

Rubber Board to give aid to farmers

The Rubber Board has called for applications for extending financial assistance to farmers who wish to take up rubber cultivation. The application should contain the sketch of the plantation (with the maximum area of cultivation set as not exceeding 20 hectares). The deadline for submitting applications is December 31, 2014. For details and application forms, log on to www.rubberboard.org.in

773 STUDENTS APPEAR FOR COMEDK

Nearly 773 students appeared for COMEDK 2014 examination held at the Sahyadri College of Engineering and Management here, on Sunday.

SACK ABHAYACHANDRA JAIN, DEMANDS BJP

The district unit of the BJP has demanded the removal of K. Abhayachandra Jain, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports from the Cabinet following the recent allegation of threatening a reporter. The BJP claimed there was “ample evidence” of the “goondaism” in which Mr. Jain is allegedly involved.

TELEPHONE ADALAT

The Sub-Regional Office of ESI Corporation, Mangalore, will conduct an employees’ conclave, Suvidha Samagam, on May 14 at 3.30 p.m. at the SRO Office, Navbharath Circle. The conclave will seek to redress grievances, create awareness of schemes, and implement suggestions provided. For details, contact 0824-2496716.

POWER SHUTDOWN

Due to works on the 33/11 kVA Byndoor and 110/33/11 kVA Brahmavar Electricity Sub-station, there will not be power supply in certain areas of Udupi district on Tuesday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., said a MESCOM release. The affected areas will be: Ganganadu, Teggarse, Yalajit, Golihole, Aaloor, Badakere, Trasi, Hosadu, Nada, Halladi, Heroor, Chantaaru, Kunjalu, Neelavar, Mundkinajadka, Cherkadi, Petri, Madi and surrounding areas.

NEW PRINCIPAL FOR SMS COLLEGE

H.V. Somayaji has been appointed as the Principal of St. Mary's Syrian College (SMS College), Brahmavar. He succeeds K. Nayaran who retired at the end of April.

New tools to check coconut oil quality

The three regional analytical laboratories in Kochi, Kozhikode, and Thiruvananthapuram will soon be equipped to carry out Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry on samples of food items such as coconut oil to determine their quality.

Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSA) sources say that more sophisticated tests are needed to determine the quality of coconut oil, widely believed to be adulterated with palm kernel oil. Traditional analysis of coconut oil samples do not indicate large-scale adulteration, though 20 to 30 per cent addition of palm kernel oil in a coconut oil sample usually go undetected, sources say.

Coconut oil now sells between Rs.140 and Rs.160 a kg in the retail market while palm kernel oil is cheaper at Rs.60 to Rs.65 a kg.

FSSA sources say that with the price of coconut oil going up surveillance has been stepped up. Samples are being drawn from tankers that arrive from Tamil Nadu at the check-posts. The number of tankers arriving in Kerala has dwindled after the sample collection was stepped up. Before the drive began, about 20 tankers passed the Walayar

check-post in Palakkad. But the number had now come down to about 10 a day. In view of the situation, coconut oil suppliers have been mandated to produce certificate from an accredited laboratory on the quality of the consignments, FSSAI sources say.

Horticulture: unseasonal rain revives hope for good harvest

The rain will help soil retain moisture in the critical stage

S.Aarayiammal (45) of Irumputhipatty near here, who has been yearning for a good spell of rain, feels so relaxed now thanks to the unseasonal rain in different parts of the district.

Ever since the intermittent rains lashed the district for about three days, she and her family members have been taking special efforts to revive the chilli crop raised on about 25 cents.

Aarayiammal is not alone. A lot of other farmers in Kulithalai region too heave a sigh of relief with the unexpected rain.

Many farmers say that the rain has come in handy to save the standing crops such as chilli, brinjal, and bendhi (ladies finger). “We were anxiously waiting for rain since the onset of summer as crops were withering due to soaring temperature.

Though we generally raise drought-tolerant crops, the rain will be extremely helpful to maintain moisture in the soil in the critical stage.

The rain has improved chances of getting a good yield,” says Aarayiammal.

