THE HINDU

A farmers' island with rich biological diversity

Not even a single farmer of Eluvolu, the tiny island on Krishna river, may have heard or taken part in the celebrations of International Day for Biological Diversity-2014 (May 22). However, round the year, less than 300 farmers are busy growing tens of varieties of food and commercial crops, contributing their share to conservation of their Island with rich soil fertility.

Farmers in Eluvolu of Ghantasala mandal experiment the nature of the soil by raising various crops which reaped them rich dividends so far.

Horticulture

Defying transportation woes, as their fields are surrounded by water most of the year, the farmers are even into horticulture and sericulture too. The proud SC farmers have scripted a success story by turning the island into one of the largest silk production pockets in Krishna. "We prefer a few varieties of silk worms based on the season. With over 30 silk production sheds in operation, the extent of land under mulberry cultivation is above 100 acres", a farmer P. Suresh told *The Hindu.*

While people in the district are after the sweetness of banana grown here, the farmers never mind the transportation problems and continue reaping profits by taking up highly yielded crops and varieties – sugarcane, turmeric, silk worms, banana, betel leaves and so on. Summer always brings cheers to the farming community as they easily cross the river through the temporary road laid on it. “Plucking betel leaves and collection of mulberry leaf for the silk worm sheds are very much important tasks reserved for us as we can do it best and effectively”, says a women with the pride of making it rich amidst heavy odds.

<u>Hyderabad hotelier ties up with tribal farmers</u>

In what could be the first step towards a welcome reversal of current farming practices in the Agency areas, a hotelier from Hyderabad, Ram Babu, has tied up with tribal farmers of Ghumnoor in Sirpur (U) mandal of Adilabad for the purchase of indigenous varieties of millets.

Instead of sowing the vexatious Bt cotton, the farmers will now cultivate local varieties of foodgrains in a part of their land, which will be purchased by the Aahar Kuteer restaurant at Begumpet in the State capital.

Specialised outlet

The restaurant specialises in serving and catering food made exclusively of organic millets besides retailing the grains. The tie-up will result in the improvement of the range of foodgrains sold across the counter. The arrangement between tribal farmers and Mr. Ram Babu is likely to result in the protection of biodiversity of foodgrains in the Agency areas besides safeguarding the former from the heavy investment required for cultivating Bt cotton. The indigenous varieties are zero investment crops as the seed is available with the farmers and is weather and disease-resistant.

Mr Ram Babu on Tuesday examined the varieties of foodgrains available in the village. He found the little millet, foxtail millet, kodo millet, the barnyard millet, red rice, wheat, jowar, red gram and Bengal gram to be useful to him. Mr. Ram Babu apprised the village sarpanch, Kanaka Gangaram, and others about the demand for the produce in the Hyderabad market and the market price.

"If you are ready to purchase we will certainly cultivate our crops at least in a portion of our lands," said the village Patel, Kanaka Manku. .

A headmaster, Kursenga Somu, volunteered to go in for the *desi* variety of food crops on an experimental basis this season. He plans to source indigenous varieties of seeds from tribal villages in Asifabad mandal.

Make payment in 72 hours to farmers, says Collector

Collector Smita Sabharwal has directed officials to ensure that payment for farmers after procurement of paddy is made within 72 hours.

Presiding over a review meeting held with officials on paddy procurement at the district headquarters on Tuesday, Ms. Smita said that as an early monsoon was predicted, the officials should see that farmers bring their paddy produce to the procurement centres in next five or six days.

Referring to the reports that some farmers from neighbouring districts were bringing paddy to the district, the Collector has directed the officials to strengthen the check-posts.

“The next 10 days are very crucial for the paddy procurement. Focus on the issue and see that there should not be any problem for farmers while bringing the produce to the Indira Kranti Padham (IKP) centres are Primary Agriculture Societies (PACs),” she said adding that action would be initiated if any village organisations failed to procure paddy and indulged in corruption. Additional facilities are being created for transportation of paddy by the administration.

Joint Collector A. Sarath and other officers were present.

Damage of crop

Khammam Staff Reporter adds: About 20,325 metric tonnes of paddy was procured through as many as 42 procurement centres so far as against the estimated paddy production of over 22 lakh quintals in the district in the rabi season.

According to sources in Agriculture Department, paddy was cultivated in about 45,000 hectares in the rabi season. The acreage under paddy has gone up in the rabi season compared to the previous year.

However, the unseasonal rains that lashed several parts of the district during the crucial harvesting stage led to damage of paddy in many areas in the district last month.

“The farmers, whose paddy got soaked in unexpected rain faced severe ordeal in disposing of their paddy produce,” lamented Narasimha Rao, a farmer of Wyra.

The staff concerned at some of the procurement centres refused to buy the soaked paddy by citing high moisture content. The small and marginal farmers bore the brunt of nature’s fury, he deplored, lamenting that the inadequate supply of tarpaulins proved costly for many hapless farmers.

