

THE HINDU

Farmer's conservation efforts get State recognition



On Thursday, Cheruvayal Raman returned home from the State capital with renewed zest for his mission in life. The 64-year-old traditional farmer from Wayanad, who is known for conservation of indigenous paddy varieties, is happy that the government has finally acknowledged his work spanning five decades.

On his way back after accepting a one-time grant of Rs.25,000 from the Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB), Mr. Raman told *The Hindu* : “This is the first time a government agency has provided me with assistance to continue my work.” Mr. Raman received the grant from Oommen V. Oommen, chairman, KSBB, at a function held here to mark International Day for Biological Diversity on Thursday. Mr. Raman has been instrumental in converting his homestead near Kammana in Wayanad into a treasure house of traditional paddy seeds. He has a collection of 41 varieties and is constantly on the lookout for more to add to the gene bank. “There was a time when more than 150 varieties of paddy seeds were cultivated here,” he said.

Mr. Raman, who started farming at the age of 10, has evolved a unique system for preserving the varieties he has come across. While he cultivates the Marathondi variety in

three acres for his family, the others are farmed in small plots, three to four cents each, for the seeds.

“I follow the organic method of cultivation. Traditional varieties are resistant to diseases.”

Instead of selling the seeds, he has worked out a barter system, under which farmers are given the seeds for farming and have to return the seeds after harvesting the grain. He is only happy to share his farming experience with others and regularly interacts with students.

K.P. Laladhas, member secretary, KSBB, said the one-time grant was a recognition for the work done by Mr. Raman in conserving rare germplasm. He said the board would take steps to document the collection. The KSBB has also initiated efforts to create a seed bank of foodgrains, pulses, and cereals. “We have started collection of seeds. The project will be implemented in collaboration with the University of Kerala,” Dr. Laladhas said.

Good rain prompts farmers to take up potato cultivation

The recent moderate to heavy rain in many parts of Hassan has prompted farmers to rush to Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee yard and buy seed potatoes.


Till Wednesday evening, 22,000 tonnes of seed potatoes, sufficient for sowing in nearly 16,000 hectares of land, had been purchased by farmers in Hassan.

This season, traders brought about 27,000 tonnes of seed potatoes from Punjab, thinking that a large number of farmers would cultivate it, considering the good pre-monsoon showers.

The district administration, after consultations with traders, fixed a price of Rs. 2,000 a quintal for seed potatoes.

Shakeel Ahmed, Deputy Director of Horticulture Department, told *The Hindu* on Thursday that farmers were procuring seed potatoes with the hope of good returns. According to official reports, Hassan received 46 mm rainfall on Wednesday evening, followed by Dudda with 35 mm, Kattaya with 29 mm, Arsikere with 16 mm, Javagal and Shantigrama with 10 mm, Shravanabelgola, Gandasi and Yeslur with 4 mm, Halebid and Mallipatna with 3 mm, Alur, Kundur, Palya, Arkalgud, Madihalli and Sakleshpur with 2 mm, and K. Hoskote, Belur and Belagodu with 1 mm.

Pulses no longer delta farmers' favourite

MAJOR BOTTLENECKS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Long-term closure of canals to facilitate delta modernisation works. ● Available seeds not suitable for the soil profile. ● Rise in input cost. ● Lack of market facility. 	
<p>CROP ACREAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 50,000 hectares -Average pulse acreage in Central, Eastern deltas ● 5,000 hectares -Acreage this year 	<p>A calendar has to be followed strictly with regard to the opening and closure of canals to avoid delay in the crop schedule</p> <p>N. Vijay Kumar, Deputy Director of Agriculture</p>

In what could be termed a disturbing trend, the pulse acreage has gone down drastically in East Godavari district, with a few farmers opting for the short-term crop for various reasons. The farmers in the Central and Eastern delta areas cultivate black gram and green gram post-rabi season that keep them engaged before the kharif crop season begins, apart from fetching considerable income.

There has been a steady drop in the pulse acreage for the last four to five years due to various reasons. According to the statistics available with Agriculture Department, the pulse acreage in the district, which is once used to be around 50,000 hectare, has gone down to 5,000 hectares this summer. Farmers attributed this to various reasons such as

delay in the schedule of rabi, untimely rains and long-term closure of canals to facilitate delta modernisation works.

Farmers say that cost of cultivation of pulses has gone up significantly and seeds available in the market are not suitable for the soil profile of the district. Rise in seed cost and labour charges and lack of market facility for the produce are some of the other reasons, they say.

“Most of the farmers now feel that it is better to take rest in the summer, instead of opting for pulses,” says Mediseti Venkateswara Rao, a farmer from Tallarevu village.

Deputy Director of Agriculture N. Vijay Kumar admits that the farmers have been complaining that the available seed varieties are not suitable for the soil conditions here. “We have informed the same to the agricultural scientists and are waiting for their response,” he says.

Sowing of pulses must be completed by the end of March, so that the farmers could get a better yield. “For this, the calendar has to be followed strictly for the opening and closure of canals,” points out Mr. N. Vijay Kumar.

Native seed festival at Thandalam on June 7

The Organic Delta Farmers Association of Nagapattinam, along with TEDE Trust, Kudumbam, an NGO in Pudukottai, and CREATE will conduct a native seed festival at Thandalam near Arakkonam on June 7 to highlight the diversity of traditional seed varieties and the need to preserve them.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, TEDE Trust secretary R. Ranganathan said: “Every year, we are conducting such festivals in different parts of the State. On May 30 and 31, we will conduct a festival at Thiruraipoondi, where a large number of farmers and those interested in agriculture are expected to participate. Last year, we conducted two such festivals, and nearly 3,000 farmers attended.”

