THE HINDU

Relief sought for Kashmir farmers affected by rain and hailstorm

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Jammu and Kashmir unit of the CPI (M) on Wednesday expressed concern over the damage to standing crops in various parts of the State due to heavy rain and hailstorm and demanded immediate relief to the affected farmers.

"Heavy rain and hailstorm have damaged fruit orchards and other standing crops in many areas in Budgam, Pulwama and Shopian. The government should depute teams to assess the losses and provide immediate relief to the affected farmers," the PDP said in a statement here.

The State unit of the CPI (M) said the farmers have suffered extensive damage to their crops and the government must "come to their support and succour".

"The farmers have suffered extensive damage to their paddy saplings and apple orchards due to weather vagaries and in such situation, the grower community looks forward for support and it becomes an obligation for the government to come to their support and succour," State CPI (M) secretary M. Y. Tarigami said in a statement.

Mr. Tarigami demanded the introduction and implementation of Crop Insurance Scheme (CIS) in the State to protect fruit growers and agriculturists in the event of losses suffered due to natural calamities.

"The Crop Insurance Scheme would not only have covered the crops affected by calamities, but also by various diseases by virtue of which the farmers in the State experience extensive financial damages every year," he said.

The CPI (M) leader asked the government to come up with details on steps taken to waive off the interest on the agricultural and horticultural loans in view of the damages caused to these sectors due to heavy rains and hailstorm.

He also demanded that the government should provide details about steps taken to impose ban on the import and sale of sub-standard chemical fertilisers and pesticides which have proved very harmful to the fruit and crops.

Heavy rain and hailstorm lashed many parts of the Valley on Tuesday causing damage to various standing crops and fruit orchards.

Farmers to get compensation

The district administration has instructed the section of farmers affected by pollution caused by industrial effluents discharged into the Noyyal River to furnish land survey numbers for entitlement to compensation.

The farmers whose lands were affected due to effluent discharge by dyeing units have been entitled to compensation following a court order. In a press release, District Collector S.Madhumathi said the details of land survey numbers must be conveyed to Environment Compensation Commission, 148 / 298, Peters Road, Chennai – 86. - Special Correspondent

Unseasonable rain raises farmers' hope

Summer rain, though unseasonable, has helped farmers of Thanjavur district, take up some agriculture activities. Summer ploughing has been taken up by farmers at various places.

“This is a welcome rain. This has helped standing cotton crop and early kuruvai taken up by farmers in pumpset-irrigated areas,” said agriculture department officials.

According to meteorological department, normal rainfall for May is 53 mm. But from May 1 to 9, the district has experienced 98 mm of rainfall. “This has helped in raising the water table. Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board officials said there has been an increase of six feet in the water table. Early kuruvai has been raised on 3,750 hectares of land in Thanjavur district. Nursery has been raised on 180 hectares. Summer paddy crop has been raised on 10,000 hectares. Pulses (blackgram) has been raised on 4,000 hectares.

However, farmers in canal-irrigated areas have to wait for an advisory from agriculture department for raising kuruvai. Water level at Mettur dam stood at 32 feet on Wednesday. The storage was 9 tmc.ft, inflow was only 2,000 cusecs. So there was no possibility of opening the Mettur dam on June 12, the traditional date of opening the dam for kuruvai cultivation. S.Ranganathan, Secretary, Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, said that four parameters have to be taken into consideration for opening

Mettur dam for kuruvai cultivation. The water level at Mettur dam should be beyond 90 feet, storage should be nearly 45 tmc, for continuous release of water for one month from the date of opening the dam, and regular power supply.

<u>New solar policy to offer incentives to farmers</u>

The revised solar energy policy, which is coming up before the State Cabinet for clearance on Thursday, will have provisions for encouraging farmers to set up small solar power plants with a capacity of 1 to 3 MW in their farms, according to Minister for Energy D.K. Shivakumar.

Addressing a curtain raiser for the proposed Green Summit 2014, to be organised by the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI) in Bangalore in June, the Minister said on Wednesday that the policy would provide incentives to farmers who are willing to set up solar plants on their farms.

Another feature would be liberalisation of norms related to purchasing farm land for non-agricultural purposes, to help investors buy land from farmers to set up solar power plants, he said.

Among other things, the policy will lay emphasis on setting up grid-connected rooftop solar power plants. Such rooftop plants could be used either for one’s own power consumption or for selling to the State grid, he said.

Pointing out that only 20 per cent of the investors had managed to implement their projects with respect to the allocation of 12,000 MW of wind energy to various private companies, he said: “We want only serious players.”

Mr. Shivakumar assured the FKCCI that there would not be power shortage for industries. “Even if you bring thousand investors to the State, I will ensure that they get sufficient power,” he said.

Even as the State is witnessing power cuts this summer, Mr. Shivakumar said he had taken care to ensure that the summer was seen off without load-shedding. “I know there are some minor hiccups here and there. But, by and large, we have ensured a comfortable summer in terms of power supply without load-shedding,” he claimed. “Recently, I had announced that load-shedding will be enforced as there was a shortage of about 1,000 MW. But, officials have told me that it is possible to manage the situation without load-shedding.” Speaking on the occasion, Additional Chief Secretary, Energy Department, P. Ravi Kumar, said the revised solar energy policy would restore the “pole position” of Karnataka in the solar energy sector.

- ***Policy to lay emphasis on setting up***

grid-connected rooftop solar power plants

- ***It can be used for one’s own power consumption or for selling to State grid***

Pay our dues: cane farmers

The Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) has demanded that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah issue stern notices to sugar factories to pay the arrears of farmers for the cane supplied to the factories.