Severe hardships

The delay in payment of money towards procurement of paddy is causing severe hardships to the farmers, alleged AP Rythu Sangham district general secretary Nunna Nageswara Rao. The procurement centres should be operated for a few more weeks to help all the farmers dispose of their produce, he suggested.

A total quantity of 20,325 metric tonnes of paddy was procured through IKP's 17 centres, ITDA's 13 centres and PACSS's 12 centres till date in the district, said Y.V. Sambasiva Rao, District Manager, Civil Supplies.

The paddy was procured at the MSP in compliance with the Fair Average Quality specifications.

Farmers urged to bring their produce to procurement centres in next five or six days in view of monsoon

Delay in procurement deals a blow to paddy farmers

It is the farmer who always faces the brunt of calamities – be man-made or those caused by nature. And irrespective of the production, it is the traders who make merry, leaving the poor farmer to fend for himself.

Across Warangal district, thousands of farmers kept their paddy bags under the open sky praying for early procurement, fearing untimely rain. However, the Indira Kranti Patham (IKP) centres — over 100 of them — are unable to procure the huge quantity of paddy, while the rice millers are not buying the IKP-supplied paddy which they are supposed to.

District Collector G. Kishan said farmers were bringing their produce directly from the fields to IKP centres without drying it. “We have another problem with the rice millers who are deliberately delaying procuring paddy from IKP centres,” he explained. Farmers raised paddy in 70,000 hectares in the last rabi season, but this kharif season it has gone up to 1.30 lakh hectares.

A farmer, Ravula Lalitha of Pattipaka village in Shayampet mandal says she dumped her paddy at the IKP centre six days ago, but it is yet to be procured as there are no lorries to transport it. Farmers are also hit by the fact that the IKP centres are unable to stock the paddy they procure owing to less storage space. “There is severe shortage of storage space,” Mr. Kishan said.

The utter neglect of Nalgonda district administration came to the fore as the farmers were forced to stay put in paddy markets for more than a month to sell their produce at MSP. This has forced the farmers to sell paddy to millers at much lesser than the MSP of Rs. 1,345 per quintal.

Farmers sold 7.5 lakh MTs of paddy, but more than 50 per cent of the stocks was purchased by millers at mill points where the farmers were offered price less than the MSP. Farmers’ leader Kandala Bal Reddy says the millers and officials are in cahoots to deny the MSP to the farmers.

Unseasonal rains

Unseasonal rains and non-availability of government machinery came in handy for the traders to exploit the farmers by denying them the MSP. This when the district has recorded the bumper harvest of 13.50 lakh metric tonnes of paddy -- the highest in the State. Buoyed by this, the district administration opened 599 procurement centres to procure paddy at Rs. 1,345 per quintal. But farmers tell a different story. Badraiah from Baddipalli village in Karimnagar mandal says he sold his produce at Rs 1,200 per quintal as against the MSP of Rs.1,345.

As against the target of procuring 6.5 lakh metric tonnes of paddy from the farmers, the authorities procured only 3.56 lakh MTs. Thanks to official apathy, traders' lobbying hard and unseasonal rains, farmers resorted to distress sale.

Unlike Karimnagar, farmers have fewer complaints in Medak district as the district administration has been in an overdrive advising ryots to bring paddy to the procurement centres before June 5. Around 92 centres -- 60 by IKP and 32 by PACS are functioning to procure 1.1 lakh MTs. About 85,000 MTs of paddy has been procured already.

Narasimha Rama Sharma, a farmer from Ismailkhanpet, says they faced fewer problems like delay in payment but are being addressed by the authorities immediately. Farmers say sufficient quantity of gunny bags, moisture meters and weighing scales have also been deployed.

Teething problems

The district administration has ensured the purchase of over 1.10 lakh MTs of paddy as against a target of 1.50 lakh MTs through 281 purchase centres. Officials said the rest of the target would be met in next seven days as purchases were going on at a brisk pace. There were teething problems at the purchase centres with the farmers bringing paddy having moisture level more than the prescribed limit.

Except in Kamareddy area where transplantation was delayed, in all other places the crop has already been harvested.

Even as the district administration made efforts to streamline purchase of paddy at the 157 purchase centres in Adilabad district, farmers staged a protest at Kadem mandal headquarters on Tuesday demanding that the IKP authorities lift the produce. Officials however, maintained there are no hitches about 50,000 quintals of the total 60,000 quintals that has already been purchased.

Paddy was cultivated in 22,000 hectares in the rabi season and the yield is expected to be at 50 quintals per hectare. There is less of heavy rainfall as compared to neighbouring Karimnagar or Warangal and the produce is being purchased not only by IKP but by DRDA, ITDA and PACS in the district.