Besides stalls that will showcase different seeds and organic produces from self-help groups, 10 leading organic farmers from different districts will share their experience in the cultivation of crops, and fish and animal rearing and take part in a discussion with the audience.

The Thandalam Yogakshema Trust will host the event, and 1,000 people are expected to attend.

N. Ravi, Editor-in-Chief, *The Hindu* ; Devinder Sharma, International Food Policy Analyst; K.Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agriculture University; and T.K. Rajendran, ADGP, are expected to address the audience. About 64 traditional varieties of paddy, vegetables and millets will be exhibited.

Festivals like these are often now being held all over the country. It only shows how it gaining importance and acceptance among growers. Not only farmers but also consumers and the common man visit the stalls and update themselves on the details of these varieties, some of which are more than 300 years old.

Organic practices

The Thandalam Yogakshema Trust has been training farmers in organic practices for growing crops and has established women self-help groups that have been making cooking condiments. This apart, it has been making and marketing Panchagavya through many outlets in the region.

The one-day function is expected to be inaugurated at 8.30 a.m.

For details, contact the Thandalam Trust on 07708683195 and 98404 18400

64 traditional varieties of paddy, vegetables and millets will be exhibited

Modi govt. to develop agriculture as industry

The Agriculture Ministry is likely to get a high profile in the Narendra Modi government's economic revival and rural jobs agenda.

“Agriculture will be one of the most important Ministries for the new government,” a senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader told *The Hindu* on Thursday. “Mr. Modi will focus on building agriculture as an industry and will free up exports of dairy products and foodgrains, etc., with full back-end support for cold storage as there is no other real way creating jobs in rural India.”

The source said dairy and other allied farm-related activities would receive a big push too.

The new government was looking to “globalise” India's agriculture, the BJP source said. “Given that the prices of rice and milk and other farm sector produce in the global market is several times that in India, Mr. Modi would like to give a big push to agricultural exports, for which output of the sector will have to expand fast,” he said.

Back-end support for the agriculture sector — cold-storage and packaging and processing — would be developed across the country, the source added. Developing the farm sector was also important for creating jobs in rural India and arresting migration from villages.

The bulk of India's population resides in the countryside and would likely find non-farm jobs, such as in the industrial sector, somewhat alien, the source said.

Mr. Modi will take the oath of office on May 26 along with his possible Cabinet colleagues.

Senior BJP leaders who are also likely to be key ministers in Mr. Modi's Cabinet have been meeting with bureaucrats for ideas pertaining to the various aspects of the economic revival agenda. The first such meeting was held in April, right after the conclusion of the

first and second phase of polling when some opinion polls showed the BJP and NDA were ahead.

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- *Prices of farm produce in global market much higher than in India: BJP leader*
 - *'Bulk of India's population, rural-dwellers, will find industrial sector jobs alien'*
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Millers told to help in paddy procurement

Joint Collector M. Hari Jawaharlal has asked the millers to help the government agencies to complete the procurement of paddy by unloading the paddy sent by them to mills.

After inspecting the several paddy procurement centres, he appointed District Civil Supplies Officer Nageshwar Rao and DRDA Project Director Sudhakar as special officer to Vemulapally and Thipparthi mandal to expedite the procurement in these mandals.

Increase in wheat procurement

With the procurement season being in "full swing" various government agencies and private traders have procured more than 170 lakh metric tonnes of wheat that arrived in grain markets across Punjab and Haryana. The Food Corporation of India procured nearly 26 lakh metric tonnes of the total arrivals in both States.

According to a release, more than 116 metric tonnes of wheat was procured in the 1,757 centres in Punjab, as compared to 110 metric tonnes on the same date last year. A spokesman reiterated that despite the procurement target having been met, the State government was committed to procure total wheat that arrived in the grain markets.

The State government also claimed to having cleared payment of all farmers within 48 hours of lifting of their produce. So far Rs.14,580.47 crore had already been paid to farmers, the release said adding that the government owned co-operative MARKFED led

the procurement table as it responded to 21.7 per cent of the arrivals. Another State owned agency, PUNSUP was second by procuring 20.6 per cent. Sangrur district was on the top were 10 lakh metric tonnes of wheat arrived in the markets.

In Haryana, more than 64.69 lakh metric tonnes of wheat arrived in various markets as compared to 58.62 lakh metric tonnes during the corresponding period last year. This season, 2,788 metric tonnes were purchased by traders.

While the State owned cooperative, HAFED accounted for the highest procurement by taking away 25.04 lakh metric tonnes, Sirsa district with 9.52 lakh metric tonnes led the wheat arrivals' table.

Kuruvai cultivation on 29,000 hectares

Kuruvai cultivation is expected to be taken up on 29,000 hectares in Thanjavur district this year said N. Subbaiyan, Collector, at Sakkottai near here on Thursday.

He inspected the bio-fertiliser plant of the agriculture department at Sakkottai. Mr. Subbaiyan said that already Kuruvai transplantation has been completed on 4,250 hectares and nursery has been raised on 190 hectares.

Agriculture department officials told the collector that the bio-fertilisers such as Azospirillum, Rhizobium, and Phospho bacteria are produced in the plant. About seven tonnes of bio-fertilisers are produced every month. "It is enough if we apply 200 grams of bio-fertiliser per acre. Bio-fertilisers help in reducing pollution, improve soil health and give good yield."