There are reports that farmers, who raised onion, tomato and other horticultural crops in Pappakkapatty, Kannupatty, Santhai Irumputhipatty, Pamanur, Sanapatty, Ayyalur and other villages in Kulithalai region, were also feeling relieved over the good showers in the hot summer . S.Annadurai of Irumputhipatty said that the groundwater table had increased slightly due to the rain. The water level had gone up although very marginally in the well situated in his farm.

He had received similar inputs from the farmers of neighbouring villages too. However, the feel-good factor would not last beyond 10 days as the temperature had again gone up dramatically in the last two days.

Periyar dam brought a social change in Madurai region



“Supply of water obtained from the Vaigai (river) is so precarious that even in good years the paddy crop barely covers 20,000 acres annually although the existing tanks and channels command have enough land and sufficient hydraulic capacity for irrigation of double the extent, if only sufficient supply of water is delivered at the moderate rate,” says the book *History of Periyar Project*, authored by A.T. Mackenzie, the then Executive Engineer, Madras Public Works Department, Periyar Dam Project.

The statement made prior to the existence of the Periyar and the Vaigai dams speaks the dry condition of erstwhile combined Madurai district.

It is in this context, the Periyar dam, constructed by the British in 1895, assumes significance in its contribution to irrigation of vast tracts of agricultural lands in Madurai.

The water from Mullai and Periyar rivers in Kerala that was wastefully draining into the Arabian sea was intercepted by constructing the 1,200-foot-long Periyar dam.

“The west flowing river water was diverted to the East by digging a tunnel for 5,887 feet,” said former PWD Executive Engineer C. Suthanthira Amalraj. The water was let into the Vaigai river through Vairavanar and Suruliyar.

That the 15-lakh population of Madurai city gets its drinking water and over 2.08 lakh acres of land, majority in Madurai, is being irrigated even after 120 years justifies the painstaking efforts made by British Engineer Col. John Pennycuick in constructing the dam under very unfriendly environment.

The drought and famine recurring in Melur Taluk prompted the British to construct the dam is revealed in the words of Mackenzie.

“Almost every alternate season is one of scarcity in this taluk, and when an exceptionally dry year occurs there is severe distress, and the population is thinned by death and migration,” it reads.

Stating that north-east rain used to be highly uncertain, the book said that agricultural operations were seldom rewarded with a good yield.

One of the progressive farmers of the district R. Arulprakasam said that the 1869 census revealed that around 1.23 lakh people were missing in the district.

“It was not clear whether those people died or they migrated elsewhere due to drought and famine,” the farmer said. “Never had Melur Taluk realised a full yield in paddy cultivation prior to Periyar water irrigating the vast farm land," he added.

The British had originally planned to bring water only to Tirumangalam and not Melur Taluk. But, later when they found that Melur had a cluster of around 1,000 tanks that could hold around three times the capacity of the Periyar dam, water was brought to Melur.

One of the main reasons for diverting Periyar water to Melur was people were increasingly involved in robberies, said Mr. Arulprakasam.

“Even a Collector then had noted in his diary that Periyar water had addressed to some extent the law and order problem of the region after the commissioning of the dam,” he said.

Throwing more light on the technical aspects, Mr. Amalraj said it was the Periyar dam and the subsequent construction of the Vaigai dam, modernising the irrigation system made possible to extend farming activities to 10 times of the total area of land that were under cultivation then, but also give assured irrigation.

While originally the Periyar dam was designed for irrigation of only 1.5 lakh acres, the PWD took up modernising the system by lining the Periyar main canal and its 12 branch canals.

Water that was saved by way of preventing loss through seepage was used to extend irrigation in Tirumangalam through the Tirumangalam main canal.

Similarly, a link canal was constructed along the left flank of the Vaigai river between the Vaigai dam and Peranai to stop seepage of water while flowing through the riverbed.

Besides irrigation, the Periyar dam was providing drinking water to Madurai city, Theni, Andipatti-Sedapatti, Dindigul and hundreds of local bodies that had their infiltration wells of their water projects on the Vaigai riverbed.

It also helps generating 140 MW of power.

The Periyar dam did not bring just water to Madurai, but the winds of social change that made more people, who were indulging in anti-social activities, jump into farming activities.

