

LBP farmers want release of water to save crops

The Tamizhaga vivasayigal Sangam has urged the State government to fulfil the Erode district administration's demand to release six tmcft water for two wettings in the Lower Bhavani Project ayacut second-turn irrigation area that has been affected by drought.

In a resolution adopted at the Sangam's district unit meeting, chaired by its secretary T. Subbu Muthusamy, the meeting called for declaration of a major part of Tamil Nadu as drought-affected and distribution of relief to farmers and agricultural workers after proper assessment of the impact.

The association wanted Agriculture Department officials to determine prospective productivity in fields for the purposes of insurance and evaluation of drought relief in the presence of farmers.

Speakers at the meeting said the loans granted to farmers through nationalised banks and cooperative banks must be written off since cultivators had been hit hard by the continuous dry conditions and unremunerative procurement prices. Officials in the habit of preparing data "arbitrarily" must be punished, they said.

The association called upon the State government to identify all waterbodies so that encroachments can be removed and desilting done. . Feasibility of linking rivers and constructing check-dams should be explored to expand cultivable area and recharge ground water.

Steps should be initiated to deepen waterbodies and other water sources under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme 'Namakku Naame' schemes. Farmers must be permitted to utilise the dug-out soil and organic material for enhancing fertility of fields, the Sangam said.

□ *Plea to write off loans granted to farmers through nationalised and cooperative banks*

□ *Steps should be initiated to deepen waterbodies under MGNREGS*

Agricultural graduate student conference

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will conduct the second Agricultural Graduate Student Conference on ‘Sustainable Agriculture to FUEL (feed, unite, educate and lead) the future’ on May 6 and 7.

A release said that all post graduate and research scholars in agriculture and related sciences were eligible to attend the conference.

Farmers switch to Alphonso for good returns



The Alphonso mango production in Mysore district has seen a constant rise, with farmers switching over to this variety for good returns.

Unlike districts such as Belgaum and Dharwad, where Alphonso mangoes are grown in abundance, the city recently started to produce the Alphonso variety, which is known for

its distinctive flavour. The area under Alphonso cultivation has increased in the district in the last few years, according to authorities of the Horticulture Department.

Deputy Director of Horticulture H.M. Nagaraj told *The Hindu* that nearly 40 per cent of the mangoes produced in the district were of the Alphonso variety.

Besides being one of the most preferred varieties, it is bought in bulk by food processing industries for its pulp, Mr. Nagaraj explained.

Of the 3,500 hectares of land under mango cultivation in the district, Alphonso is cultivated in nearly 5,000 acres. It is primarily grown in Mysore, Hunsur and Nanjangud taluks. Bilikere, about 25 km from the city, is the largest producer of Alphonso mangoes in the district, Mr. Nagaraj said.

Under the National Horticulture Mission (NHM), farmers get a subsidy of Rs. 16,500 an acre for mango cultivation.

Reliable

The horticulture farm at Yelchanahalli near Mysore, where various kinds of mango varieties are cultivated for demonstration purpose, produces nearly 40,000 mango saplings a year for distribution among interested farmers. “Farmers can buy saplings either from our farm or from nurseries run by private agencies. But, according to a government directive farmers must buy sapling only from approved nurseries to avail themselves of subsidy from the government,” he said.

On the recent trend of farmers switching to Alphonso variety, Mr. Nagaraj said replacing old varieties with new ones was a painstaking procedure.

However, he said the vagaries of weather have hit mango production and the output was lower this year.

Lack of rain

Krishnappa (68), a mango grower from D.M.G. Halli, said the mango trees in his two-acre plantation were withering due to lack of rainfall in the last two years.

Until 2011, his orchards produced about six tonnes of mango a season. The 35-year-old mango trees produced two tonnes. Mr. Krishnappa and several other farmers in the village market their produce in ‘mandis’ or to HOPCOMS.

Mango production has taken a beating owing to successive drought. The fruit size has reduced and the yield is low this year, he said.

Export quality

Farmers like Krishnappa stress the need for growers to form an association that protects their interests besides working towards producing export-quality mangoes to get higher returns.

“Growers must strictly adhere to certain conditions if they want their produce to be of export quality. They must be given guidance and assistance from the department concerned,” he said, adding that steps would be taken to form such an association soon.

1,500 kg of PDS rice recovered

A team of civil supplies department personnel recovered 1,500 kg of PDS rice in a series of raids here on Saturday.

Based on tip-offs that rice meant for distribution through fair price shops was being sold by middlemen, a team led by block supplies officer intercepted a Velankanni-bound bus and seized 15 bags of 30 kg rice each.

The sacks were found unclaimed in the bus. On enquiries, it was suspected that the destination was Paravai near Velankanni.

As a follow-up, a surprise raid was held in Paravai, where about 1,000 kilograms of PDS rice was seized.