Talking to reporters here Kodihalli Chandrashekar, president of the Sangha, said that though the government had announced minimum support price (MSP) for sugarcane about six months ago, most of the sugar factories had not paid the MSP to the farmers.

Now the sugar factories were pleading that they would incur huge losses if they pay the MSP declared.

Mr. Chandrashekar said that more than 10 ministers in Mr. Siddaramaiah’s Cabinet had their own sugar factories and they had been violating the government’s order. He urged the Chief Minister to warn the sugar factories of dire consequences if they failed to pay the amount. He suggested filing criminal cases against the deviant sugar factories and withdraw various facilities given to them.

Mr. Chandrashekar warned that if the government failed to initiate action against the sugar factories, the farmers would stage indefinite strike in front of the Vidhana Soudha during the next assembly session to be held in June.

‘Ministers lobbying’

In Bijapur, Srimant Duddagi, district president of Sugarcane Growers’ Association said that in protest of sugar factories paying just Rs. 1,800 per tonne instead of the MSP of Rs. 2,650 per tonne, the cane growers had decided to start picketing the sugar mills of the district from May 15.

Mr. Duddagi claimed that six mills of the district together had to pay arrears of Rs. 324 crore to the farmers. Mr. Duddagi charged the government of succumbing to the pressure tactics of sugar mills owners, of whom some are Ministers in the State cabinet. He said that Ministers such as S.R. Patil, Shamnur Shivashankarappa and Satish Jarakiholi who also owned sugar mills, were behind the sugar lobby that was preventing the farmers getting their justifiable price.

Notice to sugar mills

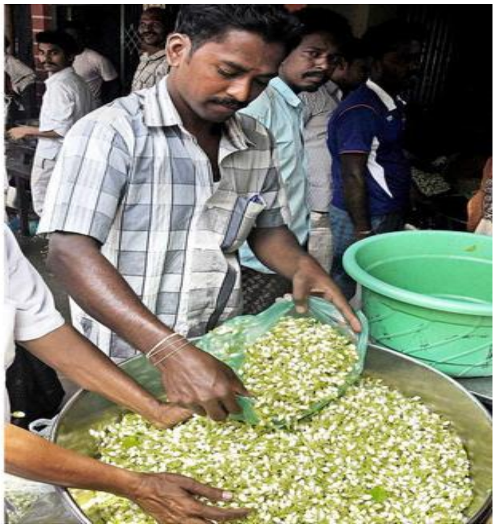
In Bidar, Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate P.C. Jaffer has issued notices to three cooperative sugar factories – Naranja Sahakari Sakkare Karakhane, Bidar Sahakari Sakkare Karakhane and Mahatama Gandhi Sahakari Sakkare Karakhane – and private factory Bhavani Sugars limited in Barur in the district, warning them of legal action if they fail to pay farmers the State-advised price on time.

The factories have been asked to pay farmers before May 19 or face legal action under section 11 of the Karnataka Sugarcane purchase and supply control Act of 2013.

Plant welfare improved by fungi in soil

A team of biologists has found that a protein, known as a proton pump, at the interface of fungus and root cells energises cell membranes creating a pathway into the plant cell for nutrients such as phosphorus.

Flower trade wilting under summer heat



Srirangam flower market seessignificant fall in arrivals

Arrival of flowers at the market on Sattara Street at Srirangam has dwindled in the past couple of weeks because of summer and lack of irrigation facility in villages.

Sattara Street is an important flower market catering to the needs of not only the retail dealers in the city but also the merchants in Ariyalur, Perambalur, Jayamkondam, and parts of Thanjavur and Pudukottai.

Apart from the quality in flowers, the multiple varieties in flowers are not to be seen.

M. Munirathinam, a dealer in "sevanthi" which is primarily cultivated in Thoppur in Salem district, attributes the poor yield to flowering season of the "sevanthi' was nearing its end.

"There are three varieties of the species – white, yellow, and dark yellow. Commencing from Karthigai month in Tamil almanac, we get high yield till February. But, with the season coming to an end, the flowers wither away by the time they reache the Tiruchi market from Thoppur," he said.

He has been incurring a huge loss as the flowers lacked lustre.

J. Govindarajan, who recently took to the trade, said that his daily turnover was just Rs. 5,000 now as against Rs. 20,000 in January. The arrival of jasmine at the market had been a source of support for his livelihood, he said.

He said he had to clear his stock by 8 a.m. daily to get the best price. It was also the time when a large number of retail dealers from other centres such as Jayamkondam bought jasmine.

"The price per kg is Rs. 200 in the morning but slides to Rs. 130 by afternoon," he said.

V. Rangarajan, a dealer in *marikozhundhu,* said he had been getting the bundles from Manapparai. The flowers withered within a few hours in the morning because of severe heat conditions.

The business at Sattara Street has been subdued in the last few days because of the hot weather that not conducive for flowers, the traders added.

Pomegranate growers suffer from lack of market facilities

The district being drought-prone, farmers here are known to fight against the vagaries of nature by growing crops that are in demand across the country as well as abroad. But even with a good yield, they fail to book profits owing to lack of facilities, including purchase centres.

The pomegranate growers in the district are facing problems owing to the negligent and lethargic attitude of officials and elected representatives. According to official sources, the farmers in the district have grown pomegranate on 8,270 hectares of land — 4,750 hectares in Hosadurga taluk, 2,250 hectares in Hiriyur taluk, 410 hectares in Challakere, 357 hectares in Molkalmuru, 378 hectares in Chitradurga, and 125 hectares in Holalkere taluk.

The farmers in other districts such as Bagalkot, Bijapur, Koppal and Tumkur also suffer from lack of market facilities and sell their produce at much lower prices, owing to exploitation of middlemen and fear of sudden collapse in prices.

