

In a similar fashion, the commodity for delivery in June traded lower by Rs 83, or 0.86%, to Rs 9,587 per quintal in 35,890 lots.

Analysts said the fall in coriander prices at futures trade was mostly due to increased supplies from producing belts against lower demand.

Chana down 0.4% on sluggish demand



[Chana](#) prices fell by 0.48% to Rs 3,095 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators reducing their holdings on sluggish demand.

Adequate stocks in the physical market due to increased supplies from producing regions also put pressure on chana prices.

At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, chana for delivery in May fell by Rs 15, or 0.48%, to Rs 3,095 per quintal with an open interest of 87,240 lots.

Similarly, the commodity for delivery in June traded lower by Rs 14, or 0.44%, to Rs 3,156 per quintal in 73,830 lots.

Analysts attributed the continued fall in chana prices at futures trade to increased supplies from producing regions against sluggish demand in the spot market.

Cardamom down 0.2% on adequate supply, weak demand



[Cardamom](#) remained weak for the second day and prices fell by 0.24% to Rs 973.90 per kg in futures trade today on subdued demand in the spot market.

Besides, higher arrivals from producing belts also put pressure on cardamom prices.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), cardamom for delivery in May fell further by Rs 2.30, or 0.24%, to Rs 973.90 per kg in business turnover of 131 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in June traded lower by 90 paise, or 0.09%, to Rs 1,004.90 per kg in 65 lots.

Analysts said subdued demand in the spot market against adequate adequate supplies from producing regions mainly kept pressure on cardamom prices at futures trade.

Potato down 1% on higher supply



[Potato](#) prices fell over 1% to Rs 1,393.50 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators offloaded their positions, triggered by low demand in the spot markets.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), potato for delivery in May fell by Rs 14.20, or 1.01%, to Rs 1,393.50 per quintal in business turnover of 136 lots.

The potato for delivery in April also traded marginally lower by Re one, or 0.08%, to Rs 1,297 per quintal in 22 lots.

Analysts said fall in potato prices was mostly due to offloading of positions by speculators on low demand in the spot markets against higher supplies from producing regions.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Hybrid coconuts could bring relief to farmers

BANGALORE: Towering coconut trees that dance to the sound of the wind along the Bangalore-Mysore road, are an integral part of the lives of residents of Old Mysore. But over the past decade, they've brought farmers more pain than gain.

Farmers are plagued by the rising number of senile and diseased coconut palms, besides the scarcity of climbers to pluck coconuts, that have squeezed productivity.

Says Made Gowda, 75, a coconut farmer near Ramanagaram: "I've been a coconut farmer for more than 25 years. The income is very low, and farming requires patience as the tree takes long to mature. Moreover, it's become a formidable task managing pests and

diseases that have taken a heavy toll on the trees of late."

In such a season, a new hybrid coconut species developed by Bangalore-based DeeJay group offers hope for farmers like Gowda.

Inspired by the late Prof Antony Davis, the pioneer in coconut breeding from the US, David Lobo, DeeJay group founder, decided to try his luck with coconut breeding in 1984, on 80 hectares near Madurai in Tamil Nadu. It took six years to develop the first hybrid seedling.

Today, they've successfully developed three varieties of coconut seedlings that offer thrice the economic yield of regular trees. Lobo said the species have special qualities, like early fruition and high yield, and are also shorter. The trees, when dedicated to the production of tender coconuts, yield nearly 30% more nuts than regular coconut trees. He said more than 2 million hybrid seedlings are being produced at Madurai and Ambur in Tamil Nadu, Bailur on the West coast in Karnataka and Sanguem in Goa, with a waiting period of over a year.

DeeJay group CEO M Murali said the hybrids were developed with seed material collected from superior quality coconut palms from the Andamans, Tiptur (Karnataka), Nagercoil (Tamil Nadu) and the West coast, with characteristics that further improved productivity to the advantage of the coconut farmer.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Coriander futures down 0.98 per cent on increased supply



Coriander prices moved down by 0.98 per cent to Rs 9,354 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators offloaded positions amid increased supplies from producing regions.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, coriander for delivery in May lost Rs 98, or 0.93 per cent, to Rs 9,354 per quintal with an open interest of 28,900 lots.

In a similar fashion, the commodity for delivery in June traded lower by Rs 83, or 0.86 per cent, to Rs 9,587 per quintal in 35,890 .. lots.

Analysts said the fall in coriander prices at futures trade was mostly due to increased supplies from producing belts against lower demand.

Cardamom futures remain weak on adequate supply, weak demand



Cardamom remained weak for the second day and prices fell by 0.24 per cent to Rs 973.90 per kg in futures trade today on subdued demand in the spot market.