Rampant clay mining destroys paddy fields



Rampant clay mining has led to the destruction of paddy fields and acute shortage of water at Nenmanikkara panchayat, near here. The local farmers point out that the panchayat used to have more than 600 hectares of paddy field. According to the development report of the panchayat, 97.6 per cent of paddy fields have been destroyed. The clay mining has turned 500 hectares of paddy fields into just fallow lands.

According to local residents, Nenmanikkara was once known for the production of quality rice. It used to produce more rice than the State average.

The rampant clay mining has caused serious environmental problems in the area, including water shortage, the residents complain. They allege that the panchayat watershed management committee and geology department have been colluding with the mining lobby.

The land has lost the layer of the sand and clay that retains the surface water. Most of the wells in the Nenmanikkara panchayat have been dried up. Many ponds and wells are polluted. Water quality in the area has also been affected.

Though the rules don't allow mining during nights, they are being blatantly violated here. The panchayat witnesses 24-hour mining, say the farmers. The miners fill the pits with quarry waste. As a result no further cultivation is possible in the field.

Many people in the area are not ready to lease out their paddy fields for cultivation, say farmers. They urged the authorities to take urgent steps to protect the remaining paddy fields.

Tile factories in Nenmanikara and neighbouring panchayats used to provide employment for many local residents till recently. However, more than 80 per cent of the employees in the sector are now migrant labourers from north Indian States.

A paddy bowl sans potable water



Potable water is a scarce commodity in the paddy bowl of Kuttanad, making life miserable to the nearly 3.5-lakh population in this low-lying area.

Though surrounded by water round the year, the households in Kuttanad lying two to eight feet below sea level are at the mercy of water vendors to quench their thirst. They buy water at the rate of Rs.500 to Rs.650 for every 1,000 litre. “We cannot afford this hefty sum and we used to buy a pot of water supplied in country boats at our door step for Rs.10 on alternative days,” said Ammini, a farm worker at Thottukadavu.

“Successive governments have failed to implement a proper mechanism for drinking water supply in this region for want of commitment, planning, and scientific management of funds and resources all these years, leaving the innocent people at the receiving end,” said Gopakumar Kavalam, writer.

The worst-affected areas are Kavalam, Kainakary, Neelamperoor, Kannady, Kunnumma, Thotukadavu, Thakazhy, and R-Block to mention a few. Kavalam panchayat housed not even a single water storage tank till date, except for the basement constructed by the panchayat, amply exposing the criminal negligence in this regard on the part of the authorities concerned, Mr. Gopakumar said.

The umpteen number of ponds and wells to which the local population depended on for their daily domestic chores have been polluted due to lack of maintenance and pollution.

The people’s hope and trust in the Kerala Water Authority, when it started laying pipelines and installing taps in different places, too proved to be a short-lived one with the pipeline network remaining dry in many places.

Dineshkumar Pullangady, a peasant who represents the dominant paddy farming community in Kuttanad, told *The Hindu* that this once paddy-rich place started losing its native charm with the unscientific development spree started a decade ago.

Criss-crossing of unscientifically constructed roads across the canals and other construction works have blocked a large number of natural flood escape routes, leaving the canal waters stagnant and polluted. Callous dumping of waste into it has further worsened the situation, making the canal water not even good for a hand wash.

Though the Revenue Department has spent Rs.1 crore for supplying potable water in tanks to the scarcity-hit areas of Kuttanad this year, there were allegations that the supply failed to reach the gravely affected interior reaches for reasons best known to the authorities concerned.

Country boats carrying water collected in large tanks from Kidangara moving along the Changanacherry-Alappuzha canal is a regular morning scene here. This is besides the water vendors who bring water in country boats from Changanacherry, Thuruthy, Kurichy, and Thiruvalla to the door step of many households situated on the canal banks.

The community here toils much for conducting ceremonies such as marriage and other functions and the first thing they do is making arrangements to ensure sufficient stock of potable water.

Salinity intrusion into the Vembanad lake, rivers and canals following opening of shutters of the Thanneermukkom barrage has further worsened the situation, denying water even to the cattle and irrigation purpose.

Bad situation

The situation is equally bad at Kainakari where many households belonging to the low income group resort to the polluted canal waters for their domestic chores. A recent study has identified Kainakari as the village with the largest number of cancer cases in the region.

Take your pick of the best fruits, it is now mango season in Salem



Shops selling different varieties of mangoes have started to come up along the roads in the city as the demand has begun to pick up for the ‘King of Fruits’.

Many shops have appeared along the Yercaud Main Road from Hasthampatti Roundtana to Gorimedu, where customers of all income-levels purchase the mango varieties they need.

“Fresh mangoes are available and bargaining allows us to get the best price,” says P. Alamelu of Hasthampatti.

Unlike in fruit stalls, where mangoes are kept in controlled environment, mangoes here are kept in open space but under the shade of trees.

Good mangoes can be easily identified and purchased in these shops, added Alamelu.

These shops usually come up during summer season selling seasonal fruits and engage in brisk trade.

