

**Rains enthuse farmers, push up hopes for summer crop**

Depression in the Bay of Bengal has dumped heavy rain on the Nagapattinam region bringing cheer to farmers who are now hoping to take up summer crop. The continued rains through the district have washed away fears of drought. For parched regions like Vedaranyam, the rains of the last 48 hours have come as a saving grace both for humans and livestock alike.

According to Samandam of Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam, the long spell of dry weather had raised fears of drought in the delta. “Now, we will start Puzhudhi Uzhavu, which will otherwise not be possible on dry soil.

The current dampness will help us prepare our fields. Drinking water scarcity was looming and community ponds had depleted. The rainfall should continue to let the ground soak.”

Cauvery division that supports groundwater and subsequent pump irrigation, has benefitted more from the increased spell what with farmers sowing seeds for nurseries.

According to Gobi Ganesan, Mayiladuthurai-based farmer, the promised three-phase supply was barely for three hours. With this, farmers were not able to prepare the nursery well until the rains of this week, says Mr. Ganesan.

“Till last week, not many farmers had taken to sowing, but this week the rains have encouraged most farmers here to take to sowing for preparation of nursery.”

The salt pans have closed shop because of the heavy rainfall. The earlier moderate rainfall in Vedaranyam returned as thunderstorm on Wednesday night, forcing a halt to salt production for another 10 days because of water logging in the salt pans here.

However, 7,000 acres of cultivable area under sesame is the only crop that is hit by the rains here in Vedaranyam. Similarly, some plantations are likely to be affected by the heavy rains. On the other hand, jasmine grown under garden cultivation on over 450 acres of land have benefited by the rains.

Heavy rains lashed Mayiladuthurai on Wednesday night.

### **Farmers' organisations appeal to govt.**

Farmers' organisations urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to address the problems being faced by the farming community, here on Thursday. They said they would launch an agitation if their demands were not met.

### **The list**

Leaders of Karnataka Pranta Raitha Sangha, Karnataka State Tur Dal Growers' Association, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, Krishik Samaj and Akhila Bharata Kisan Sabha, released a list of nine important issues concerning farmers.

Their demands include procurement of toor dal from registered growers at Minimum Support Price (MSP) announced by the government; withdrawal of 15 per cent subsidy being offered to organisations that are procuring cereals; levying 25 per cent tax on import of toor dal; fixing MSP of Rs. 3,000 for minor millets; renaming Karnataka Tur Development Board as Karnataka Cereals Development Board; and protecting the interests of sugarcane growers.

Explaining the problems being faced by toor dal growers, Basavaraja Ingina, president, toor dal association, said though the government announced Rs. 5,000 as MSP for the commodity and earmarked Rs.135 crore for procuring the produce, the process of procurement had hit a roadblock because of Lok Sabha polls. Thousands of toor dal growers were in deep trouble because of delay in procurement. The government had to

direct the authorities concerned to commence procurement of produce immediately, he said.

## **Sugarcane**

Expressing regret over the delay by sugar factories in clearing the arrears of sugarcane growers, Maruthi Manpade, president of the KPRS, alleged that the government was succumbing to pressure from the sugar lobby and hesitating to act against sugar factory owners, as most of them belonged to various political parties. Reacting to a statement by Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs T.B. Jayachandra on the plans of the government to bring in a legislation to distribute gomala land to set up industries, Mr. Manpade said instead of building land banks for helping the corporate sector, the government could distribute the gomala land to bagair hukum farmers.

He said over 16 lakh farmers had been cultivating bagair hukum land for more than three decades in the hope that the government would grant them ownership rights. He claimed that the officials concerned had rejected about 12 lakh of the 16 lakh applications submitted by the farmers for regularisation, citing technical reasons.

## **Goad – key appurtenance of farmers**



One of the least known but very important aspect of preparations by farmers for the agricultural season ahead is the purchase of a good goad *ormullu katte* . The sticks are used to control the movement of farm animals and guide them as per the requirement during farm operations.

The goad is made of bamboo in varying lengths with the activity for which the stick is needed. It has the 'shembi' or an iron ring fitted on either ends, while one end, invariably the thinner of the two, is fitted with a nail which is used to goad animals.

### **Good demand**

"I sell the sticks at Rs. 100 apiece," reveals Kunta Narayan, who makes goads at the Ichoda cattle shandy every Monday. "These are in great demand now as farmers need to make preparations before they go in for sowing in the kharif season," he says.

"Later in the season I'll make goads which will be used while weeding operations are carried out. These are called *para kattelu* of spade-sticks with a spade-like iron fitting on one end used to remove mud from the blades of the spade ploughs," he adds.

Not until long ago, goads used to be aesthetically made with brass shembis at the two ends. The stick itself had a hide skin covering which enhanced its beauty.

### **Influence on design**

The freedom movement during British rule saw Gandhiji propagating non-violence which had an impact on the design of the *mullu katta* also. Farmers removed the nail to save animals from the pain caused when it is goaded by the stick.

The farmers used to gently flagellate with goads which resembled a whiplash. The whips, however, were shunned in favour of traditional goads after independence.