(With reporting by Gollapudi Srinivasa Rao, T. Karnakar Reddy, K.M. Dayashankar, R. Avadhani, P. Ram Mohan and S. Harpal Singh)

Groundnut farmers a distressed lot

Activists of Odisha Shramajeebee Mancha (OSM) demonstrated in front of the office of Ganjam district collector at Chatrapur on Tuesday afternoon demanding opening of special mandis for procurement of groundnut from Phailin cyclone hit farmers, so that they are not compelled to sell it in distress.

One of the convenors of OSM, Kalucharan Gouda said groundnut growers of Phailin cyclone hit Ganjam district were now a distressed lot as the market price of groundnut was too low. After the cultivation and harvesting, the farmers have started panicking looking at the market rate of groundnut. As per the OSM, present market price of each kilogram of groundnut is Rs. 28 to Rs. 30. But the cost of groundnut seed procured by the farmers was Rs. 38 per kilogram. Although there has been a bumper groundnut production in Ganjam district, the farmers are unlikely to get good profit out of it due to low market price, alleged the OSM activists.

The OSM leaders have already met the authorities of State agriculture department requesting immediate opening of mandis for procurement of groundnut from Phailin affected farmers of Ganjam district so that it could provide some kind of succour to them. The OSM had also taken up the matter with the NAFED. A team of NAFED had visited Ganjam district on May 19 and had agreed to open procurement centre in Beguniapada block of the district, wherein farmers could sell their groundnut produce at Rs. 40 per kilogram. But this mandi has also not been opened.

The OSM activists alleged that due to bureaucratic hassles, opening of mandis to procure groundnut produce of Phailin cyclone hit farmers was being delayed. According to OSM leaders this has resulted in distress sell of groundnut by farmers which is only benefiting unscrupulous middlemen. “It is an irony that farmers of home district of the Chief Minister allege that they are selling their produce at low price since last four years due to unavailability of proper procurement network,” said Mr Gouda.

Although there has been a bumper crop, farmers are unlikely to get good profit

Agricultural workers stage protest

Stating that the shrinkage in agricultural activities during 2013-14 fiscal has resulted in heavy loss of income to them, the agricultural labourers from the district staged protests at various places on Tuesday.

They also put forward the demand to increase the number of working days under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) to give opportunities for assured days of income to the agricultural workers in a year.

“Despite the slight increase in the availability of water for irrigation in certain areas of Tirupur district during 2013-14 fiscal, the overall state of farming activities remained almost the same as that in the drought hit 2012-13 financial year.

“Since the 2013-14 has not been announced as ‘drought-hit’, the State Government should at least award a minimum of Rs 10,000 per head for agricultural workers as a lump sum compensatory amount for the days of work lost,” said V.P. Palanisamiy state vice-president of Tamil Nadu Maanila Vyvasaya

On the prospects for agricultural workers under the MGNREGS, Mr. Palanisamy said that despite the Central Government issuing an order raising the daily wages under the said scheme to Rs. 167 in February itself, the agricultural workers were yet to get the payment at the enhanced scale.

The workers were of the view that the State Government constituted Kolappan Committee’s recommendation for regularising the daily working hours under MGNREGS to six hours a day should be implemented immediately.

The delays in disbursing wages under the MGNREGS, which were reported from different parts of the district, were condemned by the workers.

The agitations in support of these demands took place in Dharapuram, Kangayam, Uthukuli, Udumalpet and Avinashi blocks.

State Government urged to give minimum of Rs. 10,000 per head as lump sum compensation for

days of work lost

No takers for paddy procurement centres

Farmers prefer to sell produce to traders and millers

The paddy procurement centres opened by the district administration in different parts of East Godavari district are sporting a deserted look with the farmers preferring to sell their produce to the traders and millers.

As part of ensuring minimum support price to the paddy farmers, the officials opened 137 paddy procurement centres in different parts of the district a couple of weeks ago.

The departments of Marketing, Civil Supplies along with the Food Corporation of India and the Rice Millers Association are on the job of setting up and maintaining the centres.

However, none of the centres has commenced buying, as the price being quoted by the private players is far better than the Minimum Support Price (MSP) announced by the government.

Bumper harvest

Despite several hurdles, paddy farmers from East Godavari district have registered a record yield during the current rabi season. Paddy has been transplanted in 1.5 lakh hectares (3.7 lakh acres) in the district and the outcome is expected to be about 12 lakh metric tonnes. Farmers from the Eastern delta have registered a yield of 50-55 bags per acre and the same is 45-50 bags in the Central delta (each bag consists of 75 kg).

“The district average is going to be about 45 bags per acre, which comes close to 12-15 metric tonnes,” says K. Vijay Kumar, Deputy Director of Agriculture. Over 60 per cent of the farmers transplanted ‘1010’ variety (Cotton Dora Sannalu in the local parlance), while 30 per cent farmers opted for the MTU-3626 (called as ‘Bondalu’ locally) variety during the season. The MSP for Cotton Dora Sannalu is fixed at Rs. 1,345 per quintal, whereas the traders are offering Rs. 1,400 per quintal to the farmers. For the ‘Bondalu’ variety, the MSP is Rs. 1,310 and the market price is Rs. 1,613. Since the market price is quite encouraging, farmers prefer to sell their produce outside.