Dayananda, a farmer from Kadavinkatte village in Hosadurga taluk told *The Hindu* that there has been considerable increase in the pomegranate growing areas in the region owing to the high demand in the country and abroad.

But, even after growing good quality pomegranate, farmers suffer from lack of market facilities. They have to transport pomegranate to Bangalore where the prices always fluctuate.

“There are many instances where the farmers have sold better quality pomegranate at a very low price in Bangalore, owing to lack of transportation and storage facility. The Horticulture Department in the district also lacks able staff to provide technical guidance to protect the crop. Once the pomegranate is affected by disease, farmers have to depend on private experts and pay them their fee,” he lamented.

Shankarappa, another farmer from the same village, said he requires a minimum of Rs. 1,000 a year to protect a pomegranate tree, but can get only Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 11,000 a quintal depending on quality. But the buyers in Bangalore purchase the produce at considerably lower prices by misguiding farmers, he said. After paying for the transportation charges and repaying debts, farmers make a meagre profit, he added.

"The government should make necessary arrangements for providing proper market facilities and technical guidance to farmers to protect the crop from diseases," he added.

- ***Farmers sell their produce at much lower prices than their market value***
- ***This is owing to exploitation of middlemen, fear of sudden collapse in prices***

Traders rotting in a cramped banana market

Cramped for space and lacking in amenities, 'Vazhakkai Mandi,' the wholesale banana market functioning adjacent to Gandhi Market in the city, cries for better infrastructure.

Although the market is one of the biggest in the region from where retail traders from different districts buy the fruit in auctions every day, it has been functioning with primitive infrastructure amidst poor sanitary conditions down the years.

With Tiruchi and neighbouring Karur districts being major banana-growing districts in the State, over 65 banana traders operate out of the market.

The market attracts about 15,000 to 20,000 banana bunches every day and the arrivals are auctioned and transported every evening. Yet, the auctions are held at a small open space where all banana bunches have been off loaded, hardly leaving any space for movement of people.

“Lack of space in the market forces us to offload and auction our produce right outside the market on the East Boulevard Road. The auction centre has no roof and only traders have now put up a temporary thatched roof (pandal) to protect the fruits from the scorching sun. The corporation has not provided any amenities,” says a trader who does not want to be identified.

Traders and farmers complain over the poor sanitary condition at the market. The adjoining fish market and a drain flowing nearby leave an overpowering stench. Traders claim the corporation does not even provide sanitary workers to clear the organic waste generated at the market. Traders themselves have hired 10 workers to remove the garbage generated in the market and dump it outside for the corporation vehicles to transport them to the garbage dump.

A few months ago, the corporation had proposed to shift the banana market to the Viragupettai overhead tank complex by building a commercial complex at the site. However, there has been no progress on the decision so far. The move met with resistance from traders.

Sources in the corporation pointed out that the civic body has decided to renovate the Gandhi Market, which was established 70 years ago, for providing better amenities.

- ***The market attracts about 15,000 to 20,000 banana bunches every day***

- ***Traders say the corporation does not deploy adequate manpower to handle the waste***

Managing ring spot virus in papaya

Ring spot virus (PRSV) is the most destructive disease of papaya in India. PRSV is spread (transmitted) among papaya plants by mechanical activities like pruning, as it is transmitted through the sap.

Numerous aphid species like Myzus persicae, Aphis craccivora, and Aphis gossypii spread this infestation. Seed transmission has not been detected.

Fruit drop

Initial symptoms appear as a light and dark green mosaic pattern on the leaves. Later on the leaves show a marked distortion and reduction in leaf area. Water soaked oily streaks get formed both on the petioles and on the upper parts of the trunk. Flower and fruit drop is noticed.

Pale green patches appear on the young fruits. Fruits from infected trees show bumps / raised projections similar to those observed on fruits from plants suffering from boron deficiency. Characteristic ‘ring spots’, which form the basis for the disease name start appearing on the fruit,

Number of rings on the fruit varies and the rings become less distinct as the fruit matures and yellows. Fruit yield from infected plants is lower when compared to healthy plants. Infection at early stages does not produce an economical crop.

Once the symptoms have become prominent in the field it would have become too late to spray for aphids as the disease would have already been transmitted to nearby plants.

Preventive sprays

In order to implement successful vector control, frequent preventive sprays are required. Regular monthly sprays of insecticide (75 ml / 100 L) of water and Multi Micronutrient sprays (0.1 per cent) or Soluble Boron (0.01 per cent) can be done at monthly intervals.

Barrier crops like Jowar / Maize should be sown densely along the perimeter one month before papaya transplanting. Plastic silver coloured mulch should be laid on the field. One year crop schedule to maximise production can be attempted in areas with severe PRSV infection.

Disease transmission can occur when infected seedlings are used. Hence nurseries should be raised under insect proof net cover.

(Dr. Duleep Kumar Samuel, Senior scientist and Dr .Krishna Reddy, Director, The Virology Lab, Division of Plant Pathology, Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Bangalore , email: dksamuel@gmail.com)

1.15 tonnes of artificially ripened mangoes seized

Food Safety Officials on Wednesday seized 1.15 tonnes of artificially ripened mangoes from several shops here.

Tamil Nadu Food Safety and Drug Administration Department (Food Safety Wing) Designated Officer

R. Kathiravan said that raids were conducted at 10 wholesale markets at Ukkadam and five retail shops in Gandhipuram.

Of these, five markets at Ukkadam and a shop in Gandhipuram were found selling artificially ripened mangoes. Further, around 50 kg of calcium carbide stones were seized from a grocery shop in Ukkadam fish market. The shop owners have been warned of stringent action if they indulged in such activities again.