## Cobia fish harvested from sea cages



The Cobia Aquaculture Fishermen Association, a self-help group of 21 Rameswaram fishermen, has demonstrated to their colleagues that sea cage farming of cobia, a high value fish, can be an alternative to the risky trawl fishing as it has harvested one tonne of fish in less than six months of the launch of the venture.

The progressive fishermen, who switched over to the new method in November last year, reaped the first partial harvest from the cages, anchored along the shorelines, in the presence of Collector K. Nanthakumar and G. Gopakumar, scientist in-charge of the Mandapam Regional Centre of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) here on Thursday.

“We were keeping our fingers crossed after setting up 10 cages with a total investment of Rs.49 lakh, but after reaping the maiden harvest, we are extremely happy. We were doubly happy that we proved to our colleagues that sea cage farming could be a successful venture,” N.D. Mugesh Kumar, association secretary, told *The Hindu* .

More than 100 Rameswaram fishermen, led by mechanised boat fishermen leaders P. Sesu Raja, N.J. Bose and Devadoss and country boat fishermen leader S.P. Royappan, witnessed the harvest as the fishermen brought to the shore about one tonne of cobia fish, each weighing between 1.5 kg and 2.5 kg.

Mr. Raja said more fishermen could be drawn if the government purchased the trawlers of willing fishermen on buy-back policy and helped them with financial support to start sea cage farming.

The entire one tonne of cobia, harvested on Thursday, was sold out, said A. Leonald, treasurer of the association.

Local traders bought the fish at the rate of Rs.260 and Rs.270 per kg for selling them in Kerala and Bangalore markets.

Fresh orders had been booked and they would go for the second harvest on Friday, he added.

The CMFRI, besides offering technical support, supplied 6,400 cobia fingerlings with an average weight of 37 grams to the group free of cost. A cobia fish could gain weight up to 25 kg and if the fishermen waited for a year, they could export fully grown fish to Japanese Sashimi market, Mr. Gopakumar said.

### **Double-blow to mango cultivators**

The ban on export of high quality Alphonso mango to EU countries has come as a double-blow to farmers in Muthalamada grama panchayat, popularly known as 'Mango City'. The yield has fallen by 80 per cent this season owing to change in the weather pattern.

The ban has brought down the price of Alphonso mangoes from Rs.150 to Rs.32 a kg. Export variety Alphonso constituted 40 per cent of the total mango production in Muthalamada. The change in weather pattern had delayed the production of mangoes by two months, resulting in farmers losing the early bird advantage in the international market.

Over 5,000 farmers are engaged in commercial cultivation of mango on 25,000 hectares of land in Muthalamada, The total production is nearly 3.5 lakh tonnes of high quality mango varieties. As many as 1,000 traders are engaged in the fruit's trade in addition to exporters.

### **Harvesting season**

“In the current harvesting season, which began late by two months, in April, the yield has come down to 20 per cent,” said H. Haneefa, a leading mango farmer and exporter. The quality too is not up to mark. This is owing to change in the weather pattern, he said.

He said owing to the low quality, the price of mangoes had come down from Rs.700 to Rs.300 a box (seven kg). The demand from centres such as Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Indore had fallen. The export ban to EU has brought down the prices further. There is no demand even in the local market, he said.

“Mango cultivation needs abundant rain in the months of December and January,” said C.A. Badurdheen, a mango farmer and exporter in Muthalamada. This season, there was no rain during the period. As a result, the harvest was delayed. Normally, mango cultivation on an acre of land yields six to seven tonnes. However, this time round, it was less than three tonnes. Farmers who spent substantial sum of money on fertilizers and pesticides were facing huge losses, he said.

### **International market**

Muthalamada farmers get a good price for mangoes as they reach the market early. The harvest starts early January every year. There are only two other places in the world where mangoes ripen as early as January — Peru and Bolivia. Muthalamada mangoes fetch a high price as they are the first to hit the international market, he said.

### **Mango festival begins today**

The inauguration of Mango Show 2014, organised by the Calicut Agri-horticultural Society, which was scheduled to be held on Thursday has been postponed due to heavy rain. The show will be inaugurated at 9.30 a.m. on Friday by District Collector C.A. Latha. The other events will be held as per schedule. A wide range of indigenous mango varieties will be available at the show that will conclude on May 14, a press release said.

### **Mango festival extended till May 14**

The State Horticulture Mission will extend the National Honey and Mango Festival here to May 14. The decision, which was prompted by the impact of bad weather on sales, should come as a huge relief for farmers who had arrived with truckloads of fruit from across the State and beyond the border. The festival began at the Sooryakanthi grounds on Monday.

Mangoes priced between Rs.45 and Rs.115 a kilogram are available at the festival. Also on sale are mango saplings brought from nurseries under the Horticulture Mission.

This year's festival has underlined the safety aspect, with food safety officials testing the fruits for carbide or other chemicals.

Legal action will be taken against groups who have brought tainted fruit, officials have warned.