“Since we need not pay rent, the benefit is extended to the customers who get the best price,” says Muthu, a shopkeeper.

He also ruled out using calcium carbide for artificial ripening of the fruit as customers demand only naturally ripened mango.

“Our customers trust us and we sell only good mangoes,” adds Muthu.

These shops have come up at many parts of the city as the season picks up. Salem Bangalora, Imam Pasand, Alphonso, Banganapali, Sendura were the most sought by customers.

The cheapest fruit to beat heat

With temperature soaring high leading to fatigue and sunstrokes, it is important to keep the body cool and healthy by consuming more water and also by eating fruits.

If fruits are out expensive, then go for locally available palm fruit which is called 'munjal' in the local parlance. During summer, makeshift stalls come up at almost all streets in the town and also on the State highways, that sell 'munjal'. One of the cheapest fruits in the market, the munjal is very healthy and helps in cooling the body and it also consists of high medicinal values.

Five pieces of palm fruits costs only Rs 10.

"I take up the business of selling munjal during the summer season for better profits with less investment", said Pochamma a trader. She said that she would procure the palm fruits from the toddy tappers in the villages and sell the same in the towns.

London's mango mania

At Patco greengrocer's on the Romford Road in east London, there has been a run on Indian mangoes. Boxes cradling a dozen yellow-orange fruits packed in straw, some oozing aromatic juices indicating peak ripeness, have been flying out of the store.

"Customers who usually buy one box a week have been taking four," said the owner, Krunal Parikh. "I stocked 100 boxes and most are already gone." The reason is a European Union ban. Brussels has blocked imports of Indian mangoes until December 2015 after inspectors found some consignments infested with fruit flies.

The ban has left connoisseurs practically in mourning for an annual ritual that heralds the start of summer, even in Britain.

Mangoes are grown in south-east Asia, India, Pakistan, parts of Africa, South America and in the Caribbean. But many people consider the Indian varieties to be the best.

"You get wine all over the world, but there is only one region where they produce real champagne," said Pushpesh Pant, a food anthropologist in New Delhi. "Mangoes from

Mexico, Indonesia, Brazil, China, Thailand or Pakistan don't even bear mentioning in the same breath as Indian mangoes." Popular Indian varieties include the small Dussehri, grown in northern India, and the big green Langra, from near the Hindu holy city of Varanasi.

But the Alphonso, so-called "king of the mangoes," grown on India's western coast and named after the Portuguese explorer Afonso de Albuquerque, is considered the richest in flavour and is a major export.

"The Hapuz [Alphonso in Indian languages] has a delicate fragrance, firm orange flesh, it's not overly sweet. The juice is not too gooey and its soft yellow skin is just beautiful to look at," said Pant, whose own personal consignment of the season's first mangoes was shipped to him on Wednesday.

Booked months in advance

"In India, there are very few orchards that produce the best Hapuz mangoes and their crop is usually pre-booked months in advance," he said.

Mango mania begins in mid-April when the first fruits appear. © Guardian Newspapers Limited, 2014

Drop in milk production hits availability of ghee, sweets

Dip in milk production has caused a decline in the production of Aavin's other products. But the decrease in milk production has not affected the regular sale of milk made to consumers in packets, reliable sources from Aavin, Tirunelveli Region said on Sunday.

Production of ghee, mysurpa and milk cake has come to a halt. However, production of 'palcova,' another popular milk sweet of Aavin, continued to stand in market. On an average, 140 kilograms of 'palcova' were produced every day.

Normally, about three to five tonnes of ghee was produced every month but due to the shortfall in milk production, ghee could not be produced for the past 20 days.

Besides, Aavin, which normally produced 20 kilograms of 'mysurpa' on a daily basis, has now come to a naught.

Demand for these much sought after items was on the rise among consumers.

“As for sale of milk packets, there is surplus. With the existing milk production touching 56,000 to 58,000 litres a day in Tuticorin and its neighbouring districts, Aavin meets a consumption demand for 47,000 litres a day in these districts. One month ago, Aavin saw 62,000 to 63,000 litres of milk production per day from these districts,” sources added.

To Chennai

Since there was no milk procurement centre in Chennai, milk in surplus after being sold to consumers would be supplied to Chennai.

“With a total of 128 milk vending agents in Tirunelveli and 99 in Tuticorin, Aavin has an enrolment of around 13, 000 consumer card holders,” sources pointed out.

Vegetable Show evokes good response



Having provided a visual treat to thousands of visitors and drawn attention to a major economic activity of the Nilgiris, the two-day 7th Annual Vegetable Show organised by the Department of Horticulture and the district administration concluded at the Nehru Park in Kotagiri on Sunday. It evoked a good response.

About 20,000 people, including a large number of tourists, enjoyed the show on the two days.

Organised in a commendable manner, it raised the curtain on the season related activities in this holiday destination.

Participating as the chief guest in the valedictory function, the Nilgiris Collector P. Sankar said that the people, women in particular, should grow vegetables in their kitchen garden by using natural fertilizers.