Later the collector saw pulses cultivation in Papanasam and Kumbakonam. Ramadoss, Joint Director of Agriculture and C.Srinivasan, Deputy Director accompanied the collector during his visit.

Rice festival gets under way



A three-day rice festival organised by a group of youngsters here displays indigenous rice varieties that are slowly disappearing from the State. K.K. Hilal, one of the organisers, says his effort is to bring the people back into agriculture. His friends quit government jobs and IT professions to take up farming. They follow natural farming method.

The varieties on display include Chengazhama; Chennallu, widely used in ayurveda and found in parts of Kozhikode; Kuruva, the brown beauty; and the naturally flavoured Gandhakasaala and Jeerakasala varieties. Also on display are specially made molasses and rice products.

WATER LEVEL

MADURAI

The water level in Periyar dam stood at 114 feet with no inflow and a discharge of 100 cusecs. The level in Vaigai dam was 33.01 feet with an inflow of 59 cusecs and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 1,419 mcft.

The rainfall recorded at various places during the 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Thursday was (in mm): Chittampatti – 8.6 , Melur – 0 .4, Idayapatti – 30, Viraganoor – 4.8 and Kodaikanal – 31.

TIRUNELVELI

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Thursday stood at 52.40 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 99.88 cusecs and 204.75 cusecs of water is discharged from the dam. The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 67.76 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 5 cusecs and no water is discharged.

Kanyakumari

The level in the Pechipparai dam stood at 20.55 feet, 45.55 feet in Perunchani, 7.94 feet in Chittar 1, 8.03 feet in Chittar 11, 6 feet in Poigai and 54.12 feet in the Mamabazathuraiyaru dam.

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Friday, May 23

Max Min

Sunny

39° | 29°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:41

Humidity: 66

Sunset: 06:29

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1003

Tomorrow's Forecast



Saturday, May 24

Max Min

Partly Cloudy

39° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday May 25	Monday May 26	Tuesday May 27	Wednesday May 28	Thursday May 29
38° 28°	36° 28°	36° 28°	36° 28°	36° 28°
Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:26

Humidity: 23

Sunset: 07:09

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1001



Swelling global stockpile bleeds wheat

Higher supplies and record crop in some nations dim the cereal's prospects



Wheat was the top loser among all commodities last week, losing nearly 8 per cent of its value. Prices have dropped another 2.5 per cent this week. The losses have resulted in wheat prices dropping a little over one per cent so far this year.

If the 14-month high of \$7.44 a bushel (27.2 kg) on May 6 is taken into account, then wheat has lost over 10 per cent since then.

Crop size

On Thursday, wheat futures seemed to recover a bit, rising to \$6.67 a bushel for the benchmark July contract on the Chicago Board of Trade.

The drop in prices has come despite the US Department of Agriculture estimating that global wheat production during the crop year 2014-15 starting July will drop 17 million tonnes (mt). At least 25 per cent of the drop is projected to be from the US.

Despite this, world wheat crop at 697 mt will be the second record highest. Ending stocks, though lower, are expected to be higher in the US at 583 million bushels (15.86 mt). Stockpiles in Canada, too, are expected to double, the highest in two decades.

According to the USDA, while opening stocks during 2014-15 is expected to be 172.7 mt, ending stocks are estimated to be 187.4 mt. For this year, opening stocks were 170.7 mt.

“With marginally larger foreign wheat supplies and a decline in foreign use, ending stocks are projected to increase for the third year in a row. Foreign ending stocks are projected to reach 172.7 mt, slightly up on the year, while world wheat ending stocks are projected at 187.4 mt,” it said.

Reduced imports

Opening stocks for the next season are likely to be higher in China, where the Government is accumulating inventory, Argentina, Canada (both record high production) and Iran, which built stocks this year after exhausting them last year.

In India, wheat stocks are likely to be lower as some six mt have been exported this season.

Global wheat trade in 2014-15 is projected to fall to 151.6 mt, down 6.8 mt from the record wheat trade this season. Higher wheat output in a number of importing countries and reduced feed demand in response to costlier wheat relative to corn prices are expected to result in reduced imports of the grain, limiting global wheat trade.

“The projections are based on the assumption that the current situation in Ukraine has little disruptive effect on global grain trade,” the USDA said. All these have resulted in a bearish outlook for wheat, resulting in the fall.

Rain factor

The other reason for the market to pound wheat last week was rainfall in growing areas that is expected to help overcome dry conditions. Traders speculated that the rains will benefit 75 per cent of the winter crop in the Great Plains. On the other hand, warmer, drier weather projection in the far north will aid planting from Minnesota to Saskatchewan.

In line with the bearish outlook, funds are exiting long positions in wheat futures. The development comes after hedge funds and other large speculators held net bullish bets of 45,265 futures and options contracts as of May 6, the most since November 2012.

In the domestic market, spot wheat prices at Kanpur have been ruling steady at Rs. 1,540 a quintal this month. However, prices of July contracts on the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange dropped to Rs. 1,570 on Thursday from Rs. 1,640 on May 9.

EU ban on mangoes: UK Food Department offers Indian exporters technical help, training

UK-based mango importers said they were encouraged following a meeting with Government officials on Wednesday.