### **Officials told to expedite paddy procurement**

District Collector T.Chiranjeevulu has inspected several paddy procurement centres following a host complaints of delay in procurement of paddy across the district.

Speaking to news reporters at Nakrekal Agriculture Market Yard here on Thursday, the district Collector instructed the officials and procurement staff to expedite the process of



procurement and asked them to purchase the total paddy piled up in all markets within two days.

### **Support to farmers**

Saying that he had also spoke to the millers to unload the paddy sent by government agencies without any delay, the Collector promised the farmers that the district administration would provide all support to farmers in selling their produce at MSP.

The district Collector also asked them not to fall prey to the middlemen who offers much lesser than Minimum Selling Price (MSP).

### **Water level**

#### **MADURAI**

The water level in Periyar dam stood at 114.40 feet on Thursday with an inflow of 6,649 cusecs and a discharge of 500 cusecs.

The level in Vaigai dam was 22.11 feet with an inflow of 272 cusecs and a discharge of 40 cusecs.

The combined storage in Periyar credit was 1,151 mcft.

### **Rainfall**

The rainfall recorded during the 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Thursday was (in mm): Periyar dam 28, Thekkady 51.4, Gudalur 41, Shanmuganadhi 35, Uthamapalayam 59, Veerapandi 26, Vaigai dam 15.6, Manjalaru 48, Marudhanadhi 57, Sothuparai dam 60, Peranai 33, Kuppanampatti 25, Andipatti 40.2, Madurai 46, Sathiyar dam 28, Mettupatti 30, Kallandiri 24.8, Chittampatti 31.4, Pulipatti 30.4, Melur 19.8, Thaniyamangalam 37, Idayapatti 35, Viraganoor 51 and Kodaikanal recorded 69 mm of rainfall, Public Works Department officials here said.

## **Mettur**

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 32.65 feet on Thursday, against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 1,735 cusecs and the discharge nil.

## **TIRUNELVELI**

The water level in the Papanasam Dam on Thursday stood at 44.90 feet. The inflow was 1,218.21 cusecs and there was no discharge. The level in the Manimuthar Dam stood at 64.70 feet. There was an inflow of 669 cusecs and nil discharge.

## **Kanyakumari**

The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 17.45 feet, 39.70 feet in Perunchani, 5.35 feet in Chittar I, 5.45 feet in Chittar II, 2.50 feet in Poigai and 50.85 feet in Mamabazhathuraiyaru dam.

## **Mullaperiyar dam**

Idukki district reported an average rainfall of 43.56 mm during the 24-hours on Thursday morning. The highest rainfall of 64.2mm was reported in Thodupuzha taluk.

In Mullaperiyar dam the water level rose from 111.1 feet to 114.4 feet on Thursday. However, the rainfall recorded in the catchment area of Idukki reservoir was only 27 mm, as per the data of the Dam Monitoring and Research Station, Cheruthoni.

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

## Today's Weather



**Friday, May 9**

Max Min

Cloudy

33° | 26°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:45

Humidity: 84

Sunset: 06:25

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1007

## Tomorrow's Forecast



**Saturday, May 10**

Max Min

Cloudy

33° | 25°

## Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
May 11	May 12	May 13	May 14	May 15
33°   26°	34°   28°	34°   29°	35°   29°	35°   29°
Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny

## Airport Weather

Chennai

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:34

Humidity: 54 Sunset: 07:00

Wind: normal Barometer: 1004



# Business Standard

## Sugar exports slowing as subsidy delay deters buyers



[Sugar shipments](#) from India, the second biggest producer, have slowed after domestic prices climbed to a 15-month high and as a delay in announcement of [export](#) incentives deters traders, the largest refiner said.

Exports could total 300,000 tonnes in the six months through September, compared with 1.5 million tonnes (mt) in the prior six months, [Narendra Murkumbi](#), managing director of [Shree Renuka Sugars](#), said in a phone interview on May 5.

Lower than expected shipments from India might support prices in New York, amid forecasts for the first global deficit in five years amid dry weather in Brazil and Australia. India announced a [subsidy](#) for raw sugar exports in February to help mills clear dues to farmers, after stockpiles jumped to the highest level in five years. The incentives spurred



a rally in local prices above global rates, turning away potential importers.

"I think because of the uncertainty on subsidy, there might not be much exports in the second half of the sugar year,"

Murkumbi said. "Domestic prices have moved up. So, parity is not there anymore. Domestic demand has been quite encouraging this time. It's definitely firmer than last year."

The government, which set export incentives at Rs 3,300 (\$55) a tonne for February and March, has yet to notify the aid for April and May. The delay will keep shipments this season at about 1.8 mt, Abinash Verma, director general of the [Indian Sugar Mills Association](#), said April 30.

#### Volatile prices

Prices on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange in Mumbai jumped to Rs 3,265 a quintal on April 25, the highest since January 2013. Futures have since fallen 4.7 per cent, trimming gains this year to 10 per cent. Prices are 4.9 per cent higher on ICE Futures US.

"I think there is a lot of weather risks connected to sugar in the next six to eight months," Murkumbi said. "Sugar could be volatile because of that."