He added that the Nilgiris was dependent on horticulture and tourism for its economic well-being.

The District Revenue Officer, Bhaskara Pandiyan, also spoke.

The Joint Director of Horticulture, R. Kathiravan, welcomed the gathering.

The Deputy Director of Horticulture, N. Mani, proposed a vote of thanks.

While the trophy for the best collection of temperate vegetables went to E. Krishnappa, the prize for the best collection of tropical vegetables was bagged by M. Ramesh.

State government plans to develop two new fishing harbours

The State government has plans for major expansion of fishing projects in coastal districts by developing two new fishing harbours at a cost of Rs. 273 crore.

The Fisheries Department has proposed developing a fishing harbour at Kulai, near Mangalore, at a cost of Rs. 151 crore and another at Hejamadi-Kodi, near Udupi, at a cost of Rs. 122 crore.

The department has sent detailed proposals to the Ministry of Environment and Forests to get clearance to take up the work, Minister of State for Fisheries K. Abhayachandra Jain told *The Hindu* .

Cost sharing

The Centre, New Mangalore Port Trust, and the State government would share the cost (75 per cent, 20 per cent and 5 per cent respectively) of building the harbour at Kulai.

The Centre and the State government would share the cost (75 per cent and 25 per cent respectively) of building the harbour at Hejamadi-Kodi.

The Minister said he had promised new harbours for the fishing community in Mangalore and Udupi and the department would make every effort to get environmental clearance from the Centre. Though two harbours were planned several years ago, the previous BJP government did not take the proposals forward, he said. There are eight fishing harbours in the State at Karwar, Tadadi, Honnavar, Bhatkal, Gangoli, Belikeri, Malpe and Mangalore, apart from 19 other fish landing centres.

To provide basic facilities for deep sea fishing, sanction had been accorded by the Centre to construct Mangalore fishing harbour III stage (Rs. 57.6 crore) and another at Malpe (Rs. 37.15 crore). The State government had also given administrative approval for the same and work was progressing, he said.

There are 8.72 lakh people engaged in fishing in the State comprising 3.11 lakh people in marine areas and 5.65 lakh persons in inland areas. A total of 14,847 mechanised, motorised and traditional boats are being operated, according to department officials.

Fish production

The fish production in the State was around 2 lakh tonnes in the early 80s and reached a peak of over 5.25 lakh tonnes in 2012–13. The marine and inland sectors contributed 61 per cent and 39 per cent respectively to this. The fish production in the State contributed around 5.8 per cent of the total fish production in the country.

Karnataka ranks fifth in marine production and ninth in inland fish production in the country.

□ *Detailed proposals have been sent to the Ministry of Environment and Forests: Minister*

□ *‘Work on Mangalore fishing harbour III stage and harbour at Malpe is progressing’*

Officials asked to conduct a survey of crop loss

Compensation will be given based on the report

Shyamanur Shivashankarappa, Horticulture Minister, has said that he had instructed the officials to conduct a survey of horticulture crop loss due to rain, strong winds and hail storm rain.

He said based on the report of the officials, the government would distribute compensation to the farmers.

‘Assess loss’

He told presspersons here on Sunday, Mr. Shivashankarappa said that he had received reports that horticulture crops were lost in rain, hailstorms and strong winds from different places including Davangere, Chitradurga, Shimoga, Hassan, and he had asked the officials to assess the actual loss and send a report to the government at the earliest so that farmers would be compensated.

He said that the government has decided to give an amount of Rs.40, 000 per acre as compensation to the farmers who sustained crop losses and a farmer is allowed to get a compensation for a maximum limit of one hectare.

‘Release funds’

He said that the State government would soon appeal to the Union government to release funds to compensate the farmers adequately.

If the Union government releases more grants, all horticulture farmers would be compensated adequately without sticking to the parameters of maximum lands, he said.

-
- ‘The govt. has decided to give an amount of Rs.40, 000/-per acre’*
 - ‘A farmer is allowed to get a compensation for a maximum limit of one hectare’*
-

Vaigai dam nearing dead storage



Rapid depletion of storage in the Vaigai dam has been forecasting severe water shortage to Madurai city and nearby areas as water level in the dam neared dead storage level on Sunday.

If the level reached dead storage, water cannot be pumped from the dam owing to accumulation of silt and slush on the dam bed.

Water level touched 21.3 mm, lowest level in the last one decade.

Present storage will suffice to pump water for a day or two.

Already, discharge from the dam to meet drinking water supply to Madurai was cut to 40 cusecs from 60 cusecs.

“If this trend continued, we would face a tough situation in discharging water from the dam to maintain drinking water supply to Madurai city, Sedapatti and nearby areas,” worried Public Works Department officials.

They say that summer rain alone will end precarious situation. Such pathetic condition prevailed in the dam in 2003.