“This resulted in a cultural sea change too. One cannot find jallikattu so popular in the region anywhere except for Madurai, Sivaganga and Cumbum (that were benefited by the Periyar water),” Mr. Arulprakasam said.

Stating that increasing of the water level in the dam to 142 feet from 136 feet will add 1,548 mcft of water, he said it would give an additional three turns of irrigation.

“Whereas all these days we had been fighting for one additional turn to save crops during the fag end of the irrigation seasons, the additional water will give us (the farmers) all the peace,” he also said.

The city can also claim an additional reservation in the Vaigai dam for its drinking water requirements. Thus the Periyar dam remains a lifeline for Maduraiites.

‘Ooty Rose Garden ideal for eco therapy’



The curtain came down on the 13th Ooty Rose Show at the Government Rose Garden (GRG) here on Sunday.

Participating as the Chief Guest in the valedictory function, the Nilgiris Collector, P. Sankar, said all forms of vegetation emerging from forests had long been considered as the mother of agriculture.

The annual Summer Festival of which the Rose Show was a part was being celebrated in honour of the forests and hills. He pointed out that the Himalayas alone boasted 30 varieties of forests.

Adverting to roses, their origin, benefits and the role they played in conveying different kinds of messages and feelings, Mr. Sankar said that they had enormous medicinal value. The GRG has the potential to be promoted as a place for eco therapy and a research facility. Starting with just ten varieties in 1995 it now has about 27,000 plants representing 4000 varieties. The Joint Director of Horticulture, R. Kathiravan, welcomed the gathering. The Deputy Director of Horticulture, N. Mani, proposed a vote of thanks.

The Rolling Cup for the Outstanding Rose Garden (above 500 bushes) went to M.A. Khan of Golkonda House, Ooty. The Sterling Biotech Company, Sandynullah, walked away with the trophy for the best collection of roses in pots. A special prize for the best bloom in show also went to Sterling Biotech Company. The Saint Josephs Boys Higher Secondary School, Coonoor, bagged the rolling cup for outstanding rose arrangements.

Roses took over the hills for two days



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One lakh roses

One lakh roses are in bloom for the 13th Annual Rose Show at the Government Rose Garden here.

The cynosure of all eyes was a 20-foot-long veena made from about 15,000 roses by the Nilgiris horticulture department.

A seven-foot kangaroo made with 5,000 roses by the department staff in Coimbatore, a vintage car made of 4,000 roses by the Salem staff, and a 6.5-foot penguin from 4,000 roses by the Kodaikanal staff are also vying for the attention of the thousands of tourists.

The Nilgiris District Collector P. Sankar inaugurated the two-day show on Saturday.

Rain boost for farming

A good spell of rainfall recorded in the last few days back prompted agriculture activities in the district. Farmers are busy with ploughing the lands and applying the farm yard manure ahead of sowing Kharif crops.

According to official sources, the district has recorded 33.7 mm rainfall as against the average rainfall of 830 mm from January to December.

In Yadgir taluk, Yadgir 30.2 mm followed by Saidpaur (32mm), Gurmitkal (15mm), Konkal (16mm), Balichakra (20.2 mm) and Yadgir station 15 mm rainfall was recorded.

In Shahapur taluk; Shahapur 33.6 mm followed by Gogi (29.2), Hayyal (74mm) Wadagera (65mm) and Hattigudur 42 mm rainfall was recorded.

While in Surpur taluk; Surpur 54.6 mm followed by kakkera (52mm), Kodekal (51mm) Narayanapur (47.8mm), Hunasagi (53.4mm) and Kembhavi 27.2 mm rainfall was recorded.

Agriculture Department has set the sowing target during the Kharif season as 2,68,320 hectares. Of the 2.68 lakh hectares, the cereals were to occupy 45,615 hectares followed by pulses at 1, 14,400 hectares, oil seeds at 60, 505 hectares and commercial crops at 48, 800, K Balaraj, Joint Director of Agriculture Department told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

Of the 45,615 hectares of cereals, bajra was 2300 hectares and paddy was 40,000 hectares, he said.

In the 1.14 lakh hectares of pulses, red gram was 70,000 hectares and green gram was 37,900 hectares.