Sugar output in India will total 23.8 mt in the 12 months ending September 30, the lowest level in four years, compared with 25.1 mt a year earlier after excess rains cut yields, the mills' association estimates. Inventories will drop to about 6 mt as of October 1 from 9.3 mt a year earlier, Murkumbi said. Outlook for production next year will depend on monsoon rainfall, he said.

"If there is a surplus there will be exports," Murkumbi said. "India's role in the world market will continue to fluctuate. We are very sensitive to the last 3 or 4 mt of production on the either side."

## **Reduced MEP may boost groundnut oil export**

The latest cut in the minimum export price ([MEP](#)) on edible oils is expected to boost exports, especially of [groundnut oil](#). Recently, the inter-ministerial committee of the agriculture, commerce and food ministries had decided to bring down the MEP for [edible oil](#) from \$1,400 a tonne to \$1,100 a tonne, with the estimates of higher [oilseed production](#). In December last year, the MEP had been cut from \$1,500 a tonne to \$1,400 a tonne.

Kishore Tanna, chairman, Indian Oilseed and Produce Export Promotion Council, said: “We are thankful to the government for their pro-active approach and keeping a close watch on developments in the oilseed and oil sector. Export of groundnut oil likely to increase to over 25,000 tonnes in this year.”

Export of edible oils is permitted in branded consumer packs of up to five kg, without any quantitative cap. “Fixing the floor price makes groundnut oil exports the most viable among all edible oil varieties. There is also a possibility for export of cotton oil,” said a Vimal Oils spokesperson. B V Mehta, executive director of the Solvent Extractors’ Association of India, said: “The groundnut oil market is very limited in foreign countries. However, there is still a chance to export 15,000-20,000 tonnes.” India, the world’s top importer of vegetable oils, used to prohibit export of edible oils; this was relaxed and it had allowed sales abroad of cooking oils in small packs, with a cap of 20,000 tonnes in 2013-14.

However, due to price rise in the domestic market, the export did not exceed 10,000 tonnes in FY14.

Samir Shah, president of the Saurashtra Oil Mills Association, said: “There are some export inquiries in the market for the past few days. Also, the price of oil is at the bottom

as compared to last year, which might support export (of groundnut oil).”

According to industry sources, India produces an average of 300,000 tonnes of groundnut oil every year but this could be 700,000 tonnes this year.

Angshu Mallick, chief operating officer, Adani Wilmar, said: “The government move was inevitable but we don’t see much potential for groundnut oil exports. It is not such a huge market overseas.”

### **Guar seed slips on higher output estimates**



Guar seed prices dropped by Rs 65 to Rs 5,615 per quintal in futures trading after speculators trimmed positions, driven by higher production estimates and mounting stocks.

Marketmen said in addition to huge carry over stocks position on ample supplies from growing regions, profit-booking by speculators and higher output estimates mainly attributed the fall in prices.

They said, however, export demand for guar gum which mostly used in petroleum refining, food processing and pharmaceutical industries, limited the losses.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange counter, guar gum prices for July

delivery shed Rs 65, or 1.14 per cent to Rs.5,615 per quintal, with an open interest of 721 lots.

The most-active for delivery in June month fell by Rs 60, or 1.07 per cent, to Rs 5,525 per quintal, having an open interest in 20,694 lots, while contracts for delivery in current May month slipped by Rs.55, or 1.00 per cent at Rs.5,420 per quintal, in an open interest of 7,230 lots.

Meanwhile, India is the key exporter of the commodity and produces almost 80 per cent of the world's total guar gum.

Refined soya oil up 0.45% on upsurge in demand

[Refined soya oil](#) prices higher by 0.45 per cent to Rs 697.15 per 10 kg in futures trade today largely supported by an upsurge in spot demand.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, refined soya oil for delivery in June rose by Rs 3.10, or 0.45 per cent to Rs 697.15 per 10 kg with an open interest of 1,48,130 lots.

The May contract traded higher by Rs 2.25, or 0.31 per cent to Rs 719.50 per 10 kg in 70,440 lots.

Marketmen said fresh positions created by speculators driven by rising demand in the spot market in view of marriage season mainly influenced refined soya oil prices at futures trade.



## **Cardamom up 1.8% on increased demand**



Extending gains for the third- straight day, [cardamom](#) prices rose by another 1.83% to Rs 1,020 per kg in futures trading today as speculators enlarged positions following increased demand amid a firming trend at producing belts.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), cardamom for delivery in May shot up by Rs 18.30, or 1.83% to Rs 1,020 per kg in business turnover of 36 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in June contracts moved up by Rs 11.90, or 1.23% to Rs 978 per kg in 482 lots.

Analysts said apart from increased domestic and export demand in the spot market, reports of a firming trend at growing regions, mainly influenced cardamom prices at futures trade.

## **Crude palm oil rises 0.46% on spot demand**

[Crude palm oil](#) prices rose by 0.46 per cent to Rs 549.60 per 10 kg in futures trading today, amid pick up in spot demand and fall in supplies from producing regions.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude palm oil for delivery in June moved up by Rs 2.50, or 0.46 per cent to Rs 549.60 per 10 kg in business turnover of 53 lots.