“There is an immediate need to revise the MSP, as the price fixed by the government is not at all remunerative. There is a rapid increase in the input and labour costs and there is a mismatch between the investment and return to the farmers,” says Kovvuri Trinadha Reddy, a model farmer.

‘MSP must be increased’

He says an increase in the MSP will help farmers get an attractive price in the open market. “Government must take up steps to purchase discoloured paddy from the farmers at the MSP, as there was crop damage in an extent of 25,000 hectares in the district due to the untimely rains,” he points out.

- ***While the MSP for Cotton Dora Sannalu is Rs. 1,345 per quintal, traders are offering Rs. 1,400***
- ***For ‘Bondalu’ variety, the MSP is Rs. 1,310 and the market price is Rs. 1,613***

East Godavari farmers expecting a record yield during the current rabi season

TDP seeks to wrest control of Chittoor Sugars governing body

It’s one of the prestigious sugar factories in the district

The Telugu Desam Party, which registered a series of victories with Chittoor Municipal Corporation, Zilla Parishad and Chittoor Assembly constituency, is all set to wrest the newly coming up governing body of the Chittoor Cooperative Sugars, one of the prestigious sugar factories in the district, with its golden jubilee celebrations due since a couple of years.

Of the 14 director posts, the TDP-supported candidates from several constituencies in the district coming under the purview of the factory, filed ten nominations on Monday without a single contender.

For the remaining four, three director posts received two nominations each, and on behalf of the factory employees, four nominations were received for one post. After withdrawals on Wednesday, the returning officer will be announcing the director-candidates who would win unanimously.

With majority of the candidates belonging to the TDP, senior party leader N.P. Ramakrishna, spouse of former TDP Rajya Sabha MP N. Durga, is likely to be elected the chairman of the factory's governing body. The chairman and vice-chairman posts will be announced after formal election on June 4.

The Chittoor sugar factory has been suffering severe losses since a decade, with outstanding arrears to farmers said to be around Rs. 7 crore.

During the last one decade, the factory had no governing body, which is believed to be the prime reason for the factory falling on bad days.

Sugarcane crushing for the year 2013-14 has commenced at the fag-end of last year, and the crushing was abruptly stopped in January, with only a few hundreds of tonnage, as against the 2 lakh metric tonnes of its capacity. The farmer protests marred its administration since a decade.

Though the factory officials expected to run the wheel again, the farmers could not be convinced in regard to their mounting arrears.

Over 10,000 sugarcane growing families depending on the Chittoor Cooperative Sugars hope that their prospects would be brighter than ever before and that their attachment with the local factory would be even stronger with new governing body to be formed.

Sugarcane crushing was abandoned in this cooperative factory in 2003 during Chandrababu Naidu regime, and it recommenced crushing when Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy came to power.

A YSR Congress leader from the party’s farmers wing said that the YSRC has stayed away from contesting the election to the Chittoor Cooperative Sugars for the reason that the crushing unit is already in debts and the ruling party would surely not extend any help to them even if they win.

- ***The sugar factory has been incurring huge losses since a decade***
- ***Sugarcane crushing was abandoned in this cooperative factory in 2003***

A king among mangoes

Srirangam Thathachariar Gardens showcases its Imam Pasand variety

PRIZED FRUITRaw and ripe versions of Imam Pasand mangoes at Thathachariar Gardens.Photos: R.M. Rajarathinam

Peacocks call out in the distance as visitors squelch through the rain-moistened undergrowth at the Thathachariar Gardens in what is to many, an annual pilgrimage to seek out the sweet and soft-as-butter Imam Pasand mango that is the signature produce of this family-owned farm.

So special is the fruit, that enquiries start coming in as early as February and March, says Mr. S. Rangarajan, 81, the former bank official who has been at the helm of affairs at the farm for several decades. The Imam Pasand is not native to the Tiruchi district, but the silt and water of the Cauvery river seem to have done it a world of good.

“My uncle S.R.V. Thatham started the farm in 1945, and one of his friends brought the first graft of the Imam Pasand from Andhra Pradesh. We developed the graft further, and so basically all the Imam Pasands growing in this region are supposed to be from our graft,” says Mr. Rangarajan.

The number of varieties has been brought down to six from the original 20, in order to lessen the chances of crop losses.

The origin of the prized variety’s Hindi/Urdu name (which translates as ‘The Imam’s Favourite’) is lost in the mists of time. Some say it was originally grown in Kerala and beloved of Mughal emperor Humayun (and was called Humayun Pasand), but mango lovers would rather just relish the fruit rather than quibble over etymology.