In the 60,505 hectares of oil seeds, sunflower was 34,600 hectares and groundnut was 20,950 hectares. In the 48.800 hectares for commercial crops, cotton was 47,500 hectares and sugarcane was 1300 hectares, he added.

Presently, the district has stocked 9960 metric tonne of fertiliser as against the demand of 65,800 metric tonnes. Required fertilisers would be supplied on farmer's demand, Dr Balaraj said

These mango trees date back to Tipu's era



This farmer from Kirugavalu village in Malavalli taluk of Mandya district has preserved 116 mango trees dating back to the times of the then Mysore ruler Tipu Sultan.

Carbon dating and other scientific assessment by the Genetics and Plant Breeding Department of the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, have shown that these trees are more than 200 years old.

This 20-acre orchard, popularly known as 'Bada Bagh', is said to have been raised by those in the palace of Tipu, who was a great lover of fruits, especially mangoes. The orchard was later gifted to a farmer by Tipu. Syed Ghani Khan (39), who has inherited this from his forefathers, is preserving it with care.

According to Mr. Khan, the trees yield exotic varieties of fruits. "While some trees yield fruits that taste like sweet lime, others produce fruits with cumin flavour. There are some trees that yield fruits resembling the shape of fish," he said.

In great demand

Till recently, his family used to sell the fruits locally. But from the last two years, he has been selling the fruits at organic outlets in Mysore apart from exporting them to Dubai and Abu Dhabi, where they are in great demand and also fetch a premium price.

In fact, Mr. Khan, who was passionate about becoming a curator at an archaeological museum, he did his graduation in archaeology and museology. But he had to return to his native village from Mysore to take care of his farm and support his family after his father became bedridden due to an ailment. "I then decided to turn my exotic farm itself into a live museum and started working on it," he said.

Paddy varieties too

Mr. Khan also pursues another avocation passionately. He collects native varieties of paddy and grows them mainly to preserve those rare varieties. "Presently, I have a collection of about 600 native varieties of paddy, including 'rakta dham', 'naadikeli' and 'jugal'," he said.

His efforts paid off as his farm caught the attention of Delhi-based Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority, which has started registration of the exotic

varieties of mangoes in the garden. He will get legal right over the plant species after the registration.

Mr. Khan was also honoured with the ‘Plant Genome Saviour Farmer Recognition’ award by the authority in 2012.

Mr. Khan now wants other farmers to grow these rare varieties of mangoes. He, however, is unable to take up propagation of these rare varieties systematically by constructing a poly-house as it requires big investment. As none of the government agencies offered him any help, Mr. Khan himself started an organisation to train farmers and students about local varieties of crops.

He is looking forward to getting government assistance to take his mission forward and ensure that these exotic varieties of mangoes are grown in the orchards of many more farmers.

The 116 trees, which are more than 200 years old, yield exotic varieties of fruits

Mango cutters have their hands full



People with a discernible palate are his prospective customers. The pickle preparation with unripe mango provides seasonal employment to the family of Grandhi Anand from

Medara community. Come the pickle season during summer, Anand, adept at chopping off the fruit into tiny pieces with his sharp-edged butcher's knife, is in great demand.

The fleshy pieces with the kernel intact are preferred for fermentation as gnawing of the kernel with the pickle is to the gourmet's delight at the mealtime. About 150 Medara families take up this work for two months. "We do basket making, which is our ancestral vocation, in normal course. Mango cutting only supplements our earnings during the summer months," says Anand. He and his wife are engaged in cutting the fruits for which they charge Rs 2-3 per fruit. "I can cut not less than 2,000 mangoes a day, involving a 12-hour work," Anand said.

The work fetches him not less than Rs 1,000 per day on an average. The knives are specially made for making baskets which suit the mango-cutting. They are sharpened at Adamilli near Kamavarapukota periodically.

People prefer to use the Nuzvid brand of mangoes for pickle making in the coastal Andhra . The fruit is harvested in a tender stage exclusively for the purpose of pickle preparation and it keeps flooding the market in huge quantities with the onset of May. The people from within the city and cluster of surrounding villages buy the fruits and approach the Medara caste men for cutting.