Besides, higher arrivals from producing belts also put pressure on cardamom prices.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in May fell further by Rs 2.30, or 0.24 per cent, to Rs 973.90 per kg in business turnover of 131 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in June traded lower by 90 paise, or 0.09 per cent, to Rs 1,004.90 per kg in 65 lots.

Analysts said subdued demand in the spot market against adequate supplies from producing regions mainly kept pressure on cardamom prices at futures trade.

Barley futures recover on short covering



Barley prices recovered by Rs 24 to Rs 1,409.50 per quintal in futures trading today following fresh buying at existing lower levels.

Marketmen said pick-up in demand and restricted supply in physical markets mainly led to the rise in futures markets.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, barley for July contract advanced by Rs 24, or 1.73 per cent, to Rs 1,409.50 per quintal, with an open interest of 490 lots.

May contract rose by Rs 12, or 0.90 per cent, to Rs 1,346 per quintal, showing an open interest of 8,650 lots.

Most active June contract also rose by same margins of Rs 12, or 0.88 per cent, at Rs 1,371 per quintal, with an open interest of 9,220 lots.

Chana futures extend losses on sluggish demand



Chana prices fell by 0.48 per cent to Rs 3,095 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators reducing their holdings on sluggish demand.

Adequate stocks in the physical market due to increased supplies from producing regions also put pressure on chana prices.

At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, chana for delivery in May fell by Rs 15, or 0.48 per cent, to Rs 3,095 per quintal with an open interest of 87,240 lots.

Similarly, the commodity for delivery in June traded lower by Rs 14, or 0.44 per cent, to Rs 3,156 per quintal in 73,830 lots.

Analysts attributed the continued fall in chana prices at futures trade to increased supplies from producing regions against sluggish demand in the spot market.

THE  NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

Farmer' Jaya Bachchan to get Compensation for Crop Damage



The name of actor-turned-politician Jaya Bachchan, who owns movable and immovable assets worth `91.65 crore, has been added to the list of ‘farmers’ who suffered loss and damages due to untimely rain and hailstorms and are to be provided compensation by the Madhya Pradesh State government.

According to officials in the district collectorate of Bhopal, Jaya owns five acres of agricultural land in Bishenkhedhi village, which falls within the municipal limit of Bhopal.

The officials stated that just like the other farmers of the village whose crops were damaged in the natural calamity here, Jaya will be given a compensation of Rs 14,000.

“Whoever has agricultural land in the villages of Bishenkhedhi, Sewaniagaud, Prempura, Chandanpura, Mendora and Mindori will be compensated as per the State government policies regarding natural calamities. The compensation is given in the name of the owner of the land and the amount will be transferred to their bank account,” an official said.

“We will start distributing the compensation cheques after May 16. The minimum amount of compensation is Rs 3,600 and the maximum amount is Rs 14,000,” the official added.

It is pertinent to mention that at least one dozen serving and retired senior bureaucrats own agricultural land near Bhopal.

The officials said that it was not their responsibility to check whether the compensation was reaching the farmers who were actually tilling the land.

Jaya’s family, including her mother and sister, resides in Bhopal.

In May 2012 while filing her nomination for the Rajya Sabha Jaya declared that she owned movable and immovable assets worth Rs 91.65 crore while her husband and Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan had fortunes to the tune of Rs 402.21 crore.

Jaya owns two vehicles, including one Rs 30-lakh Toyota Lexus, while her husband Amitabh has nine vehicles, including a Mercedes 350 worth Rs 1.35 crore, a Rolls Royce

worth Rs 3.08 crore, a Mercedes 350L worth Rs 85.63 lakh, a Porsche Cayman worth Rs 61.48 lakh and a tractor.

King of Fruits Reigns at Mela



An organic mango mela, hosted by Jaivik Krishik Society, began at Lalbagh on Thursday. Several varieties of mangoes and organically grown vegetables are on offer for those who prefer organic food. The mela will be held for as long as stocks last.

“Instead of chemical pesticides, we use neem or other such products to keep pests away and not kill them,” said Uday Kumar, a farmer participating in the mela.

Harish, who is employed with the Society, said, “We use panchagavya and jeevamrutha instead of chemicals. These consist of animal dung, powdered pulses and soil. We ripen mangoes using paddy straw.” Visitors said they are inclined towards the organic fare than what is available in markets. Farmers at the mela are expecting more footfalls this year. Rain and hailstorm reduced yield but there is good demand, they added.

Rains to Continue

Rains and thunderstorms are expected to continue in some parts of the state in the next couple of days, the Met Department said on Tuesday.

Thiruvananthapuram will have partly cloudy skies with spells of rain and thunderstorms in the next couple of days.