Lord de Mauley, a Minister with Britain's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), hosted the meeting with the Fresh Produce Consortium, representatives from the Asian Business Association, CII and Deputy High Commissioner Virendra Paul, as well as regulators from British agencies to discuss developments since the European Union imposed a ban on five Indian fruits and vegetables, including mangoes from May 1.

The EU's Food and Veterinary Office is set to conduct its next visit to India, due to take place in September, following previous visits in April and December. "It was very clear that while DEFRA can't change anything – with just one vote at the commission – they have indicated they will help in anyway they can," said Monica Bandhari of importer

Fresh Fruity Ltd, who has been one of the lead campaigners against the ban, following the meeting. This included DEFRA's offer to provide technical advice and training for Indian authorities and exporters for the necessary EU certification, and facilitating discussions between the European Commission and Indian regulators. A follow-up round table will take place in July.

“The intention is to work with all the stakeholders to get the processes right so the ban imposed till December 15 is lifted soon,” said Lord de Mauley in a statement following the meeting. With over 90 per cent of the EU's mango imports from India, the UK has been the EU country most affected by the ban with industry bodies and politicians expressing concerns about the damaging economic impact of a lost mango season particularly on small and medium-sized businesses.

Poor demand grounds turmeric



Spot turmeric prices decreased in Erode markets on Thursday on slack demand.

“Traders did not receive any fresh upcountry demand, so they purchased limited quantity of turmeric. Only 50 per cent of the arrivals was sold. Stockists purchased about 800 bags of turmeric,” said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

On Thursday, 4,400 bags of the spice arrived, of which about 200 bags were fine in quality which fetched good price. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety fetched Rs. 4,599-7,009 a quintal; the root variety Rs. 4,128-6,512

Salem Hybrid: The finger turmeric was sold at Rs. 6,055-7,534 and the root turmeric Rs. 5,779-6,595. Of the 910 bags that arrived, 239 were sold.

Tyre firms' buying boosts spot rubber

Domestic rubber prices turned better on Thursday.

According to sources, some tyre companies bought RSS 4 up to Rs. 145 a kg from the spot market and the commodity made all round gains amidst better volumes.

The trend was partially mixed as ungraded rubber finished steady on low demand.

Sheet rubber improved to Rs. 145.50 (Rs. 145), according to traders and the Rubber Board. The grade increased to Rs. 142.50 (Rs. 142) as reported by the dealers.

June futures firmed up to Rs. 150.58 (Rs. 148.57), July to Rs. 151.75 (Rs. 149.63), August to Rs. 151 (Rs. 148.79) and September to Rs. 150.50 (Rs. 148.38) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) inched up to Rs. 123.66 (Rs. 123.44) at Bangkok. May futures closed at ¥193.5 (Rs. 111.25) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg) were: RSS-4: 145.50 (145); RSS-5: 142.50 (142); Ungraded: 138 (138); ISNR 20: 138 (137) and Latex 60%: 118 (116).

Export enquiries boost jeera



Fresh export enquiries and domestic demand at the bottom level pulled up jeera prices on Thursday. With this, jeera futures gained on short covering after Wednesday's fall, though expectation of higher production limited the gain in the spice. Analysts attributed the rise in jeera futures to pick-up in domestic and export enquiries in the spot market, leading to speculators enlarging their positions. Traders believe that the market has bottomed out and is likely to firm up as domestic demand increases in the days to come.

A global shortage of the commodity is also helping in the sentiments. Spot jeera in Unjha increased Rs. 15 to Rs. 2,030-2,125 for best quality and average jeera was traded at Rs. 1,950-2,000 for 20 kg.

Pepper steady on supply squeeze

Pepper prices continued to rule steady on limited activities and squeeze in supply. There were no activities on the National Commodity Exchange, while on the IPSTA there were

strong buyers for June contract at Rs. 1,000 a quintal above the previous day's close. Tamil Nadu-based dealers have slowed buying following arrival of imported pepper in the upcountry markets in Delhi, Jaipur, Nagpur, etc., market sources told *Business Line* . On the spot, there was neither any arrival nor any offtake, they said. On the IPSTA, buyers were active with June contract ruling at Rs. 72,292 but no trading took place. Spot prices stayed steady at Rs. 71,500 (ungarbled) and Rs. 73,500 (garbled) a quintal. Export prices were at \$12,900-13,000 a tonne c&f for Europe and \$13,150-250 c&f for the US.

Business Standard

Coconut oil on boil, price crosses Rs 180/kg on drop in production



Coconut oil and copra prices are constantly on the rise, thanks to massive drop in coconut production in the last 10 years.

The market on Thursday quoted a wholesale price of Rs 15,900 a quintal, while in retail trade the price ranged between Rs 180 and 185, depending on the quality.

According to Kochi-based traders, the market would witness a spurt in coconut oil and copra prices in the coming days, as shortage is so serious in Tamil Nadu and Kerala — the two major producing states in India.

In these states, the production is down 50 per cent in the last six months, due to extreme summer heat. Traders project the price to cross Rs 200 a kg, as there is an increase in demand from commercial users and household consumers.