"After all, it is not our cup of tea. I will get it done only by the choppers from the Medara community by paying whatever they charge," says Paladugu Vijayalakshmi, a retired school teacher. Her husband had his finger cut once while trying to cut mango. She will send mango pickles to her children in the United States at least twice a year.

Just like Ms. Vijayalakshmi, it is a common practice for all the households in the city to send pickles for their NRI children.

About 150 Medara families take up this work for two months

Now, get info on farm tech

In a bid to create awareness on farming techniques and to increase productivity, the Karimnagar District Cooperative Central Bank (DCCB) on Sunday launched Farmers Development Centre, a first-of-its-kind initiative in the country.

The FDC, launched in association with Nabard and e-fresh portal, would enlighten farmers about the latest farming technology and methods for increasing yield, DCCB chairman K. Ravinder Rao told reporters. It would also conduct soil and water testing and give appropriate suggestions to farmers on the use of fertilizers, pesticides and crops.

It would also sell the latest variety of seeds, pesticides, fertilizers and other agriculture tools etc. The FDC would educate the farmers about the need for developing vermin compost. They would also remove middlemen and ensure that farmers have direct linkage with the market so as to get better prices for their produce. The FDC would also provide weather forecast for farmers. Similar FDCs were being planned at Jagtial and Sircilla town, DCCB authorities said.

On the go

In order to ensure that the latest agricultural developments reach the grassroots-level farmers, the DCCB had also decided to launch '208 Rythu Ratham'. The specially-designed vehicle contains all information on the FDC and also facilities for the conduct of soil and water testing in the fields. It would also contain audio-video equipment for educating farmers on the latest farm technologies.

The Karimnagar District Cooperative Central Bank's Farmers' Development Centre would provide inputs on technology, weather, crop variants and fertilisers to spur productivity

Sharing farm-fresh success stories



The International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) kick-started the Krishi Parivartan Yatra on Sunday, hosting the first of five Agro-tech and Business Opportunities Expos scheduled to take place in the country.

The Krishi Parivartan Yatra takes 50 farmers and entrepreneurs – beneficiaries of the World Bank-funded National Agriculture Innovation Project (NAIP) of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) – on a five-city tour to share new technologies and agri-ventures with fellow farmers.

The activity is being organised by NAIP to promote cross-learning and sharing of success stories among farmers across the country so as to strengthen agribusiness and boost the transformation of Indian agriculture. It will conclude and culminate in the Agri-Innovation Conclave in New Delhi on May 18.

The first expo held at ICRISAT showcased the best of enterprises developed through NAIP initiatives. The activity included parallel sessions and discussions where NAIP farmer beneficiaries shared their success stories with about 200 farmers and entrepreneurs promoted the tremendous potential in agribusiness. The train journey was then flagged off from ICRISAT's global headquarters in Patancheru for the five-city tour after the day-long activity.

Innovation in agriculture is widely considered key to achieving food security, said NAIP National Director D. Rama Rao. The Krishi Parivartan Yatra was being organised to actualise this vast untapped potential of Indian agriculture, he said.

ICRISAT's director (Strategic Marketing and Communication) Joanna Kane-Potaka said the institute's mission was to make smallholder farmers in the drylands prosperous, not just self-sufficient. "And that is why we are engaged in promoting an inclusive and technology-based entrepreneurship and agribusiness programme," she said.

ICRISAT Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) Program has supported more than 200 agribusiness ventures and benefited over 5,00,000 farmers in Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring States, its Chief Operating Officer S.M. Karuppanchetty said.

"We have identified and supported some very good innovative products and technologies and taken them to the market," he said, adding that the Krishi Parivartan Yatra supported the institute's goal of bringing together the best of agri-ventures and enterprises to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

WATER LEVEL

Madurai

The water level in Periyar dam stood at 114.80 feet with an inflow of 315 cusecs and a discharge of 500 cusecs.

The level in Vaigai dam was 27.56 feet with an inflow of 390 cusecs and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 1,326 mcft.

Kuppanampatti recorded 7.3 mm of rainfall during the 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Sunday, PWD officials here said.