The May contract edged up by Rs 2.10, or 0.38 per cent to Rs 552.50 per 10 kg in 52 lots.

Analysts said fresh positions built up by speculators triggered by a pick up in demand in the spot market amid restricted arrivals from producing belts mainly influenced the crude palm oil prices in futures trade.

### **Potato falls further on supply pressure**



[Potato](#) prices fell further by 1.55 per cent to Rs 1,347.10 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators offloaded positions, driven by increased supplies pressure from producing regions.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, potato for delivery in June declined by Rs 21.20, or 1.55 per cent to Rs 1,347.10 per quintal in business turnover of 376 lots.

The potato for delivery in May contract also traded lower by Rs 5, or 0.59 per cent to Rs 1,316 per quintal in 110 lots.

Analysts said continued slide in potato prices was mostly due to increased supplies from producing regions against sluggish demand in the spot market.

**Mixed trend seen in Kochi tea auction**

Despite a good arrival compared to last week, the Kochi tea auction witnessed a mixed trend this week with the prices of almost all varieties quoted lower.

In sale no 19, the quantity on offer in the CTC dust category was 11,25,500 kg. With a fair demand, the market was irregular when it opened and lower by Rs. 2-4.

As the sale progressed, prices declined with longer margins of Rs. 5-10 and sometimes more. According to the auctioneers, Forbes, Ewart & Figgis, there was a subdued demand from exporters.

There was a good demand for orthodox grades and the quantity on offer was 9,500 kg. With a good demand, the market for primary grades was steady, while secondary grades quoted lower. A small quantity of orthodox dust offered was absorbed by exporters. In the best CTC dusts, PD grades quoted Rs. 100/118, RD varieties fetched Rs. 106/125, SRD ruled at Rs. 121/156, while SFD stood at Rs. 129/154.

The mixed trend witnessed in leaf sale and the quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 1,32,500 kg. With a fair demand, the market for Nilgiri smaller broken was firm to dearer. Others were irregular and tended to ease.

The quantity on offer in CTC grades was 76,000 kg. The market for good liquoring varieties sold around last levels. Others were irregular and lower and witnessed some withdrawal. Good liquoring Fannings appreciated in value.

In the dust varieties, Waterfall SFD quoted the best prices of Rs. 159, followed by Waterfall SRD at Rs. 157. In the leaf grades, Chamraj Green FOP (S) fetched the best prices of Rs. 296, followed by Pascoes Woodlands Hyson Green Tea at Rs. 281.

## **Fertiliser industry looks to the weather gods**

The fertiliser industry is pinning hopes on good weather this year to arrest the declining trend in sales. Fertiliser sales, after hitting a peak in 2011-12, have been on a downward trend in the last two consecutive years.

According to provisional estimates of the Fertiliser Association of India (FAI), the total sales of nutrients in 2013-14 declined by about 5 per cent to 51.23 million tonnes (mt) over last year.

### **Record foodgrain output**

This is despite a record foodgrain production in the country during the year.

While urea sales inched up marginally by less than a per cent to around 30.45 mt during the year, the off-take of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) fell by about a fourth to 6.85 mt over last year.

Also, the sales of NP/NPK nutrients fell 2.32 per cent, while that of muriate of potash (MoP) increased marginally. Urea imports were lower by 12 per cent during the year at 7.09 million tonnes over last year, while DAP imports were down 43 per cent at 3.26 mt. Despite lower sales, trade sources said the actual consumption during the year would have been higher, as the stocks that built up in the sales pipeline got utilised. As a result, the opening stocks are estimated to be lower this year.

“Lower opening stocks should help boost sales. We are hoping that sales would improve this year, but it all depends on the weather,” said Satish Chander, Director General, FAI.

### **Monsoon**

Also, the timely arrival of monsoon rainfall and its spatial distribution is crucial for the fertiliser offtake.

Though there are concerns over the potential occurrence of El Nino, which triggers drought in countries including India, Chander said it would be too early to comment on its impact.

The India Metrological Department, in its first official forecast, has predicted that the South-West monsoon will be lower than normal this year, while indicating that there was a 60 per cent probability of El Nino's occurrence. Meanwhile, fertiliser companies have already started entering into import contracts for the current year.

Indian Potash Ltd has already signed a deal with Uralkali to import about eight lakh tonne of potash.

Zuari Industries also expects to import about 7-8 lakh tonnes of potash this year.

*Hopes to arrest sales which have been on a downward trend for the last two years*

### **Spot rubber edges up**

Spot rubber was almost steady on Thursday. The only gainer of the day was RSS 4 which improved marginally on scattered enquiries at the lower levels.

Sheet rubber improved to Rs. 138.50 ( Rs. 138) a kg, according to traders and the Rubber Board.

The grade was quoted firm at Rs. 135.50 ( Rs. 135) by dealers.