Even as the Western Ghats received heavy downpour during the last 48 hours, Varusha Nadu hills, the main catchment for the Vaigai dam, did not receive any rain. However, other parts of the district received torrential showers in the last 24 hours. Water flooded several areas in the district, owing to heavy downpour.

water level

Water level in Periyar dam stood at 109.9 feet (permissible level 136 feet), (level on Wednesday was 109.5 feet).

The flow into the dam was 274 cusecs and the discharge was 100 cusecs only. Storage level dwindled to 21.3 feet in the Vaigai dam. Discharge was only 40 cusecs. Rainfall recorded at various places in the district (in mm) at 8 a.m. on Sunday: Periyar 44, Thekkadi 64, Uthamapalayam 24, Veerapandi 18, Sothuparai dam 10, Manjalar dam 4, Vaigai dam 2, Shanmuga Nadhi dam 8 and Bodi 28 mm.

Dindigul

Torrential showers hit many parts of the district. Prime roads and low-lying areas in Dindigul town were flooded with rainwater, paralyzing routine life on Saturday evening.

Kodaikanal town too received heavy rain.

Sky was overcast and breeze was cool in Dindigul on Sunday.

Water level at

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 32.47 feet on Sunday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 280 cusecs and the discharge, 1,000 cusecs. — Special Correspondent

TIRUNELVELI

The water level in Papanasam dam on Sunday stood at 32.85 feet.

The dam had an inflow of 1.62 cusecs and a discharge of 104.75 cusecs.

The level in Manimuthar dam stood at 62.08 feet. The inflow into the dam was five cusecs and the discharge was 200 cusecs.

Kanyakumari

The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 16.30 feet, 37.60 feet in Perunchani, 3.61 feet in Chittar I, 3.71 feet in Chittar II, 1.70 feet in Poigai and 44.78 feet in Mamabazhathuraiyaru on Sunday


Chennai

Chennai - INDIA






Today's Weather

Monday, May 5
Clear
Max 32° | Min 28°
Rain: 0
Humidity: 79
Wind: normal
Sunrise: 05:47
Sunset: 06:24
Barometer: 1007

Tomorrow's Forecast

 **Tuesday, May 6**
Partly Cloudy
Max 32° | Min 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

| Wednesday May 7 | Thursday May 8 | Friday May 9 | Saturday May 10 | Sunday May 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 32° 26° Rainy | 34° 26° Cloudy | 33° 26° Cloudy | 34° 27° Partly Cloudy | 35° 26° Partly Cloudy |

Airport Weather

Chennai

Rain: 0
Humidity: 79
Wind: normal
Sunrise: 05:47
Sunset: 06:24
Barometer: 1007



Cottonseed demand set to grow in Maharashtra, Gujarat

The seed industry is expecting a rise in cottonseed consumption in Maharashtra and Gujarat in the range of 3-5 per cent in the ensuing kharif season. Both States witnessed a significant drop in cotton area last year.

The industry as a whole too is likely to register a similar growth rate of 3-5 per cent this year, with an expected sales of 4-4.2 crore packets of cottonseed.

While Gujarat witnessed a drop of 10 per cent (45 lakh packets sold) in cottonseed consumption, Maharashtra registered a reduction of 3-5 per cent (1.5 crore packets sold). Each packet contains 450gm of seed.

“Cotton lost out to soya last year. But we are expecting them to come back as it turns out to be less lucrative this year,” P Sathish Kumar, former President of the Andhra Pradesh Seedsmen Association, told *Business Line* .

Like last year, the seed industry is saddled with an inventory of four crore packets. But the industry feels that there are no stocks of premium brands. Though myriad brands are available in the market, only a handful of them go well with the farmers. A large chunk of the left-over stock consists of non-premium brands.

Andhra Pradesh, which is a key market for the industry, consumes one-fourth of the four crore packets the country buys every year. The industry expects this trend to continue this year as well. After a bleak estimate of area, the State went on to reach the record levels of 22 lakh hectares against the average area of 15 lakh ha. The seed industry is not losing sleep over weathermen’s forecast of a not-so-favourable rainfall.

“Unlike other crops such as maize, cotton can withstand dry spells, thanks to its deep root system. It can withstand even if rains are delayed for a while,” Satish Kumar said.

Meanwhile, the Andhra Pradesh Government has decided to maintain a status quo with regard to the price of cottonseed. It held a couple of rounds of discussions with the stakeholders (prior to the President’s rule).

Despite a demand from the industry for a hike, the Government chose not to increase the price, keeping in view the upcoming general elections.

Business Standard

Compensation to 'farmers' Jaya Bachchan, minister, IAS, IPS for crop losses

Celluloid scion, a number of bureaucrats and influential people have figured on the list of "helpless" [farmers](#) who lost their crops to unseasonal [rains](#) and hailstorms earlier this year.

Prominent among them is [Jaya Bachchan](#), Bollywood actress and wife of actor Amitabh Bachchan, who owns five acres in a village named Bisankhedi in the proximity of Bhopal.