TIRUNELVELI

The water level in Papanasam Dam on Sunday stood at 52.65 feet. The dam had an inflow of 534.35 cusecs and there was no discharge.

The level in Manimuthar Dam stood at 67.45 feet. There was an inflow of 241 cusecs and the discharge was nil.

Kanyakumari

The water level in Pechipparai dam on Sunday stood at 18.65 feet, 42.80 feet in Perunchani, 7.18 feet in Chittar I, 7.28 feet in Chittar II, 6 feet in Poigai and 54 feet in Mamabazhathuraiyar dam.

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Monday, May 12

Max Min

35° | 28°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:44

Humidity: 75

Sunset: 06:26

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1008

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Tuesday, May 13

Max Min

36° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday

May 14



37° | 28°

Cloudy

Thursday

May 15



36° | 29°

Sunny

Friday

May 16



36° | 29°

Sunny

Saturday

May 17



36° | 30°

Sunny

Sunday

May 18



36° | 29°

Sunny

Airport Weather

Chennai

Chennai

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:44

Humidity: 75

Sunset: 06:26

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1008



Business Standard

India's sugar output to be 24.8 mn tonne: USDA



The US farm department has estimated India's [sugar production](#) at 24.8 million tonne for the ongoing 2013-14 season, higher than the 23.8 million tonne forecast by the domestic industry body [ISMA](#).

The country had already produced 23.15 million tonne sugar till April 15 of the current October-September season, as per the data maintained by Indian [Sugar Mills](#) Association.

The US Department of Agriculture said the output is expected to be lower than 25.1 million tonne achieved in the 2012-13 season.

It said the output in India - the world's second largest producer and biggest consumer of sugar - is expected to be higher as cane production has risen and favourable monsoon conditions have improved the overall sugarcane recovery to 10.25%, an increase of 0.25% over last year.

USDA said [sugar output](#) in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh - the country's top producers - is likely to be 7.73 million tonne and 6.78 million tonne respectively, for this year.

Last year, Maharashtra had manufactured 8 million tonne, while Uttar Pradesh produced 7.46 million tonne.

Production in Karnataka is expected to be exceptionally high at 4.2 million tonne this year, as against 3.4 million tonne in the year-ago period, it said.

Sugar output in Tamil Nadu and Gujarat is expected to be 1.5 million tonne and 1.18 million tonne respectively, this year. Last year, Tamil Nadu had produced 1.8 million tonne and Gujarat, 1.13 million tonne.

Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) has revised the output for this year from 25 million tonne to 23.8 million tonne due to lower output in key producing states.

Rise in cotton prices puts pressure on yarn margins



With the [cotton prices](#) rising again in recent times to close to Rs 44,000 per candy, yarn makers are under margin pressure. Cotton prices that had been stable till February-March later on saw a gradual rise from Rs 41,500-42,000 per candy to Rs 44,000 per candy, wherein a candy is about 356 kg.

While cotton prices have been rising, yarn makers have not been able to raise prices

simultaneously due to low demand.

According to cotton yarn makers such as [Suryalakshmi Cotton Mills](#), rising cotton prices have resulted in shrinking margins in the last one month. "Rise in cotton prices coupled with restricted demand has led to increased pressure on margins," said Paritosh Aggarwal, managing director of Suryalakshmi Cotton Mills that manufactures cotton yarn as well polyester yarn. Industry sources cite a decline in margins by around 5-7 per cent in last one month. What's more, demand too has been stable and low for cotton yarn from [fabric makers](#).

"Margins for yarn makers is typically low. In such a scenario, the recent rise in cotton prices has led to even further decline in margins," said Jayesh Pathak of Bombay Yarn Traders Association. At Rs 44,000 per candy, the yarn industry is currently the only part of the textile chain that is feeling the maximum heat. On the other hand, fabric and garment industry has seen stable input prices as well as stable sales in recent months.