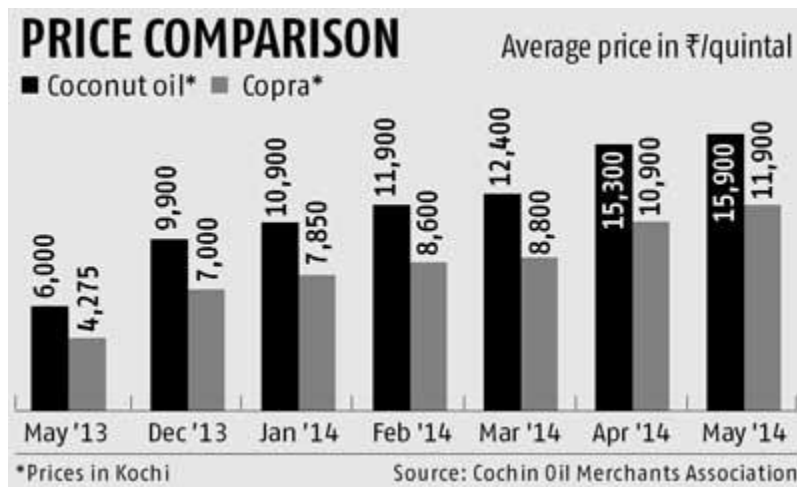
Despite price rise, there has not been much decline in household consumption of coconut oil in Kerala, said Thalath Muhamed, former president, Cochin Oil Merchants Association.

The fall in the production of coconut oil has led to a heavy shortfall in copra cake, a cattle feed. Cattle feed manufacturers now import copra cake from countries like Indonesia in order to maintain their production.

The prices of cattle feed had gone up 10-20 per cent during last five-six months.

Coconut oil price increased 165 per cent in just 12 months, as the average price for coconut oil was Rs 6,000 a quintal in May, 2013 and for copra this was Rs 4,275 a quintal. In just five months, 61 per cent rise was recorded for the oil, as the average price

in December 2013 was Rs 9,900 a quintal.



The market crossed the Rs 10,000-mark in January.

Muhamed said Kerala has been depending on Tamil Nadu for good quality copra. Strict quality check by Kerala Food Safety officials makes this

import from the neighbouring

state unattractive to traders. The Kankayam market in Tamil Nadu offer oil at Rs 15,200

a quintal. Although palm oil is cheaper compared to coconut oil, consumers prefer the latter. [Retail price](#) of palm oil is Rs 75 -80 a kg.

Steep rise in prices has triggered adulteration of coconut oil on a massive scale. According to traders, almost 70 per cent of the coconut oil, being distributed through unbranded retail network is impure, causing serious damage to liver, heart etc. Produced mainly in Tamil Nadu, the cheaper version is widely sold in Kerala. Imported palm kernel oil is mixed with coconut oil. Sources told Business Standard that used edible oils like palm oil and sun flower oil are also mixed up with coconut oil. The production cost of a kg of pure coconut oil comes to about Rs 150, but coconut oil is available in the Kerala market at Rs 140 a kg. Because of adulteration the product is offered at much cheaper price, said a trader.

Crude palm oil extends gains on rising demand

[Crude palm oil](#) prices rose further by 0.15 per cent to Rs 534.10 per 10 kg in futures market today as speculators enlarged positions on the back of rising demand in spot market.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude palm oil for delivery in June inched up by 80 paise, or 0.15 per cent, to Rs 534.10 per 10 kg in business turnover of 222 lots.

The May contract edged up by 50 paise, or 0.09 per cent, to Rs 536.50 per 10 kg in 37 lots.

Analysts said besides rising demand in the spot market, restricted arrivals from producing regions mainly kept crude palm oil prices remain up at futures trade.

Chana rebounds 0.35% as demand picks up



[Chana](#) prices recovered by 0.35 per cent to Rs 2,908 per quintal in futures trading today mostly in tune with a firming trend in the spot markets on rising demand.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, chana for delivery in June rose by Rs 10, or 0.35 per cent, to Rs 2,908 per quintal with an open interest of 1,43,200 lots.

The July contract traded higher by Rs 10, or 0.34 per cent, to Rs 2,975 per quintal in 67,760 lots.

Analysts said fresh positions built-up by speculators following pick-up in demand in the spot market mainly pushed up chana prices at futures trade.

Refined soya oil extends gain on rising demand

[Refined soya oil](#) prices rose further by 0.15 per cent to Rs 688.90 per 10 kg in futures market today as speculators indulged in enlarging positions, tracking a firm trend at spot market on rising demand.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, refined soya oil for delivery in June traded higher by Re 1, or 0.15 per cent to Rs 688.90 per 10 kg with an open interest

of 1,42,520 lots.

The July contract edged up by 95 paise, or 0.14 per cent to Rs 672 per 10 kg in 1,29,140 lots.

Analysts said speculators enlarged positions, driven by rising demand in the spot market driven by the ongoing wedding season, mainly kept refined soya oil prices higher at futures trade.



At 23.9 mt, sugar output down 3.2% till mid-May

The country's sugar output dropped 3.2% until mid-May in the marketing year through September, partly due to diversion of cane to other consuming industries in states such as Uttar Pradesh due to a delay in crushing by almost one month. Exports are, however, expected to surge manifold to around 2 million tonne in the entire marketing year, compared with just 0.34 million tonne in 2012-13, according to the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA).

Sugar output in the world's second-largest producer hit 23.90 million tonne between October 1 and May 15, compared with 24.70 million tonne a year before, according to the ISMA data. Cane crushing has come to an end in the country, except for 20 sugar mills in Tamil Nadu. This means the production level so far has just exceeded the ISMA forecast of 23.80 million tonne for the entire 2013-14 season, although output may not be significantly more than the predicted level.

India's sugar output will likely drop 5.3% in the current marketing year through September, marking a second successive year of decline, mainly due to rough weather in key producing regions and diversion of cane for use by jaggery makers, a top industry body said on Thursday.