A team comprising Food Safety Officers – K . Chandran, R. Govindarajan, S. Gerald Sathiapunithan, R. Rajendran, K. Suruli and S. Velusamy – conducted the raid. The mangoes would be buried at the Corporation Compost Yard at Vellalore. Such raids would continue in the future as well, he added.

Vendors warned against selling artificially ripened mangoes

Even as mango season sets in, fruit vendors have been put on notice by authorities against selling artificially ripened varieties that are flooding markets across the city.

Terming such acts illegal, the officials of Department of Food Safety and Revenue Department warned that it would crack down on vendors and traders in the city found to be selling artificially ripened fruits.

The department's diktat follows reports of mass arrivals of artificially ripened fruits from parts of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

Recently, on receiving a tip-off from the public, the sleuths of the food safety department launched raids at several shops and godowns owned by fruit vendors in the Big Market area right in the heart of the city.

The tip-off proved to be authentic as officials stumbled upon a large quantity of mangoes ripened artificially using banned chemical calcium carbide as additive. These mangoes were sold in polythene packs or in cartons for bulk buyers.

I. Danaraj, Food Safety Officer, told *The Hindu* : “The tip-off helped us organise raids on shops and godowns in the Big Market vicinity with the assistance of Revenue and Municipal authorities. We found small sachets of calcium carbide kept in several cartons which contained fruits. We seized those fruits weighing approximately three tonnes from vendors. Immediately after the seizure, we destroyed and disposed of the fruits.”

Explaining that such artificially ripened mangoes would give serious health hazards to the general public, he said the officials had warned vendors against adopting artificial methods to ripen the fruits. Severe action was being contemplated against offenders after consultation with top officials in government, he said.

The provisions of Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on sales) Regulations, 2011, prohibits the use of carbide gas in ripening of fruits. The provision says, “No person shall sell or offer or expose for sale or have in his premises for the purpose of sale under any description, fruits which have been artificially ripened by use of acetylene gas, commonly known as carbide gas.

In the eyes of the law, the ‘Fresh Fruits and Vegetables shall be free from rotting and free from coating of waxes, mineral oil and colours.’

WATER LEVEL

MADURAI

The water level in Periyar dam stood at 114.70 feet on Wednesday with an inflow of 303 cusecs and a discharge of 500 cusecs. The level in Vaigai dam was 30.64 feet with an inflow of 520 cusecs and a discharge of 40 cusecs.The combined storage in Periyar credit was 1,427 mcft.

Rainfall: The rainfall recorded during the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Wednesday (in mm) is as follows: Veerapandi 8, Vaigai dam 3.7, Manjalaru 1 and Sothuparai 3.6.

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 35.13 feet on Wednesday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 1,418 cusecs and the discharge 500 cusecs.

hindustantimes

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Sunny

Thursday, May 15
Max Min
36° | 28°

Rain: 0
Humidity: 49
Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:43
Sunset: 06:27
Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast

Partly Cloudy

Friday, May 16
Max Min
40° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday **May 17**	Sunday **May 18**	Monday **May 19**	Tuesday **May 20**	Wednesday **May 21**
41° | 27°	36° | 29°	34° | 29°	35° | 29°	35° | 29°
Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Chennai

Rain: 0
Humidity: 49
Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:43
Sunset: 06:27
Barometer: 1005

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Tata Coffee Q4 profit down 35%

Losses incurred through the sale of its overseas subsidiary have dragged Tata Coffee's group consolidated profit down by 35.28 per cent to Rs. 16.32 crore for the quarter ended March 31.

The company's total income from operations, however, rose 2.43 per cent to Rs. 397.3 crore during the fourth quarter compared with the year-ago period.

Tata Coffee has attributed the loss to the sale of Consolidated Coffee Inc. The US-based subsidiary had invested in a US-based functional beverage company. Based on changed market conditions, its performance and significant future funding requirements, Tata Coffeedecided to divest its holdings in Consolidated Coffee during the second quarter of the fiscal 2013-14. The losses on this account are included under exceptional items and net of tax and minority interest, the impact on group consolidated profits is Rs. 33 crore.

The board of directors has recommended a dividend of Rs. 13 a share of Rs. 10 each, aggregating to Rs. 24.28 crore for the year ended March 31.

Coffee and pepper continued to record encouraging performance throughout the year. Instant Coffee recorded improvement in sales volumes during Q4, from new customers and new markets, said a company release.

"Its focus on high value specialty coffee helped neutralise the fall in both the robusta and arabica prices during the year. The pepper business has generated substantial margins, underlining our strength of being a multi-product plantation company," it added.

Eight O' Clock Coffee

During the 12-month period, Eight O' Clock Coffee Company (EOC), a subsidiary of Consolidated Coffee, recorded a total income of $170.69 million, compared with $202.84 million in the previous year.

The operating profit of EOC stood at $25.89 million against $29.85 million.

The growth in single serve coffee business has impacted the sale of coffee in conventional bags and cans across the US.

At 35,000 tonnes, pepper output could drop to the lowest in two decades

Prolonged dry period, quickwilt disease cited for plunging production

Kochi, May 14:
Pepper production in the current season to December is likely to be the lowest in two decades at 35,000 tonnes.

According to trade estimates, this marks a sharp fall from the already lower production of 50,000-60,000 tonnes over the last few years.

Production in Karnataka is estimated at below 15,000 tonnes, while in Kerala it could be around 20,000 tonnes.

In fact, a section of the trade says that the 35,000 tonnes includes 6,000 tonnes of pepper held at the NCDEX warehouses after being sealed by the Food Safety Commissioner since December 2012.

Reasons for drop

A prolonged dry period last year, affecting growth of the pepper plant, and incidences of "quickwilt' disease are blamed for the sharp drop in pepper production.