In the 70-acre farm that we visit, Thathachariar Gardens has 700 mango trees, of which around 300 are the Imam Pasand, followed by other varieties such as Banganapalli, Roumani, and Kallamani (Bangloura). Thathachariar Gardens has also developed the ‘Pacharusi’ mango that is tart and tangy in taste, and is meant to be eaten raw.

What makes the Imam Pasand even more exclusive is that it has a very short season between May and June every year. The fruit is plucked shortly before ripening, when its green coat sports an ash-grey look that will eventually bloom into straw-yellow on maturation. Farming methods are a judicious mix of modern and native norms that are defined by years of experience.

“After the mango is picked (an Imam Pasand tree can yield anywhere between 40-100 fruits per season), we lay the fruit on the ground for a day to let the sap run. Then we arrange the raw mangoes on a bed of hay to allow them to ripen naturally," says Ganesan, who looks after the upkeep of the trees and also functions as a lease agent for the farm during harvest time.

This year's yield has been 25% less than the usual figure due to insufficient rainfall, says Mr. Rangarajan. "We had excessive heat, but that atmosphere is conducive only during the flowering stage for mango," he says.

"Only 1% of flowering trees bear fruit, but this year most of the blossoms wilted in the harsh sunlight," he rues. There are several other challenges for farms like Thathachariar Gardens, which uses inter-cropping (alternating coconut trees with mangoes at six-acre intervals as a natural pest control measure).

"We need to spray insecticide to stop the hopper insect from infiltrating the gestational-stage mangoes, but it's hard to get the skilled labour for this," says Mr. Rangarajan.

The lowering of the water table is also of grave concern, he adds. "Earlier we used to get water at 40-50 feet with a three or four-horsepower motor, but this year, the water diviner says that we'd have to dig bore-wells up to 120 feet." The recent rains haven't helped either. "They are good for the trees but bad for the fruit," says Ganesan. Even these problems don't seem to deter fans of the Imam Pasand, as customers continue to drive up to the farm to claim their orders.

"We have a very good local market," says Mr. Rangarajan.

The stipulation of uniform-sized fruit by exporters doesn't work in favour of the Imam Pasand, as each mango could grow up to 800 grams in weight. The mangoes are sold by the dozen, with an average price of Rs.300-600, which can skyrocket depending on the season's duration.

<u>**Huge stock of artificially ripened mangoes seized**</u>

14 teams formed to check the practice being adopted by some vendors

DANGEROUS:Food Safety officials inspecting artificially ripened mangoes at a godown attached to a fruit stall in Tuticorin on Tuesday.— Photo: N. Rajesh

Seven and a half tonnes of mangoes, artificially ripened with calcium carbide, were found in a godown attached to a fruit stall opposite Tuticorin Corporation Office on Palayamkottai Road and seized by Food Safety officials on Tuesday.

A team of officials, led by District Designated Officer for Food Safety Dr. M. Jegadis Chandra Bose, found the artificially ripened mangoes during a surprise raid. The seized mangoes, which were unfit for consumption, were destroyed in a compost yard at Tharuvaikulam.

The harmful chemical substance was found concealed under heaps of mangoes. Officials said consumption of artificially ripened mangoes would cause serious health hazards such as stomach ulcer, loss of appetite, insomnia and even lead to cancer. Black spots were found in almost all the seized fruits.

Dr. Bose told *The Hindu* that 14 teams of Food Safety officials had been formed to check the harmful practice being adopted by some vendors.

On the directive of Collector M. Ravikumar and Commissioner of Food Safety Kumar Jayant, the official teams would intensify raids on fruit stalls and godowns, he added.

The vendors in the district had already been exposed to a new and legitimate method of ripening mangoes ahead of this fruit season. They were trained in using ethylene to ripen mangoes. Ethylene, which was secreted from mango trees, was used in liquid form and applied on mangoes. Mangoes at tender stage could be kept along with ripe papaya and banana, which had high ethylene content, for natural ripening.

"Since mango is a perishable item, it would be difficult to despatch it to quality testing laboratory for tests. Only when mangoes are found concealed along with calcium carbide, they could seized and destroyed," Dr. Bose noted.

Fertilizer requirement for Ramanathapuram district estimated at 46,720 tonnes

As the farmers are set to take up farm activities on 1.71 lakh hectares of land later this year, the Agriculture Department has estimated the total fertilizer requirement of the district at 46,720 tonnes for the year 2014-15.

After a meeting with representatives of fertilizer manufacturers and wholesale dealers here on Tuesday, S.S. Shaiek Abdullah, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Quality Control, said the requirement of urea had been estimated at 23,320 tonnes.

He said the requirement of DAP had been estimated at 5,755 tonnes, while the requirement of MOP at 3,375 tonnes and NPK complex at 11,920 tonnes. Other fertilizers

– ammonium chloride, ammonium sulphate and Superphosphate – had been estimated at 2,350 tonnes.