Sugar output in the world's largest consumer and second-biggest producer will likely drop to 23.80 million tonne in 2013-14, compared with 25.14 million tonne a year before, according to the latest estimate by the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA). Last August, ISMA had forecast sugar production for 2013-14 at 25 million tonne.

The country had produced 25.14 million tonne in 2012-13, compared with 26.34 million tonne a year earlier, while consumption had risen 3.6% to 22.80 million tonne last year from 2011-12. As many as 526 mills crushed about 250 million tonne of cane last year, down around 2.5% from a year earlier.

This year, Maharashtra produced 7.70 million tonne of sugar until May 15, almost unchanged from a year before. However, sugar output in Uttar Pradesh, the second-largest producer, hit 6.45 million tonne, down almost 13.4% from a year before.

Earlier this year, mills in Uttar Pradesh expressed their inability to start crushing cane after banks refused to lend them working capital loans citing a drastic mismatch between cane and sugar prices. This forced farmers to sell cane to competing industries initially, resulting in a drop in sugar production.

Karnataka produced 4.1 million tonne of sugar up to May 15, up 7,00,000 tonne

Cane crushing season ends with low sugar output than last season



NEW DELHI: As the cane crushing for the sugar season October 2013- September 2014 inches towards commencement, mills across the country have produced 239 lakh tonne of sugar, against 247 lakh tonne during same period last year, said Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) in its production update.

The sugar mills in Maharashtra have produced 77 lakh tonne of sugar, followed by Uttar Pradesh, which produced about 64.5 lakh tonne and then mills in Karnataka with 41 lakh tonne.

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The sugar industry representative body said that as the frequency of sugar exports is less, around 19-20 lakh tonne of sugar will get exported out of the country in the whole season. Last year, the total sugar exported out of the country was 80 lakh tonne.

"The pace of sugar exports has slowed down because of the unreasonable and unexpected reduction of the export incentive from Rs. 3300 per to Rs. 2277 per ton by the Food Ministry, which the sugar industry and exporters feel is not as per the gazette notification of 28th February, 2014," said ISMA.

Indian farmers could plant record soybean area as prices rally



MUMBAI: Farmers in India are likely to boost the amount of land devoted to growing soybeans by up to 4 per cent in the crop year that begins in July, as they look to profit from a rally in prices for the oilseed, an industry body said.

That would help the world's top importer of edible oils to cap overseas purchases and

could boost oilmeal exports to Asian countries.

"Farmers are quite interested in soybeans due to the higher prices. We can see at least a 2-4 per cent rise in area," said Rajesh Agrawal, chief co-ordinator at the Soybean Processors Association of India.

Local prices have risen 28 per cent since the start of 2013/14 marketing year on Oct. 1 due to climbing demand from the poultry industry for soybean product soymeal.

Soybeans are the main summer-sown oilseed crop in the south Asian country, with farmers last year cultivating a record 12.22 million hectares.

But despite that record area, output fell 4.4 per cent from the year before to 10.2 million tonnes as heavy rainfall damaged crops in some areas, according to estimates from the Central Organisation for Oil Industry and Trade.

"This year (planted) area will rise mainly in Maharashtra and the southern states. Madhya Pradesh is quite saturated," said Agrawal, adding that in some areas there could be a shortage of quality seeds after rains affected the standard of last year's harvest.

The central state of Madhya Pradesh is the country's top soybean producer, followed by Maharashtra state in the west.

The possible emergence of the El Nino weather phenomenon could affect sowing patterns, however.

India is likely to receive below-average rainfall in 2014 if El Nino hits the four-month-long rain season, the government's weather office said last month.

"A drop in rainfall due to El Nino could influence sowing patterns," said Vijay Data, president of Solvent Extractors' Association.

"We are advising farmers to sow early, so even if there is a drop in rainfall, its impact would be minimal on sowing (volumes)."

Soybean is mainly a rain-fed crop in India and most farmers begin sowing in June after the arrival of the monsoon. Supplies of the new-season crop start arriving in markets from October.

India's edible oil imports in the year to Oct. 31, 2014 have been slated to rise 4 per cent from a year earlier to 10.8 million tonnes.

The country mainly buys palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia, with a small quantity of soyoil from Argentina and Brazil.

India's soymeal exports were estimated to drop 30 per cent to 3 million tonnes in the year to Sept. 30.

India is Asia's top soymeal exporter. Its product preferred to Latin American supplies because it does not use genetically modified beans and due to lower transportation costs.

"Last year, India could have harvested record (soybean) crop, but erratic weather spoiled prospects. This year, farmers are enthusiastic, but let's see how the weather pans out," Isha Trivedi, an analyst at Phillip Commodities India Pvt Ltd.

Drought conditions affect Darjeeling tea production



KOLKATA: A sustained drought-like condition in Darjeeling has affected the premium first flush, which fetches a high price for tea crop, major growers said.

"The severe lack of rainfall in several parts of Darjeeling has affected the first flush which happens the period between March to April," Chairman and Managing Director of Andrew Yule Kallol Datta told PTI.

He said the first flush accounted almost 10 per cent of the entire tea crop in Darjeeling and most of the producers had missed out on that.

Datta said though there were rains now, the drought-like conditions had caused nearly 30 per cent loss in tea production but there was a possibility of a recovery during the period between July to September.

Chairman of Darjeeling Tea Association (DTA) S S Bagaria said one-third of the area under tea cultivation in Darjeeling was still reeling under drought-like conditions.