On the other hand, many growers have switched over to other lucrative crops such as rubber in Kerala's Pathanamthitta and Idukki districts.

Vast stretches of area under pepper have been converted to tourist resorts in Kerala's Wayanad district.

Many young farmers are complaining about the sustainability of pepper vines, discouraging them from taking up pepper cultivation, said Rajeev, a grower from Wayanad.

However, Joshua Daniel, a farmer in Konni (Pathanamthitta district) said that the current uptrend had encouraged him to plant about 25,000 vines.

Global output

Globally, pepper production is declining. Output in Indonesia and Sri Lanka have dropped, while Brazil’s crop has been steady between 30,000 and 35,000 tonnes.

Vietnam has been the only exception, coming up with a bumper crop of 1.35-1.4 lakh tonnes.

As a result, except for Vietnam, pepper prices in all origins have moved up sharply.

In India, the price surge has been sharp in view of substantial domestic consumption compared to other producing countries.

Domestic absorption of pepper is estimated at around 45,000 tonnes and since the overall usage of pepper in food is small, the spike has not affected consumption.

Some Indian exporters have entered into January-March, March-June commitments with overseas buyers, expecting the prices to fall in view of huge production in Vietnam.

Many seem to have not taken into account the huge shortfall in Karnataka’s production. This has resulted in pepper prices soaring to Rs. 700 a kg.

Therefore, imports during January-March of whole pepper at Cochin port was 4,200 tonnes. Of this, the trade estimates that 1,000 tonnes could have been re-export .

Value-addition could have been done in the whole form itself, while balance of 3,200 tonnes could have been used by extraction units and pepper grinding units. More exports are likely during April-June.

Export prices

The pipelines are running with bear minimum stocks and traders in Kerala have limited stocks.

On the other hand, farmers and dealers are wary of holding pepper stocks above Rs. 500 a kg in view of the global prices that are $3,000-5,000 a tonne below Indian prices.

Efforts on to revive Kerala’s saline water rice farming

Kerala’s Pokkali farming, a unique saline tolerant rice variety that is facing extinction, could be on a revival path if efforts of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (Ernakulam) under the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute bear fruit.

This old and traditional method of cultivation has been reduced to less than 1,000 hectares in the coastal areas of Ernakulam and in some parts of Thrissur and Alappuzha from 25,000 hectares a quarter century ago.

It is a typical farming system in which paddy and shrimp cultures are alternatively carried out in the same field.

The farming is organic in nature and no chemicals are used as farmers have to cultivate for export-oriented shrimps next season. Paddy is cultivated from June to early November.

Shinoj Subramanian, Programme Coordinator, and Vikas P.A., a KVK specialist in the subject, said that Pokkali farmers faced problems from white spot virus disease in shrimps, high labour costs, lack of suitable machinery, climate change, low productivity of traditional rice varieties and pollution.

Taking into account all these factors, KVK has decided to involve itself in resolving the issues connected with its farming practice by extending adequate support by supplying machineries for field preparation and harvesting.

It will also launch Pokkali varieties that yield more. To augment income from the unit area, KVK will also initiate steps to assure a premium market for Pokkali products, the officials said.

The productivity of Pokkali paddy is now in the range of 1.5 tonne/hectare for local varieties and only 2.5 tonnes for improved varieties. This is against the productivity of 5.2 tonnes/hectare for hybrid paddy varieties commonly cultivated elsewhere.

KVK has also introduced a new package of practice to augment income from unit area of Pokkali field by integrating high density cage culture of high value candidate fin fishes (Pearl Spot and Mullet) along with shrimp without disturbing the paddy farming.

The fixed cost for cage culture in a one hectare of field works out to be Rs. 88,000. Since the assets can be used for five years, the fixed cost per year would be Rs. 17,600. Initial investment will be provided as loan to farmers through financial institutions with KVK providing technical assistance.

Reverse move to cut export sops for raw sugar, industry tells Centre

The sugar industry has urged the Centre to reverse its decision to cut incentives for raw sugar exports.

Industry representatives said that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs had announced an incentive of Rs. 3,300 a tonne on raw sugar exports which was notified on February 28. The incentive was to have been recalculated every two months based on the rupee-dollar rates with higher incentive if rupee strengthens. A Vellayan, Chairman, EID-Parry, said that the decision to slash incentives will affect sugar mills' liquidity and their ability to pay sugar farmers. Also, the inconsistency in policy will affect exporters' credibility in the international markets.

Palani G Periasamy, President, South Indian Sugar Mills Association – Tamil Nadu, said the Government's decision to reverse the policy was 'shocking'. This will result in huge liquidity pressure on sugar mills and push them into deep distress.

Vellayan said the objective of the incentive was to boost raw sugar exports to address the domestic surplus. Following three years of high production, stocks are estimated to reach about 750 lakh tonnes (lt) by September 2014. This had hit domestic sugar prices and sugarcane arrears have mounted to over Rs. 12,000 crore, he said.

The plan had been to export over 40 lt of raw sugar. But just about 5 lt have been exported and the mills have committed to exporting about 4 lt.

Mixed trend in spot rubber market

Spot rubber was mixed on Wednesday.

Sheet rubber was quoted unchanged at Rs. 141 a kg by traders. The grade firmed up to Rs. 141 (Rs. 140.50) and Rs. 138 (Rs. 137.50) respectively, according to the Rubber Board and dealers.

RSS 3 (spot) improved to Rs. 123.22 (Rs. 122.45) at Bangkok. May futures closed at ¥196 (Rs. 114.65) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg): RSS-4: 141 (141); RSS-5: 138.50 (138); Ungraded: 135.50 (134); ISNR 20: 132 (132) and Latex 60%: 112 (112).