"All those farmers who own land and lost crops to hailstorms will get [compensation](#)," a senior official in the district collectorate said, adding, "She (Jaya Bachchan) will get a compensation of Rs 14,000 against the crop losses."

Many bureaucrats, including a former chief secretary, and a number of senior Indian Administrative Service ([IAS](#)) and Indian Police Service ([IPS](#)) officers have also figured on the list. They have lands in Chandanpura, Mindori, Sewaniagaud, Prempura, Mendora and Bisankhedi village. All these villages are in Bhopal district.

State farmers had lost crops in 27,000 villages, after which the government revised its wheat production estimates downwards from 19 million tonnes to 17 million tonnes.

The government will start distributing compensation from May 16 in the bracket of Rs 3,500-50,000. A minister, Indrajeet Patel, has also figured in and will be compensated with Rs 50,000.

He was a candidate in ongoing Lok Sabha elections from Sidhi constituency. An ex-district collector was also among the farmers who will get compensation.

[Ex-CM of Karnataka seeks bailing out redgram farmers](#)

Former chief minister [H D Kumaraswamy](#) has urged the government to bail out [red gram](#) (tur dal) [farmers](#) who are in distress due to drop in yield this year. The government should come to the rescue of the farmers and open procurement centres and purchase their produce.

In a letter to chief minister [Siddaramaiah](#), the JD(S) leader said that farmers are selling their produce for lower prices as they are in deep debt trap. Since the crop is also very low this year, the farmers are unable to recover their investment and are forced to sell their crop to middlemen.

“The government should open procurement centres in Gulbarga, Raichur, Bidar, Yadgir and Bijapur districts and start purchasing redgram from the farmers immediately,” he said.

Normally, the state-owned [Tur Development Board](#), based in Gulbarga procures redgram from the farmers directly.

This year, the farmers of these districts had sown redgram in about 750,000 acres. For the last 3-4 years rainfall percentage had declined drastically leading to lower yields for farmers. This has led to severe burden on the farmers of redgram and it is high time the government comes to the rescue of farmers in these districts, Kumaraswamy said.

Gulbarga district in northern Karnataka contributes 15 per cent of the national tur output. This year, tur was cultivated over 800,000 hectares and the estimated production was around 560,000 tonnes from here.

The cost of cultivation of red gram has seen a steep rise due to rise in input costs. The prices of fertiliser (DAP) have gone up by 2.5 times to Rs 1,350 a bag as against Rs 530 a bag last year. Besides, labour shortage has resulted in the rise of daily wages for farm labourers.

The total cost of cultivation per acre amounts to Rs 12,000-14,000, which means the cost of cultivation per quintal of tur has touched Rs 4,500 a quintal as against the MSP of Rs 4,300 a quintal, making it uneconomical for the farmer to grow, farmer leaders said.

This year, the farmers in northern Karnataka districts, where red gram is predominantly

grown, witnessed a widespread damage to the red gram crop due to Helen cyclone effect and the rains thereafter, which was followed by heavy fog for three days subsequently. According to the estimates by the state agriculture department, the crop damage is about 80 per cent in Chincholi taluk and 70 per cent in Chittapur taluk.

The drop in production was 50 per cent across the state.



Online Trading for Tur, Cotton From This Month

The Department of Agriculture and Marketing is bringing several farm produces, including tur and cotton, under the e-Trading process from this month.

This comes following the introduction of online trading of copra, an initiative of the Rashtriya e-Market Services (ReMS), which fetched better price for farmers.

ReMS is a joint venture between NCDEX Spot Exchange and the state government.

MD and CEO of ReMS Manoj Ranjan told Express that copra is now traded online at around `11,500 per quintal against `6,500 a couple of years ago, in Tiptur and Arsikere markets.

Attributing the increase of Copra price to the introduction of online trading in 2013-14, he said apart from better price, the new system also eliminated the role of middlemen and ensured enhanced transparency in trading.

It also helped farmers get remittance through the hassel-free e-Transfer platform, he said.

Ranjan said online trading has also ended the monopoly of local traders. Wholesale dealers, including Metro Cash and Carry, and traders from across the state, who had registered with ReMS, can participate in trading.

Now, ReMS officials are working on bringing tur and cotton under online trading and the response from banking institutions, including SBI and HDFC, has been encouraging, he said.

Bankers have come forward to open zero balance savings account for farmers, extend loans under the e-pledge scheme and also give cash credit to traders.

However, Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha state convener Maruthi Manpade strongly countered the claims of ReMS officials. He said the price of copra increased because of the state government's market intervention.

He said the system would be detrimental for local traders who would fall into the hands of international operators.

Stating that his organisation would oppose the move of the APMC to introduce online trading for tur and cotton, he said they will stage protest against this.

“Market intervention and heavy duty on imports are enough to protect the interests of farmers,” he said.

Action Against Errant Sugar Factories: Hukkeri

he government will hold yet another meeting with sugar factory owners at Bangalore on May 5 in connection with the fixed rate of sugarcane at `2,500 per tonne.