May futures closed at Rs. 136 ( Rs. 136.65), June at Rs. 140.30 ( Rs. 140.19), July at Rs. 141.05 ( Rs. 141.17), August at Rs. 141.80 ( Rs. 141.02) and September at Rs. 139.97 ( Rs. 140.50) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) inched up to Rs. 120.79 ( Rs. 120.68) a kg at Bangkok.

May futures closed at ¥197.4 ( Rs. 116.37) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates Rs. /kg were: RSS-4: 138.50 (138); RSS-5: 135 (135); Ungraded: 131 (131); ISNR 20: 130 (130) and Latex 60%: 112 (112).



### **Turmeric prices firm up on concern over lower rainfall**

Turmeric prices are on a firmer track these days on concerns of lower-than-normal monsoon rains which can negatively impact the next crop.

Good carryover stocks had so far kept the turmeric market under pressure for some months. India is the largest turmeric producer with 75-80% of global production and demand for the commodity has been increasing rapidly from the medicine and cosmetic industry.

Reports of monsoon rains being lower than normal have affected the market sentiment as farmers switch to crops that need lesser water at such times. Huge carryover stocks with farmers and traders are keeping the market currently under pressure.

Turmeric prices had surged to record levels during 2010, touching R16,350 per quintal in November that year. Prices also touched a low of R3,360 per quintal in 2012.

Very high returns from turmeric prompted farmers to switch from cotton, tapioca and soybeans in many places.

Spot price for the commodity at NCDEX counter on Thursday evening stood higher at R6502.15 per quintal. "Arrivals are quite good and the stocks are sufficient. The market may react positively to the possibility of lower rains and move up in the coming days," a trader from the Erode market told FE.

Exports between April-December 2013 stand at 58,000 tonne, higher than 49,526 tonne in April-December 2012. According to Spices Board, exports in FY13 touched 80,050 tonne as against 79,500 tonne in FY12. Curcumin content of turmeric is an important factor in pricing and trade. Indian turmeric has highest curcumin content and is preferred.

Broking firm Angel Commodities reports that lower demand at higher levels coupled with higher arrivals may pressure prices. However, lower level demand and expectations of overseas demand may support prices at lower levels.

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University reports that India's domestic consumption and export demand requires 65-75 lakh bags of turmeric per annum. The university experts are of the view that the new production and existing stocks would be unable to meet demand in the current year.

## **THE TIMES OF INDIA**

### **20% hail-hit farmers await 'zero' energy bills**

NASHIK: For Rajesh Bhamre, a farmer from Satana taluka, the wait for a zero energy bill as announced by the state government as relief to tillers hit by the unseasonal rain and hailstorms is getting longer following the power company's failure to identify the "affected cultivators" given the limitations in the list provided by revenue department.

The farmers, as a result, are now forced to approach the revenue department and prove themselves that they are the affected lot.

As many as 1.95 lakh cultivators with farms across 1.03 lakh hectares of land at 1,256 villages in the district have been affected by the unseasonal rain and hailstorms that lashed Nashik since January 23.

"I have received a complete energy bill for the January-March quarter even as our farmland was devastated by the rain and the revenue department issuing us certificates on the issue. Now we are being told to go to the revenue department and bring signatures of its officials on the bills, stating that we deserve the assistance," said Rajesh, the 38-year-

old farmer whose orchard of pomegranates was washed away by heavy rains. There are hundreds of such farmers who are being denied the benefits as of now.

Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (MSEDCL) officials, however, claimed that it was not their fault, but blamed the limitation in the data provided to them by the revenue department. The revenue department presented the lists of farmers to the MSEDCL, so that the relief of "zero" bills announced to the affected farmers by the state government could be extended. But lack of complete names of the beneficiaries or issues such as electricity connection being in the name of a person and land in the name of his or father are making it difficult for the energy company to extend the help.

"We received the names for farmers but there are two issues - either the names with revenue department or with the power company are in abbreviated forms making it difficult to identify the exact person. On the other hand, the fact that the land is owned the father and the power connection is in the name of his son, is also making it difficult to provide the relief," MSEDCL (Nashik zone) chief engineer K V Ajnalkar said.

The MSEDCL officials have asked the farmers to approach the revenue office and get signatures of the authorities that would identify them as the beneficiaries. "There is no other way out to resolve the issue. Since the revenue department is the final authority on the issue, we have asked the farmers to go to the respective officers and get their recommendations identifying them as beneficiaries. Once it is done, we will clear their proposals," an official said.

The number of such farmers is nearly 20 per cent of the affected ones, the official said, adding that many tillers have already got the status and the assistance.

Asked if the energy company had taken up the issue with the revenue department, the official said they would do it soon. "The MSEDCL and the revenue officials are here to



reach out to the people. We will in a couple of days write to the collector, requesting him the department's cooperation in authenticating the bills of the farmers who are waiting for the assistance because of the limitations of the data," Ajnalkar said.