"It is only the yarn makers that are facing pressure on margins. Fabric and garment sales have been doing good. However, with China also lowering its yarn prices, domestic yarn makers are not able to raise their prices despite input costs such as cotton rising in recent times," said DK Nair, secretary general of Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI). Textile mills, on their part, are attempting to create a level playing field with traders for purchase of cotton. For this, apart from a 5 per cent interest subvention, mills have been demanding extension of credit limit from current 3 months to 9 months in order enhance their cotton inventory holding capacity. Mills are of the view that except for a few large players, almost the entire industry ends up buying a very small portion of cotton during the peak season of November to March, while rest is bought by wealthy traders or exported to competing countries like China and Pakistan, among others.

Agri-biz road show begins

Around 50 farmers and entrepreneurs will travel to five cities to meet fellow farmers and share their experiences with new technologies and agri-ventures. These farmers have benefitted from the World Bank-funded National Agriculture Innovation Project (NAIP) of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

The initiative is called the Krishi Parivartan Yatra (a journey of agricultural transformation).

Conclave

The Yatra, along with the Agri-Biz Idol Camps held in various cities from May 5 to May 9, will both culminate at the Agri-Innovation Conclave in New Delhi. The Conclave, to held on May 18-19, aims to bring together agribusiness experts, professionals, and other stakeholders, on a common platform to share NAIP's success. The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) kick-started the Yatra on Sunday, hosting the first of five Agro-tech and Business Opportunities Expos scheduled to take place in five cities: Hyderabad, Nagpur, Bhopal, Mathura and New Delhi.

Over the last five years, 22 agribusiness incubators have been set up in agricultural universities and research institutes by NAIP-ICAR with support and mentoring by ICRISAT-ABI.

The Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) Programme has supported more than 200 agribusiness ventures and benefited over 5 lakh farmers in Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring States.

King of Fruits to Become Dearer as Rain Hits Growth



The unseasonal rain that lashed the district in the past few days has dealt a severe blow to mango farmers. As a result, the mango yield is expected to come down this season. Already, the crop suffered a setback in the flowering stage in February due to extended cool weather on account of a series of cyclonic storms that hit the state. The recent rain has come as a double blow to the farmers.

With the increase in the demand-supply gap in the days to come, middlemen men are likely to benefit more than the farmers. “Due to rains on Thursday and Friday, most of the mangoes fell down and got damaged. About 10 per cent to 20 per cent crop has been damaged. Traders do not buy mangoes even if there is a slight cut on the fruit. As a result, we will not get remunerative prices,” says B Venkatesh, a mango farmer from Adavi Nekkalam who brings his produce to the Nunna market.

The prices of Banginapalli mangoes in Nunna mango market ranges between Rs 6,000 and Rs 17,000 per tonne. The Totapuri variety fetches Rs 5,000 to Rs 12,000 per tonne. When compared to the market price, the prices offered to the farmers are meager. While Banginapalli mangoes are sold at prices ranging from Rs 35 to Rs 60 per kg to consumers, farmers have to contend with Rs 6 to Rs 17 per kg.

The production is so low this year that only 400 tonnes of mangoes are being exported every day as against 1,000 tonnes last year.

“In the last 30 days, 13,316 tonnes of mangoes were brought to Nunna market, which is very low when compared to the figure every year. With this, mango is going to become dearer for the common man,” sums up M Srinivasa Rao, supervisor at Nunna mango market.

Cassava Farmers Call for Government Intervention

The untimely rains that hit the district in the past week had put the cassava farmers in dire straits with their intermittent crops including cassava being inundated with rain water.

The farmers have turned up with selling off these products at a meager price that would not even meet their farming costs.

The inundated yards caused as result of a week-long rains have forced the farmers to conduct an early harvest of tapioca this time.

The mass harvesting and the pre-mature tuber root vegetable led to a considerable drop in the price of cassava in the open markets.

The demand has also gone down as the heavy down pour has led to a drop in the starch content in the tapioca tubers.

Adding to the woes, the farmers also suffered from heavy crop loss in the past week due to the heavy storms. Cassava, which is available at a rate of `20 per kilogram in the open markets, earns a farmer only `10. Farmers from the low-lying area including Pala, Ettumanoor and Arppookkara are forced to sell off their products as soon as possible in order to prevent a total loss of the crop.

The cassava market has already been suffering from low prices for months which further dropped this week.