Cotton body pegs crop size at 383 lakh bales

The Cotton Association of India (CAI) has pegged the crop size for the current season to September at 383.50 lakh bales (of 170 kg each), up from its earlier estimate of 381.3 lakh bales.

In its estimate for April, based on arrivals, the association pegged total supply at 442.75 lakh bales.

Domestic consumption has been pegged at 295 lakh bales, thus leaving a surplus of 147.75 lakh bales. Arrivals as on April 30 were 341.75 lakh bales. About 90 per cent of the total estimated crop for the season has already arrived in the market signifying that the 2013-14 cotton season is coming to an end.

Arrivals in Gujarat – the top producer of the fibre – were the highest at 101.2 lakh bales, followed by Maharashtra at 80 lakh bales.

Maize exports to fall on firm domestic prices

Maize exports are likely to be lower this marketing year to September owing to higher domestic prices compared with the international market. According to experts, for the marketing year, maize exports may fall 26 per cent to around 3.5 million tonnes (mt) against 4.76 mt last year.

Maize exports have been lower during the October-April period of this season at 2.17 mt, down some one million tonne against the same period a year ago.

"We expect exports to touch 3.50 mt in the remaining period as there is demand from Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan and West Asia. Higher exports in the last few months have supported prices and so we believe that prices are likely to rule stable with a positive bias till next season," said Raju Choksi, Vice-President (Agri Commodities), Anil Nutrients Ltd.

The second advance estimates released by the Agricultural Ministry have pegged maize production at 23.29 mt (22.50 mt).

According to Choksi, maize supplies will increase due to higher production and lower exports. However, prices will not be affected as they are hovering around the minimum support price of Rs. 1,300 a quintal.

"Prices will move in a narrow range. We expect maize demand in the domestic market to be stable with about 50 per cent of the total consumption going for poultry, about 25-30 per cent going for starch making and remaining for consumption and exports," Choksi said.

However, maize production may be affected during the oncoming kharif season if the El Nino phenomenon occurs.

"Though, it is bit earlier to give any figures, confirmation of El Nino occurrence would pare expectations of maize production," Choksi said.

Currently, Indian maize hovers at $240/tonne f.o.b Kakinada/Vizag port. Meanwhile, trade sources said that South American origin corn has been sold to buyers in South Korea in the range of $265-269 c.i.f for delivery in September and October. In the domestic market, maize is trading in the range of Rs. 1,150-1,250 a quintal at producing centres.

Business Standard

10 mt of wheat export possible by reducing spoilage: Study

India can record 10 million tonnes (mt) of annual wheatexport through sustained annual production of about 95 mt and continuous reduction in post-harvest crop losses due to inadequate scientific storage capacity, a study by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham) has said.

The study quantifies total wheat spoilage due to the dearth of adequate storage and the slow pace of creating fresh warehousing capacity at about 40 per cent of India's annual wheat output, worth Rs 50,000 crore.

"A long-term and stable wheat export policy is the need of the hour, as it will go a long way in developing a dedicated clientele in the global wheat market, helping India earn much-needed foreign exchange. Thus, issues vis-à-vis storage, domestic consumption, food security needs, population growth, etc, must be analysed and a pragmatic view should be taken in this regard," the study said.

"India should formulate a strategy to garner about 10 per cent share in the global wheat market, provided the right steps are taken to tap this potential in the long run," D S Rawat, Assocham's national secretary-general, said while releasing the study.

In 2012-13, India's wheat export stood at 6.5 mt, worth Rs 10,529 crore, compared with a mere 0.74 mt, worth Rs 1,023 crore, in 2011-12, data compiled by the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, under the commerce ministry, showed.

The total production of wheat, which accounts for about 35 per cent of India's foodgrain basket, might stand at 100 mt by 2016-17, against 93.5 mt as of 2012-13. However, unless concerted efforts are made to fight the vagaries of weather, pests, diseases and poor productivity in most wheat-producing states, it was difficult to achieve higher production on a consistent basis, Rawat said.

Assocham believes procurement by government agencies might exceed the official target of 34.12 mt, as the quality of wheat this year has been affected by hailstorms and unseasonal rains. Also, farmers prefer to unload inferior-quality wheat early and, therefore, the government might end up procuring more.

With about 90 mt of annual wheat production, India ranks second only to China. However in terms of yield (three mt/ha), India is far behind European countries such as France, Germany and the UK (each has about seven mt/ha) and China (five mt/ha).

Veg oil imports up 27% in April on lower domestic crushing

India's vegetable oil import jumped 27% in April on rising consumption from retailconsumers and lower lean season crushing locally. Data compiled by the apex industry body the Solvent Extractors' Association (SEA) showed India's veg oil import at 832,760 tonnes in April this year as compared to 654,827 tonnes in the corresponding period last year.

During the first half of the current oilyear (November 2013 - October 2014), however, import of veg oil covered earlier loss to record a marginal 2% decline overall. In the period between November 2013 and April 2014, veg oil importsstood at 5.16 million tonnes as against 5.28 million tonnes recorded in the same period last year.

The data reveals a turnaround in sentiment. Veg oil refineries opted to build inventories of crudeoil now rather than import refined oil earlier due to positive refining margins. That resulted into crude oil import rising to 90% in Aprilthis year, the highest ever.BV Mehta, executive director of SEA, had earlier said, "There is a difference between Indian and global prices. So, importing oil is attractive. This has affectedcrushing."

Arrivals have seen a hit in three months and have been lower 25% compared to last year's. Meanwhile, India's demand for edible oil is on the rise and is going up by eight to nine lakh tonnes every year due to rupee denominated increase in demand. Also, a majority ofthe crushers have shut shop for the moment, while the ones which are workingare only using 30% of their capacity.