Speaking to media persons here on Saturday, Sugar Minister Prakash Hukkeri said that keeping the interest of both the cane suppliers and sugar factories, the government during the last winter session of the state assembly had fixed the price at `2,500 per tonne and that the factories would be given many facilities, too.

He said the Karnataka High Court had instructed the factories to pay according to the fixed rate and suggested the government to initiate legal action against those who violate the order. He also said that he will be attending the meeting.

Hukkeri said that sugar has a good rate in the market and that the government will not come down from the fixed rate.

Many factories last year sold sugar at `2,500 per tonne, though the rate was `30 per kg. Factories will not suffer loss at the given fixed rate. `2,500 per tonne is being given at Maharashtra, too, he said. The factories will be taken into confidence and will be asked to give the fixed rate, Hukkeri said. Initiating legal action against the factories which do not comply is up to the chief minister, he added.

Coconut Shells Turn Artefacts in His Hands

The handicraft items, carved out of coconut shells by P K C Mohammad Master, not only exhibit the skills he is blessed with, but they also attempt to dispel the conventional notion that coconut shells are useless.

Neatly carved and polished, there are hundreds of coconut shell handicraft items on display at Mohammed Master's house at Earpona near Thamarassery. From spoons to pendants, there is a wide range of products in his collection.

Mohammed Master, 75, finds pleasure in the fact that his retired life is not wasted away.

For the past 35 years, this man is actively engaged in carving out various handicraft items from coconut shells.

Several products such as ornaments, miniature forms of chairs and tables, bowls, candle holders, vases, various flowers, lanterns, spoons and forks now adorn his house.

“The shells are dried before they are polished. It takes hours to polish the coconut shells. Then I cut the shells to shape various designs,” says Mohammed Master. “Every phase of the process demands care and skill. Though the job is tedious, I enjoy it very much,” he says.

“I know that the products I make are unaffordable for many. If I get the due price for my hard work, I am ready to sell the products. If I deliver them at no cost, my days-long efforts will go in vain,” he says.

“During my days with the Chantheri Mappila Lower Primary School at Kuruvangad in Koyilandi, I used to train the students to appear for various competitions, including science fairs,” the craftsman recollects.

“As a trainer at the Kozhikode District Institute of Education and Training, I could provide training to hundreds of students through work experience classes,” says Mohammed Master.

“To promote the skills in students, I used to attend the school-based science and handicrafts fairs with my products,” he says.

“Besides, I render all possible service to the Teachers Training Students and BEd students if they seek help to prepare various learning aids.”

The craftsman is glad as his grandson Shamil, a seventh standard student at Crescent English Medium School, Omassery, is passionately following in the footsteps of his grandfather.

Shamil often extends a helping hand to Mohammed Master.

“The new generation may not be willing to take up such tedious jobs. But it is a pleasure to watch grandfather doing his work and it is a privilege to be the grandson of such a

passionate being,” says Hasheem Earpona, a postgraduate student and grandson of Mohammed Master.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Ban slices off big chunk of Alphonso mango prices, supply shot up 2-3 times



PUNE: Alphonso mangoes have turned doubly sweeter for domestic consumers this season as prices of the most premium variety of the king of Indian fruits have almost halved following an increase in supply and the possible impact on other importers of the ban clamped by the European Union. If Alphonso mangoes reach other parts of the country in large quantities, prices of other varieties such as Safeda are also likely to fall, traders said.

Supply of Alphonso mangoes shot up two to three times in tandem with the sudden rise in mercury, which caused simultaneous ripening instead of staggered ripening of this season's crop. Moreover, this is a year of good crop of mango, which sees an increased production every alternate year. Therefore, prices of Alphonso mangoes started falling about a fortnight ago while the European Union banned Indian mangoes with effect from May 1.

All major markets in the region saw enhanced availability of the fruit on Akshaya Tritiya. Two lakh boxes of Alphonso mangoes arrived in Mumbai's Vashi wholesale market compared with 60,000 boxes a fortnight ago. "There has been a threefold increase in mango arrivals due to sudden increase in temperatures. The rates have decreased by about

Rs 800 per box," said Sanjay Pansare, director (fruits), Vashi Market.

Nathsahab Khaire, one of the biggest wholesale dealers of mangoes in Pune said prices had fallen by 40% over the past eight days. "The temperature in Maharashtra has suddenly increased to 40 degree Celsius, which led to early ripening of the fruit. Karnataka is getting rains consistently, leading to increase in size of the fruits," said Khaire.

Delhi gets a limited supply of Alphonso mangoes, a majority of which are exported each year. However, with increased arrivals in Mumbai, rates fell in Delhi as well, from Rs 400-450 per dozen two days ago to Rs 350-400 on Friday. From April to June, Delhi gets the bulk of its supply of mangoes from southern India while June onwards it gets mangoes from Uttar Pradesh.