Representatives of fertilizer manufacturing companies such as SPIC, Madras Fertilisers Limited (MFL), Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilisers Ltd (RCF) and Fertilisers and Chemicals Travancore (FACT), who attended the meeting, were told to maintain bill book in 'M form' and stock register in 'N form' as per the Fertiliser Control Order, 1985, he said. The dealers were asked to legibly display the stock availability and price list of fertilizers to the farmers, Mr. Abdulla said. They had also been instructed to sell Urea at the government-controlled rate of Rs.270.50 per bag and other fertilizers not above the rate of the Maximum Retail Price.

M. Manimaran, Deputy Director, Seed Inputs, briefed about the seed licence, storing and other enforcement activities under the Seed Act, and he was assisted by B.G. Nagarajan, Agriculture Officer, Quality Control, Mr. Abdullah said.

He said as on Tuesday, the Urea stock stood at 2,257 tonnes (801 tonnes with Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Societies (PACCS) and 1,456 tonnes with private dealers), DAP at 991 tonnes (852 tonnes with PACCS and 139 tonnes with private dealers, Potash at 145 tonnes (14 tonnes with PACCS and 131 tonnes with private dealers) and NPL at 939 tonnes (540 tonnes with PACCS and 399 tonnes with private dealers).

As the government had taken the initiative for the use of Single Super Phosphate (SSP), the department would launch an awareness campaign to popularise the SSP among the farmers, he added.

Water level

Mettur Dam

Recent rain in the catchment areas has improved the water level in Stanley Reservoir, Mettur, that stood

at 37.27 ft on Tuesday morning as against

its full reservoir level of 120 feet.

On May 20, the water level was 35.30 ft and increase in flow led to increase in water level.

The storage level was 10.726 thousand million cubic feet against its full storage of 93.470 tmcft. The inflow was 2,422 cusecs while the outflow was 501 cusecs.

TIRUCHI,

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 37.35 feet on Tuesday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 2,234 cusecs and the discharge 500 cusecs.

TIRUNELVELI,

The water level in the Papanasam dam on Tuesday stood at 51.30 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 163.77 cusecs and 204.75 cusecs of water is discharged from the dam.

The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 67.59 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 3 cusecs and no water is discharged.

Kanyakumari

The level stood at 20.85 feet in the Pechipparai dam, 45.70 feet in Perunchani dam, 7.94 feet in Chittar 1, 8.03 feet in Chittar 11, 6 feet in Poigai and 54.12 feet in Mamabazathuraiyaru dam.

hindustantimes

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Wednesday, May 28

Sunny

Max	Min
34°	28°

Rain: 0	Sunrise: 05:41
Humidity: 63	Sunset: 06:30
Wind: normal	Barometer: 1006

Tomorrow's Forecast

Thursday, May 29

Partly Cloudy

Max	Min
37°	28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
May 30	**May 31**	**Jun 1**	**Jun 2**	**Jun 3**
40° | 27°	38° | 29°	37° | 28°	36° | 28°	35° | 28°
Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai Chennai

Rain: 0	Sunrise: 05:41
Humidity: 63	Sunset: 06:30
Wind: normal	Barometer: 1006

Business Standard

Horticulture mission's project to boost pepper production

Black pepper plantations with an area of 21,396 hectares has been replanted in Idukki district of Kerala under the project 'On Pepper Production' funded through the National Horticulture Mission (NHM), according to the Spices Board.

In a release, the board said it was expected to get an additional yield of 21,000 tonne black pepper from this project, when it starts full yielding, during 2016-17. The project, completed in April, 2014, involved a total expenditure of Rs 45.85 crore.

Under the scheme, 12.8 million pepper planting materials were produced and supplied to farmers. The board supplied 500,000 improved high-yielding varieties of pepper cuttings viz, Panniyur-1 and Karimunda, to 5,500 farmers. It also set up 655 vermicompost units for promoting organic farming in pepper.

Among other initiatives, integrated pest and disease management practices were adopted in 28,299 ha, and a pepper processing plant had been installed at Spices Park, Puttady, with facilities like pre-cleaner, grader, grinder, steam steriliser & packaging. Godowns having 80 tonne capacity have also been developed among others.

The project was sanctioned for five years from 2008-09 till 2012-13 with a financial assistance of Rs 120 crore. The government initiated this project as the production and productivity of pepper had dropped drastically during the last 5-10 years due to aging of pepper vines. India's production dropped roughly 40 per cent during the period, from 60,000 tonnes to 40,000 tonnes.

Incidentally, Kerala was down to the second spot in production after Karnataka, a couple of years ago. This paved the way for large scale import to the country and India became a net importer during 2012-13. The growing dependence on imported pepper also affected manufacturers of value-added products like Oleoresin and spice oils.

Though the price of pepper increased substantially this year, farmers could not benefit owing to a steep decline in production. In Idukki district, the production registered a decline of around 60 per cent during the last couple of years.

Potato down by 0.63%

Potato prices fell by 0.63% to Rs 1,324.60 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators offloaded their positions due to fresh arrivals from producing regions.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, potato prices for June contract fell by Rs 8.40, or 0.63%, to Rs 1,324.60 per quintal, with a business volume of 21 lots.