This year, India's crushing has hit a four year low due to soybean not being available for crushing which hasalso caused imports to increase. However, non edible oil imports in April stood at lowest levels according to SEA 13,325 tonnes compared to 13,500 tonnes last year. Since November to April, India'snon edible oil imports stood was down by 35% to 91,899 tonnes.

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Mango prices: Maharashtra govt sets up probe

The Maharashtra government has set up a five-member committee to probe the reasons behind plummeting prices of mango this season.

According to the state government, the reason cannot be the recent ban on mango exports imposed by the European Union.

"The state's share in the exports is very less and hence it is not expected to result in falling prices," officials in the state co-operation department said.

The committee comprises Maharashtra State Consumers Federation Executive Director Deepak Tawre, members of Maharashtra State Agriculture Marketing Board D L Tamale and Sunil Borkar, Dapoli-based Maharashtra State Mango and Cashew Board CEO Vikas Patil and Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) MD Sudhanshu.

The committee has been asked to conduct a detailed probe and submit its report to the government by May 22.Agricultural Produce Market Committees in Mumbai and Pune have also been asked to cooperate in the probe.

Below normal monsoon to boost India’s cardamom export share

A less-than-normal monsoon is likely to help the cardamom market firm up in the coming days on fears of a lower yield. India is the second-largest producer of cardamom in the world after Guatemala and the biggest consumer of the spice. Guatemala leads with 60-66% of the world production but has seen production come down in the past few years due to natural disasters like flood.

“Fears of El Nino affecting our monsoon have been seen historically affecting Guatemala too. This could help us get more export share as Guatemala is the main competitor to our product in West Asian markets like Saudi Arabia. Market is likely to get firmer in the days to come,” KK Devassia of Cardamom Growers Association said. Lower production in Guatemala is also likely to prevent imports into India which tend to depress the domestic market, he added.

Average price on Wednesday auctions stood at Rs 830.84 per kg with nearly 29 tonnes being traded. Some summer rains in the producing areas have also raised hopes of an early crop .Cardamom plants are very sensitive to rains with productivity directly related to the volume of rains and the number of raining days. Cardamom needs low temperature, high humidity and incessant drizzles. Heavy rains could damage the crop, while intermittent rains that keep the atmosphere humid augur well. A study by the Agricultural Market Intelligence Centre (AMIC) of Kerala Agricultural University in 2012 had also reported higher acreage for cardamom in the region. Devassia estimates that production could be as high as 20,000 tonne but feels that the additional production can be easily absorbed as consumption of the spices has increased across the world.

Exports from India had declined in the last few years due to the premium on Indian cardamom compared to the Guatemala commodity. Exports for the first three quarters of the fiscal are seen higher by 40 % in volume at 2080 tonne as against 1491 tonne during the same period of last fiscal. Value realization is also seen higher by 23 % at Rs 164. 29 crore. During FY13, exports stood at 2,372 tonne valued at Rs 212.15 crore.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Coriander, jeera weaken on subdued demand

NEW DELHI: Coriander and jeera prices declined by Rs 100 per quintal in the national capital today on subdued demand from retailers and stockists amid adequate stocks.

Coriander prices fell by Rs 100 to Rs 8,900-13,900 per quintal. Jeera common and best quality also declined by Rs 100 each to conclude at Rs 11,300-11,500 and Rs 14,000-14,500 per quintal.

Marketmen said subdued demand from retailers and stockists against adequate stocks, mainly pulled down coriander and jeera prices. Following are today's quotations per quintal: Ajwain 13,500-18,500, black pepper (per kg) 750-950, betel-nut (kg) 180-200, cardamom brown-Jhundiwali (kg) 1,350-1,430 and cardamom brown-Kanchicut (kg) 1,500-1,600.

Cardamom small (kg): Chitridar 710-780, cardamom (colour robin) 700-760, cardamom bold 740-780, cardamom extra (bold) 910-980 and cloves (kg) 950-1,075.

Sugar prices drop on sluggish demand, adequate supply

MUMBAI: Sugar prices dropped at the Vashi wholesale market here today due to reduced offtake from stockists and bulk consumers amid ample supply positions.

Medium Sugar (M-30) slumped by Rs 30 per quintal to finish at Rs 3,282/3,442 from overnight closing level of Rs 3,282/3,472. Small sugar (S-30) also fell by Rs 6/11 per quintal to Rs 3,126/3,271 per quintal as compared to Rs 3,132/3,282 yesterday.

Following are today's closing rates for sugar (per quintal) with the previous rates given in brackets: Medium sugar (M-30) quality: Rs 3,282/3,442 (Rs 3,282/ 3,472). Small sugar (S-30) quality: Rs 3,126/3,271 (Rs 3,132/ 3,282).

THE TIMES OF INDIA.

First organic farming training centre to come up near Dhule

NASHIK: The first training centre for organic farming will soon be set up near Dhule in Nashik division by the agriculture department of the state government.

The state government has decided to set up the training centre at a farm at Vadane in Dhule district in the division. A grant of Rs 5 lakh has already been approved for the purpose.

Speaking to TOI, an official from the agriculture department said, "In October 2013, the government had announced a new policy on organic farming. Accordingly, it had been decided to set up training centres across the state to provide train farmers on organic farming at divisional level. The training centres are to be set up at the farms of those farmers who have good experience in organic farming and are desirous to impart training to others as well."