"The Mirik Valley area is still having lack of rainfall. The bushes are drying and there is a shortage of leaves. This makes the economics of the gardens in the area unviable," Bagaria said.

He said that so far, crop loss in the premium tea producing region was down by 40 per cent from the last year.

To add to the woes there was a long summer last year in the European Union which resulted in a huge carry-over stock, he said.

During the summer, tea consumption in the EU declines considerably as people prefer other drinks.

However, producers were of the view that the crop loss is unlikely to have any impact on the price level.

The entire Darjeeling area produces nine million kg of orthodox tea which is generally exported.

Incentive for coconut growers to be raised to Rs 30,000



THANE: The incentive for coconut growers will be increased to Rs 30,000 from Rs 8,000 per hectare of cultivation, a senior official said today.

There is lot of potential for coconut cultivation in Thane district and the farmers here should make the most use of the opportunities being given by the the Coconut Development Board (CDB) under the Ministry of Agriculture, said Rajeev Bushan Prasad, CDB's Deputy Director for Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Farmers from Thane district and surrounding areas will henceforth get coconut seeds and plants from the nursery of the CDB at Palghar here, a senior official said today.

The Board mainly undertakes projects under area expansion programme and laying out of demonstration plots in the region, he said.

The CDB also stresses on the flagship programme in which educated unemployed people are trained in various facets of coconut and its care. These people, known as "Coconut Mitra", take care of the plantations from cultivation to harvesting, he said.

As of now, farmers are required to procure the coconut seeds from various other sources, including agricultural universities and nurseries. The CDB has developed a nursery in Palghar where the seeds were being treated and will be given to the farmers from June 1, Prasad said, adding that this will solve problems of farmers related to procurement.

Last year, as against the 75 hectares target for Maharashtra, only 40 hectares could be brought under coconut cultivation and in Gujarat, as against 50 hectares, 93 hectares were brought under cultivation, he said.

Cashew declines on subdued demand

NEW DELHI: Cashew prices fell by Rs 5 per kg in the national capital today, largely owing to subdued demand from retailers and stockists.

Sufficient stocks position, following increased arrival from producing belts too weighed on cashew prices.

Cashew kernel (No 180, 210, 240 and 230) prices fell by Rs 5 each to settle at Rs 850-860, Rs 750-760, Rs 630-640 and Rs 520-560 per kg, respectively.

Jeera futures climb over 1 per cent on upsurge in demand



NEW DELHI: [Jeera](#) prices shot up by over 1 per cent to Rs 11,130 per quintal in [futures](#) trading today as speculators created fresh positions.

At the National Commodity and [Derivatives](#) Exchange, jeera for [delivery](#) in June spurred by Rs 115, or 1.04 per cent, to Rs 11,130 per quintal with an [open interest](#) of 8,511 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in July shot up by Rs 115, or 1.03 per cent to Rs 11,255 per quintal in 3,627 lots. Analysts attributed rise in jeera futures to pick up in domestic and export demand in the spot market, triggering speculators to enlarge positions.

Govt to hand over Tasgaon sugar firm to cooperative bank

KOLHAPUR: The state government has decided to hand over the management of controversial Tasgaon sugar factory in Sangli district to Maharashtra state cooperative bank so that it can be leased out and start crushing sugarcane by November.

State cooperation secretary Rajagopal Devara told TOI, "The factory could not start its operations in the previous season. Therefore, we have decided to hand over the factory to liquidators so that it can be leased out for a longer period to recover the losses."

Newly elected Sangli MP Sanjay Patil (BJP) was embroiled in controversy last year when he allegedly tried to gain control over the factory. Patil managed Ganpati Sangh which owned the factory by getting Rs 10 crore from the Maharashtra state cooperative bank. After the controversy, the bank scrapped the deal and took charge of the factory.

When asked about the commencement of sugar production, Devara said, "The factory's closure means sugarcane cultivators in the command area will have to look for another buyer. But in such a situation, factories purchase sugarcane at low prices and the farmers end up suffering losses."

Having more than 10,000 farmers as members and shareholders of a sugar factory is considered to be important in rural politics. Helping farmers augurs well for the factory management. The farmers are expected to return the favour in the form of votes in various elections. "Hence, the sugar factories have become a roadway to political power in western Maharashtra," a senior political observer said.

With the government's decision, political equations are likely to change in the district.

Sanjay Patil, a former NCP leader, is expected to fight back for seeking possession of the sugar factory as it was instituted by his uncle and senior Congress leader Dinkar Patil. Former chief minister Vasant Patil decided to sideline Sanjay Patil and gave the ticket to NCP leader and state home minister R R Patil to contest the Tasgaon assembly seat. Sanjay Patil, who was then a corporator in the Sangli Miraj Municipal Council, physically assaulted R R Patil. The conflict between the two continued with Sanjay Patil losing the assembly elections twice to R R Patil.

Post a comment

Training camp organized by Punjab Agricultural University consumer club

LUDHIANA: To create awareness amongst the rural masses regarding 'quality and standard marks' on consumable articles, a one day training camp was organized in Village Talwara by the Consumer Club, College of Home Science, Punjab Agricultural University (PAU).

Jasvinder Kaur Sangha, Dean, College of Home Science, said that the camp received wide appreciation from farm women who turned-up in large number. She added that during the camp, University scientists created awareness for quality assurance marks on various appliances, apparel and food products.

Dean, College of Home science said that besides, demonstrations were given to prepare lemon and watermelon drinks to beat the scorching heat of the coming summer months.