The potato for delivery in July declined by Rs 6.90, or 0.50%, to Rs 1,362.60 per quintal, with a trading volume of 22 lots.

Marketmen said offloading of positions by speculators at existing higher levels amidst higher supplies in the spot markets, mainly pulled down potato prices.

Cardamom down 0.5% on profit-booking

Cardamom futures prices drifted by Rs 5.10 to Rs 943 per kg today after speculators booked profits at prevailing higher levels, amidst sluggish demand in spot markets against sufficient stocks position.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for July contract eased by Rs 5.10, or 0.53%, to Rs 943 per kg, with a business turnover of 16 lots.

The spice for delivery in June fell by Rs 4.40, or 0.45%, to Rs 961.10 per kg, with a trading volume of 69 lots.

Marketmen said apart from profit-taking by speculators at existing level, fall in demand in the spot markets also put pressure on cardamom prices in futures market.

Turmeric down 1% on subdued demand, higher supply

Turmeric prices fell by 1.04% to Rs 6,280 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators reduced positions amidst sluggish demand in spot market, against adequate supplies from producing belts.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, turmeric for delivery in July declined by Rs 66, or 1.04%, to Rs 6,280 per quintal with an open interest of 2,710 lots.

In a similar fashion, the spice for delivery in June traded lower by Rs 52, or 0.84%, to Rs 6,136 per quintal in 13,380 lots.

Analysts said offloading of positions by speculators, driven by subdued demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position, mainly kept pressure on turmeric prices in futures trade.

Jeera down 0.3% on subdued exports demand

Jeera remained weak for the second day and prices fell further by 0.36% to Rs 11,030 per quintal in futures market today after speculators offloaded positions, triggered by subdued exports demand.

Besides, adequate stock in the physical market on increased supplies from producing regions further fueled the downtrend.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, jeera for delivery in July fell by Rs 40, or 0.36%, to Rs 11,030 per quintal with an open interest of 3774 lots.

Likewise, the spice for June contract moved down by Rs 35, or 0.32%, to Rs 10,940 per quintal in 7,746 lots.

Analysts said the fall in jeera futures was attributed to offloading of positions by speculators due to subdued export demands in the spot markets.

Chana down 0.7% on increased arrivals

Amidst increased arrivals from producing regions and subdued spot demand, chana prices fell by 0.74% to Rs 2,829 per quintal in futures trade today.

At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, chana for delivery in June fell by Rs 21, or 0.74%, to Rs 2,829 per quintal, with an open interest 1,24,240 lots.

Similarly, the commodity for delivery in July traded lower by Rs 20, or 0.68%, to Rs 2,900 per quintal, in 98,190 lots.

Analysts attributed the fall in chana prices to increased arrivals from producing belts against sluggish demand in the spot market.

Chilli up 0.3% on rising demand

In range-bound trade, chilli (teja) prices rose by 0.31% to Rs 9,638 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators created fresh positions after spot demands picked up.

Further, tight supplies in the physical market due to less arrivals from producing regions also supported the chilli (teja) prices.

At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, chilli (teja) for July contract moved up by Rs 30, or 0.31%, to Rs 9,638 per quintal with an open interest of 165 lots.

Analysts said fresh positions built-up by speculators mainly supported the upside in chilli prices at futures trade.

Sugar down 0.5% on sluggish demand

Sugar prices declined by 0.53% to Rs 2,981 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators reduced positions, tracking a weak trend at spot markets on sluggish demand against ample supplies.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, sugar for delivery in June declined by Rs 16, or 0.53% to Rs 2,981 per quintal with an open interest of 44,060 lots.

Similarly, the sweetner for July contracts sheded Rs 11, or 0.37% to Rs 2,971 per quintal in 25,980 lots.

Analysts said besides weak demand in the spot market, ample supplies from millers, mainly led to decline in sugar prices at futures trade.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Indian cashew kernel priced out of global markets

Exports drop on higher unit value in April; cashew nut shell liquid also turns costlier

Stasis Photo/shutterstock.com

Cashew exports from the country in April fell sharply in volume and value compared with the corresponding period a year ago.

Attributing the decline in shipments to substantial increase in the unit value by 18 per cent, traders said this phenomenon has resulted in cashew kernel becoming slightly less competitive with other tree nuts.

Kernel shipments

At the same time, there has been a sharp rise in prices of imported raw cashew nuts (RCN) in April.

However, the upsurge in the RCN prices will not reflect on kernel prices.

Exports of cashew kernels in April stood at 7,318 tonnes valued at Rs. 318.22 crore at a unit value of Rs. 434.86 a kg.

Shipments in April last year were 9,995 tonnes valued at Rs. 368.05 tonnes at a unit value of Rs. 368.23 a kg.