Weather fluctuations bad for crops'

KANPUR: The cloud cover and the easterlies gave further dip to mercury which stood at 38.6 degree celsius on Wednesday. The agricultural experts advised farmers to maintain moisture in the standing zaid crop, especially mangoes, during the temperature fluctuations to save the crop. A few days back, temperature was recorded upto 43 degree celsius and it had remained above 40 degrees. However, it fell two days back when the storm hit the city.

Agro-meteorologist of Chandra Shekhar Azad University of Agriculture and Technology (CSA), Anirudh Dubey informed that fluctuation in mercury and wind direction is leading to low humidity (moisture) in the atmosphere. Such conditions are not good for crops as this causes dropping of both fruits and flowers. "During less availability of moisture content in air, need of external irrigation increases in crops. This helps in strengthening of roots," said Dubey.

The farmers are advised to irrigate the fields twice a day. The irrigation should be done before and after sunset. Extra irrigation is also needed in standing zaid crops like urad, moong, cucurbits. Fruiting plants like litchi and banana also need some extra care during weather fluctuations.

Meteorologist at CSA university, CB Singh predicted increase in the temperature in the coming days and partly cloudy weather may prevail on Thursday.

Cardamom futures extend gains, up 1.83 per cent on increased demand

# THE ECONOMIC TIMES

## Cardamom futures extend gains, up 1.83 per cent on increased demand



NEW DELHI: Extending gains for the third- straight day, cardamom prices rose by another 1.83 per cent to Rs 1,020 per kg in futures trading today as speculators enlarged positions following increased demand amid a firming trend at producing belts.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in May shot up by Rs 18.30, or 1.83 per cent to Rs 1,020 per kg in business turnover of 36 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in June contracts moved up by Rs 11.90, or 1.23 per cent to Rs 978 per kg in 482 lots.

Analysts said apart from increased domestic and export demand in the spot market, reports of a firming trend at growing regions, mainly influenced cardamom prices at futures trade.

## **Chana futures down 0.63 per cent on subdued spot demand**



NEW DELHI: Chana prices moved down by 0.63 per cent to Rs 2,975 per quintal in futures market today as speculators trimmed positions amid subdued demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position.

At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, chana for delivery in May lost Rs 19, or 0.63 per cent to Rs 2,975 per quintal with an open interest of 58,000 lots.

Similarly, the commodity for delivery in June shed Rs 17, or 0.56 per cent to Rs 3,039 per quintal in 1,15,450 lots.

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

## PDS Sugar Turns Bitter for Maharashtrians



PUNE: Getting assured supply of sugar has not been possible for people dependent on the public distribution system in Maharashtra, the largest producer of the sweetener . As the open market sugar prices are much higher than the government-offered price, the co-operative sugar mills have refused to sell sugar to the state government . The food and civil supplies department has now asked the district administration to buy sugar from the local mills by participating in their weekly tenders .

The central government abolished the levy sugar system last year making state governments make their own arrangement for procuring sugar. The central government decided to give subsidy of Rs 32/kg to the state governments for this purpose. Many states bought sugar from the open market through tendering. The efforts of Maharashtra government to buy sugar from the market through e-tendering did not receive any response from the traders.

According to the traders, the conditions were tough for participation. Meanwhile, the Maharashtra State Co-operative Sugar Factories Federation (Sakharsangh) was persuading the state government to procure PDS sugar from the sugar co-operatives through Sakharsangh. Refusing to accept this demand of Sakharsangh for almost a year,

the state government finally gave in last month as it could supply no further sugar to the PDS shops.

Last month, it has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Sakharsangh to buy sugar from the co-operatives . As the market prices of sugar have increased to more than Rs 31/kg, the sugar mills refused to sell sugar to the state government. "The price offered by the state government is less by about Rs 200 - 300/ quintal than the current market rate," said a representative of the co-operative sugar mills. The food and civil supplies department has now instructed the district administration ..



### **Farmers to Back FACT Action Panel**

The Ernakulam district committee members of Kerala Karshaka Sangam (KKS) have decided to launch a series of protests from Saturday urging the Centre to save the public sector unit Fertilisers and Chemicals Travancore (FACT) from severe financial crisis.

According to them, the decision was taken considering the difficulties that the farmers across the state will have to face if FACT shuts down permanently.

“Farmers in the state will be at the receiving end if the operation of the plant comes to a standstill as alerted by FACT chairman and managing director Jaiveer Srivastava.

Though the Save FACT Action Committee has completed 197-day long protest, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs is yet to take any solid measure to allot the revival package and rescue the company. Hence, to extend out support to the district-wide harthal called by FACT Save Action Committee on Monday, we will take out a protest march to Udyogamandal on Saturday. As many as 1,000 farmers will participate in the march. The protest will jointly be led by State Committee and District Committee leaders of the Karshaka Sangam,” said a press note of the organization.

Karshaka Sangam district committee secretary T K Mohanan said the Cabinet Committee was putting at stake the lives of farmers by delaying `991-crore revival package approved by the Reconstruction of Public Sector Enterprises (BRPSE).

“Even during the full-capacity operation periods of the FACT, the farmers in the state couldn’t get enough Factomfos for their cultivation purposes. The permanent close down of the company will definitely affect the livelihood of farmers,” he said.