“There are not much buyers for the premature crop. It tastes bad when you boil it. Also, it is hard to make chips out of it as chopping a premature root takes much effort,” said Varghese Kalayil, a farmer from Pala.

The farmers asked the government to make an alternate market and decide a fair price to save the struggling market.

Immediate market intervention is the only solution being pointed out to save farmers from suffering a total loss.

Many have grown cassava in the paddy fields as intermittent crop. It is time for the next crop and the farmers are under pressure to destroy the remaining crops unless any urgent market intervention is made by the government.

Mango Buffs Have a Whale of a Time

Summer months may be the cruellest in the cultural capital in terms of heat waves, but it is the best time when it comes to savouring seasonal fruit, especially the mango and jackfruit.

The three-day annual Fruit and Food Festival, being organised by the district administration in association with the District Tourism Promotion Council and other government and private agencies, saw mango buffs thronging the stalls at the Town Hall. More than 165 varieties, even from abroad, are on display. The fest is part of the farm/plantation tourism scheme.

The festival is getting an overwhelming response with many takers even for the indigenously grafted mango saplings and mango products. The highlight is the 100-odd recipes of techie-turned-entrepreneur James Joseph.

The exhibition that aims at providing information on effective cultivation strategies and information on quality of the fruits will conclude on Monday.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Punjab Agricultural University organizes five-day training course on small-scale agro-based industries

UDHIANA: A five-day training course on "Small Scale Agro-based Industries" for the rural youth of Punjab concluded at the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) here. The department of processing and food engineering, PAU, organized the course in which as many as 20 trainees from all over Punjab participated.

In his remarks, PPS Lubana, dean, College of Agricultural Engineering and Technology, PAU elaborated on the importance of such training courses for the youth.

"The processing of wheat, paddy and oil seeds is the need of the hour in the processing centres, he said. The basic knowledge of processing of haldi, honey, fruits and vegetables, imparted to the trainees during the course, will be of immense benefit," the dean said. Lubana gave away the certificates to the participants.

Amarjit Singh, senior extension engineer and coordinator of the course, said that participants were equipped with the basic knowledge about processing of agricultural produce and the required machinery. He added that lectures on Agmark certification along with providing the loans from the banks were also organized.

PAU authorities said that besides, the rural youth were shown already functional agro-processing centres at Bagha Purana and Kotkapura. They added that participants lauded the efforts of the organizers and were anxious to start their own agro-processing centres.

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Dairy farming training for the farmers of Punjab starts at Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University

LUDHIANA: Dairy farming training for the farmers of Punjab started in the department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Extension Education, at Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU), here.

R.S Sahota, director of Extension Education, GADVASU, said that after getting such training from the university, the unemployed youth can start their own enterprise, which on one hand can provide the needed employment and on the other hand bring diversification in agriculture. He added that although livestock population has declined over the years, but still there is increase in milk production, which is indicative of high and better producing animals being reared in the state. He stressed upon the value addition of dairy products, record keeping of dairy farming and especially on the issue of raising of calves born on farmer's own dairy farm for the breed improvement.

J S Bhatti , head, department of Veterinary Animal Husbandry Extension Education informed that Experts from College of Veterinary Science will deliver lectures on various aspects of dairy farming. He interacted with the farmers and dealt with their queries. "The farmers were advised to have proper planning in connection to land, funds and availability of loans etc. Further they advised to keep high yielding dairy animals in their herds", Bhatti said. "They will be instructed to construct cheap but comfortable sheds for their animals which will help them in better hygienic conditions and excellent management. Major part of the expenditure in dairy farming is on feed and fodder".

M P Gupta , technical coordinator of training course told that t he farmers will be guided to make the green fodder available to their animals throughout the year.

"They will also be encouraged to make the concentrate feed at the farm itself. This will be ensured quality of the feed and it will be economical too. The farmers will be trained to differentiate between healthy and sick animals. Role of regular vaccination, deworming and hygiene in prevention of diseases will be stressed", M P Gupta said. "The

first aid methods for various ailments will be taught and practical demonstrations will be held. Tips for timely detection of heat, timely Artificial Insemination and care of pregnant and new born animals will be emphasized. The experts from Bank and Insurance Company will also deliver their lectures regarding facilities provided by them".