"The first training centre is being set up in the division, which will be located at the farm of farmer Dilip Patil at Vadane in Dhule. The state has also approved a grant of Rs 5 lakh for the centre, which will have the capacity of imparting training to around 50 farmers at a time. The training centre will have facilities like TV, an LCD projector and other required equipment. Farmers will also get practical knowledge of organic farming. Farmers from Nashik, Jalgaon and Nandurbar districts may take benefits of training at the centre," the official explained.

Farmer Patil has been into organic farming for the past 15 years and had received the 'krishibhushan' award from the state government in 2012 in recognition of his contribution in organic farming.

Patil said, "The proposed training centre is expected to be ready by August-end. It is the policy of the state to set up training centres at the farms of those farmers who have good experience in organic farming and are ready to impart practical training to other farmers. The government has approved three farming training centres, two for Aurangabad division and one for Nashik division. The yield of the farm and the quality of crop is reduced due to use of chemical fertilizers, which also create health problems. But organic farming increases the yield and the quality of the crop."

Considering the disadvantages of chemical fertilizers, the state government has started promoting organic farming in the state and has set the target of bringing 10% of the total agricultural area under organic farming.

Farmers get bogus bonus for NTPC Lara project

RAIPUR: Raigarh district authorities have unearthed a massive scam, allegedly involving officials of the revenue department and a public sector bank, in the payment of bonus as part of the compensation deal for the land acquired for the proposed 4000 megawatt NTPC project at Lara and have recommended registration of criminal cases against seven persons.

While investigations into the multi-layered scam are still in progress, preliminary inquiries by Raigarh collector have revealed a deep-rooted conspiracy to defraud government. Farmers were taking advantage of NTPC decision of a uniform bonus payment of Rs 5 lakh for any piece of land that had been acquired, whether it is one acre or smaller.

The scam has been unearthed in village Jhilgitar and there are apprehensions that it could extend to eight other villages, where land was acquired for the project spread over 3,500 acres.

According to sources, investigations initiated after an anonymous complaint have revealed that since the bonus payment of Rs 5 lakh was universal, some farmers divided their land in smaller chunks within their families and claimed the bonus payment on them. As a result, instead of Rs 14.15 lakh bonus, a farmer, whose 1.147 hectares (2.83 acres) land was acquired, attempted to pocket Rs 35 lakh, over three times, by dividing and registering the land in smaller pieces in the names of his seven family members.

Authorities suspect that this could not be done without the involvement of officials of revenue department and the bank where the accounts were opened to receive payment for compensation and bonus. Involvement of NTPC officials has also not been ruled out.

Talking to Times of India, Raigarh collector Mukesh Bansal said that three patwaris of revenue department have been suspended and action has been recommended against two tehsildars of Janjgir and Gariyaband districts, who were posted here earlier.

Sources claim that according to initial estimates, 300 odd farmers owned land in the nine villages but the number of compensation claimants had gone up to 6,000, indicating illegal divisions of ownerships.

Sources also claim that recently it was discovered that 800 fake farmers had opened 1,403 accounts in Jhilgitar village alone.

NTPC signed a MoU with Chhattisgarh government to set up a 4,000 mw power project in the state in 2009. The project cost is estimated to be over Rs 20,000 crore.

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Compensate Gurgaon Farmers at Current Rates, Court Tells Builders

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has directed builders to compensate Gurgaon farmers on current circle rates for buying over 6oo acres of land, a petitioner said Wednesday.

The court has directed seven builders to compensate farmers from Manesar, Nakhrola and Naurangpur villages according to current circle rates.

"The court of double bench comprising Justice Suryakant has ordered the builders to pay farmers according to circle rates of their areas concerned. The court passed the order Tuesday," Omprakash Yadav, petitioner in the case, told IANS.

"The court has put a permanent stay on further hearing of the case till the orders are not implemented," Yadav said.

The court also ordered the builders to pay back the amount of house buyers (who now did not want to buy) in the affected areas along with an interest rate of 18 percent per annum.

The private builders purchased a total of 688 acres of land from the above-mentioned villages after state government's Haryana State Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (HSIIDC) issued notices to the farmers under sections 4, 6 and 9 for acquiring their agricultural lands for essential public needs.

Scared farmers sold their lands to the builders but the HSIIDC withdrew the notices after the private players purchased the land.

The first notice under section 4 was issued Aug 27, 2004. The notice under section 6 was issued April 25, 2005.

Section 9 (called award -- a farmer has to surrender his land to government whether he wishes or not, the amount of the land is forcefully deposited in bank account of land owner concerned) was implemented Aug 2, 2007.

Private builders started buying the land at the rate of Rs.25 lakh per acre.

"The rates were hiked from Rs.25 lakh to Rs.1.5 crore per acre between July 25 and Aug 5, 2007. The court took notice of this raise and ordered to compensate the farmers on current circle rates," Yadav added.

"It was all the conspiracy and deal between the Haryana government and the private players to grab land from farmers and we challenged it in the high court," Yadav added.

The current circle rate of agriculture land in Manesar is Rs.1.90 crore per acre, while it is Rs.30,000 per square metre in residential zone.

Food Dept Seizes 3 Tonnes of Artificially Ripened Mangoes

Three tonnes of artificially ripened mangoes were destroyed by the Food Safety Department after confiscating them from two godowns in Grand Bazar market on Wednesday. 'Banganapalli' and 'Neelam' mangoes were found to be artificially ripened using calcium carbide, which is carcinogenic, Food Safety Officer Dhanraj told Express.

Based on a complaint from the Puducherry Municipality, a team of municipal and revenue officials checked the products and found them artificially ripened and in violation of Food Safety and Standard Regulation, 2011.

Such artificially ripened fruits do not have a pleasant smell and are half yellow and half green, Dhanraj said. Other fruits like bananas are also artificially ripened using calcium carbide.