Sudesh Sachdev, the biggest trader of Andhra Pradesh mangoes at Delhi's Azadpur Mandi said, "The main arrival of Andhra mangoes in Delhi started from April 15 and the prices have been almost stable since then."

If Delhi gets more Alphonso mangoes this season, Safeda mangoes from Andhra Pradesh are also likely to turn cheaper due to the popular preference for Alphonso.

Amar Desai, a mango grower and exporter from Pavas in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra, the abode of Alphonso mangoes, said, "Prices of Alphonso in the domestic market have decreased by almost 50% due to the increase in arrivals. The temperature was slightly less in April due to the rainfall in many parts of Maharashtra, though it did not rain in the Konkan region. As a result, mango production was less in April. Now, with the increase in temperature, all the mangoes have ripened at once instead of ripening in the usual phased manner."

The ban by the EU is likely to have very little impact on the demand and supply situation in the domestic market as exports to the European Union account for a small percentage of the total domestic consumption. According to Agricultural and Processed Food Export Development Agency (APEDA), India exported 55,000 tonne mangoes in 2012-13, of which about 4,000 tonne were exported to the EU. Indian exports mangoes to the US,

EU, Middle East, Australia, New Zealand and a few other countries.

The major exports take place to the Middle East while India accounts for 70% of the mango imports of New Zealand. Different countries demand a different kind of treatment on the fruits and vegetables before exports. The US requires the mangoes to be treated with nuclear radiation. India's only irradiation facility is located at Lasalgaon, where the US deputs its own inspector for the duration of mango exports. India bears expenses of the US inspector. Countries like Japan insist on vapour heat treatment (VHT).

Although the EU does not insist on any specific type of treatment for the mangoes, it imposed a ban after detection of fruit fly in Indian mangoes. The EU stated while banning Indian fruits and four vegetables, "The number of consignments from India intercepted with harmful organisms in the Union has shown an upward trend since 2010. Audits carried out by the commission in India, in particular in 2010 and 2013, revealed shortcomings in the phytosanitary export certification system. Despite assurances and action taken by India, the number of interceptions increased further in 2013."

Haryana procures 58.89 lakh tonnes wheat



CHANDIGARH: About 59 lakh tonnes of wheat has so far arrived in various mandis in Haryana during the current procurement season.

A spokesman of the Food and Supplies Department said that the government agencies have so far procured 58.87 lakh tonnes of wheat.

He said that HAFED has purchased highest 22.16 lakh tonnes wheat followed by 16.63 lakh tonnes purchased by Food and Supplies Department.

Similarly, Agro Industries Corporation has purchased 5.28 lakh tonnes, Haryana Warehousing Corporation 5.90 lakh tonnes, CONFED 1.43 lakh tonnes and Food Corporation of India 7.44 lakh tonnes this procurement season.

He said that district Sirsa is leading in the wheat arrival where 7.88 lakh tonnes of wheat has arrived in the mandis, followed by Karnal 6.31 lakh tonnes.

Farmers have been asked to bring dry and properly cleaned wheat in the mandis so that they might not face any difficulty while selling their produce, the spokesman said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Mangoes from Odisha now Bangladesh-bound

BHUBANESWAR: At a time when the European Union (EU) has banned import of mangoes from India, Odisha has found a new market for the king of fruits in Bangladesh. The first consignment of homegrown Dussehri and Amrapali mangoes was sent to the neighbouring country through train on last Friday.

On the home front, north India has been a destination for mangoes from Odisha for a long time. This season too, the state will export 500 metric tonne mango to Delhi and other places.

Director of horticulture Sanjiv Chadha said, "We sent around three metric tonne mango to Bangladesh for trial. We are exploring the market there and based on the response, we will increase export. Dussehri and Amrapali are very popular in north India. Compared to other mango supplying states like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, these varieties ripen early in our state. We aim to capture the north Indian market by reaching there earlier." The state is also exporting the fruit to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, he added.

Sources said the horticulture department had got orders for mangoes from Finland last

year, but could not supply the fruit owing to unavailability of international flights from Bhubaneswar. "This year, we have tied up with companies for marketing of mango in markets across India and outside, which will facilitate export, and ensure more benefit to farmers," said assistant horticulture officer at the state horticulture directorate Susant Dash.

Besides, to facilitate global and domestic trading of mango, the state horticulture department has set up a unit in Dhenkanal with processing and packaging facility, said another senior official, adding the ban imposed by the EU on import of Alphanso mangoes from India will have little impact on business in the state.

Annually, Odisha produces nearly 8 lakh tonne mango, of which 40% are high quality varieties such as Amrapalli, Dussehri, Mallika, Keshari and Lengada, and the rest are local and indigenous varieties. Majority of the fruits are produced in Dhenkanal, Angul, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Boudh. The varieties that dominate the Indian market are Baiganpalli, Dussehri, Amrapalli, Kesari Totapuri, Latsundari, Mallika, Subarnarekha, Himasagar, Neelum and Chausa.