Mango season: Some farmers abide by natural process

TRICHY: While some people are indulging in ripening mangoes using harmful chemicals, there are some farmers in the district who are engaging in the natural process. However, the drought due to no rain has hit them badly.

Mango cultivation has been on in around 1,000 acres in areas like Lalgudi, Pullambadi, Kollidam, Anbil, Srirangam and Melur, which supply the produce to the locals market and also other places. However, added to the drought indiscriminate sand mining in the Cauvery and Kollidam rivers have depleted the ground water level resulting in water scarcity for the mango trees.

K V Ganesan, a farmer in Koo hoor village attributed the drought to the poor yield of mangoes. "The mango yield is not favourable for the farmers because the ground water level has depleted. Those who have wells and electric motors are able to save the trees. Rest of them are helpless. Besides the lack of rains, indiscriminate sand mining has also played spoilsport. It is a bad sign for mango cultivation which may gradually disappear from the area due to water scarcity," said Ganesan.

The poor yield resulted in the increase of the mango price manifold and delayed the season. This year, the size of mangoes is small. Nevertheless, some of the farmers still use natural method to ripen them. The paddy straws are utilized for the process. Normally, most of the mango fruit traders prefer to ripen the mangoes quickly using 'carbide stones' because they have no time to wait up to six days.

P Balasubramanian, a farm owner at Vadaseri in Karur who ripens the mango through natural method said the health of the people is paramount than the income. "Farmers and traders must be concerned about the health of the people. Though there is a loss in natural method, the health of the people should not be put at risk," Balasubramanian said.

A Ramakrishnan, designated officer of the food safety wing in Trichy said that law does not permit them to certify the naturally-ripened mangoes. "There is no provision to certify the naturally-ripened mangoes. We are not sure whether we will be empowered to do so in future. If it is so, it would give a boost to the followers of the natural methods," Ramakrishnan said.

DECCAN Chronicle

Fertilizer producer IFFCO looks for revised subsidies



India's largest fertilizer producer, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO), expects the country's new government to shake up its fertilizer subsidy program, possibly spurring greater phosphate and potash use to boost crop production. Two major fertilizer suppliers to the world's second-biggest wheat producer, Potash Corp of Saskatchewan and Mosaic Co also said on Thursday they expected changes by the Narendra Modi government to the subsidy program, which is a big factor in how much fertilizer Indian farmers buy.

"I think we'll see a shift in government to more balanced application," said Manish Gupta, IFFCO's Director of strategy and joint ventures, at BMO's Farm to Market conference in New York. Modi thundered to electoral victory on Friday in a seismic political shift that gives his party a mandate for sweeping economic reform.

Changing the subsidy program is critical if India is to maximize crop production, Gupta said. Indian fertilizer companies rely entirely on imported potash and heavily on phosphate produced elsewhere. Since 2010, India has reduced its subsidies for potash and phosphate. That has resulted in urea becoming a more attractive option for farmers relative to the two other fertilizers, leading to an imbalance of nutrients in the soil.

The subsidy program "probably can't get any worse," said Potash Corp Chief Financial Officer Wayne Brownlee, speaking at the BMO conference. "When you have the first majority government in 30 years there is an opportunity for sound policies to prevail over impulse politics." India is the biggest global phosphate importer and a top consumer of potash. Slack Indian fertilizer demand is one reason for a plunge in profits by Potash Corp and Mosaic.

It is unlikely that India, facing a deficit, can afford to raise subsidies for potash and phosphate. But it could cut the urea subsidy or target subsidies only to poorer farmers, Gupta said, although he noted that tinkering with urea prices was politically sensitive. Both Potash Corp and Mosaic forecast increased Indian imports even before the election result.

Potash Corp said in January that it expects India to import 3.7 million to 4.2 million tonnes of potash from all suppliers in 2014, up from 3.1 million last year, due to thin Indian inventories and a small bump in consumption. Mosaic sees phosphate imports jumping to about 9 million or 9.2 million tonnes of phosphate in 2014, up from 8 million. Change to subsidies may take awhile, Mosaic Chief Financial Officer Larry Stranghoener said in an interview. "We would love to see a fundamental change in the subsidy system. I think that may be a bridge too far for a new government to take on immediately."

A trend toward urbanization, along with higher incomes and demand for more protein-rich food, has made India, China and Southeast Asian countries key growth markets for grains and fertilizer.

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

It's Raining Mangoes at Marine Drive

Hibi Eden MLA inaugurated the 'Mango Festival-2014' at Marine Drive Helipad Ground here on Thursday. The festival showcases over 50 mango varieties from different states of India and other countries.

The varieties in display include Banganappalli, Alphonso, Malgoa, Thottapuri, Kalluketty, Kesar, Rumani, Bombay Green, Himasagar, Rajapuri, Badami, Himayudhein, Olor, Safeda, Raspunia, Mallika, Himayath, Amarapali, Chakkarakkutty, Puri, red sparkle and Suvarnarekha. The main attraction of the festival is a food court exclusively for mango juice, bhaji and payasam. The organisers said that organic mangos are being used at the festival. Unlike other festivals, this time mangos are displayed at an open space.

Spectators can buy mangoes at a cheaper rate. The entry fee for the festival is `20 for children and `30 for others.

As part of the fest, cultural programmes will be staged in the evenings. The festival will conclude on June 1.

Star Entertainment and Metro Eventmakers are the organisers of the mango festival.