The Sangam members also slammed at the Union Government for giving scant regard to resolving the issues of farmers and workers. “The Sangam will continue with the protests if the government fails to take necessary measures to allot the revival package after these protests. If the results are not favourable, we will convene a district committee meeting to decide the future cause of actions,” he added.



### **ANGRAU to Revive AMIC for Crop Price Forecasting**

Perhaps for the first time in the history of Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University, a closed project is being revived and funded by the university itself. It has agreed, in principle, to revive and fund the Agriculture Market Intelligence Centre (AMIC) as demanded by the farming community.

The AMIC was started at Sri Venkateswara Agricultural College in Tirupati five years ago as part of World Bank-funded ‘National Agriculture Innovation Project’ (NAIP) with a funding of Rs 1.20 crore over a period of five years. The main objective of NAIP was to establish a network in India for providing price forecast well in advance of sowing and harvesting of major crops so that farmers can take appropriate decision on selling and marketing of their agricultural produce.

Eleven agricultural universities in the country were thus linked and the AMIC of ANGRAU at Tirupati was one of them. Now, after a successful completion of five years,

the project came to a closure on March 31, with Kharif pre-sowing price forecast for different commodities for 2014-15 being the last one of AMIC. It became a tradition to release the almanac of pre-sowing price forecast on Ugadi at the hands of the head of the state and this year too it was no different.

However, farmers and even traders, who had benefited from the price forecasts made by the AMIC based on scientific calculation and econometric analysis using the trends in different commodity markets across the state and other parts of the country, did not want such valuable information being disseminated to them through various channels.

“Even our university’s higher officials were not ready to wind up the project now that World Bank funding for it has ended. They are very much impressed by the project and the impact it had on the farming community. They asked me to submit a proposal for continuing the project and agreed to sanction Rs 10.9 lakh per annum,”

Raghuram Papisetty, AMIC director and professor of agricultural economics, told Express.

The project is most likely to recommence in the first week of June and will be confined only to price forecasting and dissemination of the information to the farming community.

“Earlier, we also conducted training programmes and workshops as part of the World Bank-funded project. Now that it has become a university-funded project, we will limit to only the main objective.” Raghuram said funding would not be a problem since the project would not have training and workshop components. “We used to conduct a number of training sessions and workshops. Now that there will not any such programmes, the assured funds will be sufficient for price forecasting,” he said.

AMIC began its operations in June 2009 with a base line survey which revealed that soil suitability and better prices were the major factors that influenced a farmer’s sowing decision. In the last five years the centre has made 102 price forecasts for the mandate crops \_ groundnut, sunflower, soyabean, gingelly, greengram, blackgram, Bengalgram, redgram, cotton, turmeric, chilies, maize, etc.

The pre-sowing forecasts presented a view on the likely prices to prevail at harvest to enable the farmers to take sowing decisions. Similarly, the farmers' major dilemma at harvesting time is taking the right decision on disposing of the produce, whether immediately after harvest or later.

The information was disseminated through newspapers, radio, TV and also through scientists, KrishiVigyanakendras, agriculture officials, marketing and market committees. Price forecasts were also posted on the websites of the agricultural university, state department of agriculture and agropedia

### **EU envoy defends Alphonso mangoes ban, dubs it as more political issue**

*The European Union defended the ban it has imposed on Alphonso mangoes.*

The European Union today defended the ban it has imposed on Alphonso mangoes but said it was open to reviewing the decision if all issues related to quality control are addressed even as it dubbed the controversy over its move “a fallout of electoral politics”. “The situation is very simple. A bunch of files regarding problems relating to quality control of the fruit were found during the inspection by a team that had come in 2010 to check the export process. So warnings were issued.

“In, 2013 a regular follow-up inspection was carried out and they were told to put in some mechanism in next 6-8 months but that did not happen till this February,” European Union envoy Joao Cravinho said here.

Cravinho was addressing an event on ‘business opportunities in the EU’, organised by the industry lobby group All-India Association of Industries.

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He, however, was quick to add that “the EU does not want to ban Indian mangoes. This is a temporary ban and I expect there will be a revision of the situation in 2015. But there can be a review of the situation before that as well if the changes are put in place.”



Cravinho said the controversy following the ban was outcome of general elections in India and the EU Parliamentary polls.

“The controversy surrounding the ban has more to do with politics than the trade. 90 per cent of the controversy is related to the fact that you are in the election mode here. The European Parliament elections have also played some role,” Cravinho said.

He said the ban was not a big issue in Europe, which imports most of the mangoes from Africa and the US.

The 28-member EU had slapped a temporary ban on imports of Alphonso variety and four vegetables from the country on May 1, sparking protests from the government and traders.

He also ruled out any impact of mango ban on now-stalled FTA talks with the European Union.

“We are talking about something like 8-9 million euros in the context in which Indian exports to the EU is nearly 40 billion euros,” he said.

However, EU member Britain imports nearly 16 million mangoes from the country and the market for the fruits is worth nearly 6 million pounds a year.