Shell liquid exports

The increase in price of Cashew Nut Shell Liquid (CSNL) also led to a decline in its exports in April.

Against 612 tonnes valued at Rs. 2.45 crore shipments in April stood at 462 tonnes valued at Rs. 2.23 crore. The unit value rose to Rs. 48.30 (Rs. 40.02).

Raw nuts

Import of raw cashew nuts showed a marginal increase despite sharp rise in its price in other origins.

During April this year imports rose to 46,005 tonnes valued at Rs. 341.10 crore at a unit value of Rs. 74.14 a kg from 45,737 tonnes valued at Rs. 256.40 crore at the unit value of Rs. 56.06 a kg in the same month last year.

Overall exports

Total shipments in last financial year rose to a record high with exports rising by over 13 per cent to 1,13,620 tonnes from 1,00,105 tonnes in the previous fiscal.

Total value realisation stood at Rs. 4,975.96 crore against Rs. 4,046.23 crore in 2012 -13 despite an increase in the average unit value to Rs. 439.34 a kg during the current financial year from the previous year, according to Cashew Export Promotion Council of India (CEPCI).

Spices Board’s pepper replanting plan paying off

The Spices Board’s efforts to encourage pepper farming in Idukki have started yielding results as an area of 21,396 hectares has been replanted under the scheme.

It is expected to result in an additional yield of 21,000 tonnes of black pepper from the project area when it starts yielding fully in 2016-17, senior Board officials said.

They said that quality pepper planting material to the tune of Rs. 128.65 lakh has been produced and supplied.

A total financial assistance of Rs. 46 crore has been incurred for the scheme till date and the total beneficiaries were over one lakh farmers.

The project was sanctioned for five years till 2012-13 with a financial assistance of Rs. 120 crore from the National Horticulture Mission.

The scheme was implemented as a special case since pepper exports were drastically going down and there were no enough quantities for export even though the production is not under Spices Board mandate.

Listing out the achievements of the scheme, the officials said that the Board supplied five lakh improved high yielding varieties of pepper cuttings. About 655 vermi compost units were set up till date to promote organic farming.

For functional infrastructure development, pepper processing plant was installed at Spices Park, Puttady with facilities such as pre-cleaner, grader, grinder, steam steriliser and packaging facility. Finished godown of having 80 tonne capacity has also been developed.

Slack retail demand dissolves sugar

Sugar prices dropped further by Rs. 4-5 a quintal on the Vashi wholesale spot market on Tuesday as stockists sold fair quality at lower rates. Fine variety ruled steady. *Naka* and mill tender rates were unchanged due to matching demand and supply. Due to ample supply and inventory stocks morale was weak, said observer.

A Vashi-based wholesaler said that continuous selling by producers and slack retail demand amid enough stocks on hand kept overall volumes need-based.

Arrivals at Vashi market were 57-58 truckloads (of 100 bags each) and the local dispatches were 59- 60 loads. Bombay Sugar Merchants Association’s spot rates: S-grade Rs. 3,092-3,205 (Rs. 3,096-3,205) and M-grade was Rs. 3,206-3,350 (Rs. 3,212-

3,350). *Naka* delivery rates: S-grade Rs. 3,030-3,080 (Rs. 3,030-3,080) and M-grade Rs. 3,140-3,240 (Rs. 3,140-3,240).

Spot rubber prices mixed

Spot rubber was mixed on Tuesday. Most counters remained unchanged while RSS 4 finished firm despite a weak closing in the domestic futures market.

According to sources, there were no fresh enquiries from the tyre sector but the market managed to sustain at the prevailing levels on supply concerns.

Sheet rubber improved to Rs. 151 (Rs. 150) a kg, as quoted by the traders. The grade closed steady at Rs. 150 and Rs. 147 respectively, according to the Rubber Board and dealers. June futures declined to Rs. 149.24 (Rs. 152.32), July to Rs. 149.50 (Rs. 153.53) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) closed at Rs. 122.97 (Rs. 122.96) a kg, at Bangkok. June futures closed at ¥194.4 (Rs. 112.51) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg): RSS-4: 151 (150); RSS-5: 146 (146); ungraded: 142.50 (142.50); ISNR 20: 141 (141) and latex 60%: 121 (121).

Cotton wilts as US rains ease supply woes

Cotton lost over three per cent of its value last week as rains lashed the parched areas of Texas in the US.

The losses made the natural fibre the biggest loser in the commodities market.

Cotton was pounded in the market particularly on Thursday and Friday after having gained on Wednesday, when the US reported higher export interests.

On Friday, cotton’s loss was the biggest in seven months. Cotton contracts due for delivery in July dropped to a three-month low of 85.26 cents a pound (Rs. 39,795 for a candy of 356 kg).

On Tuesday, it was quoted at 85.65 cents a pound (about Rs. 40,000/candy).

Cotton had showed signs of surging mainly in view of a prolonged drought in Texas, where the natural fibre is grown the most in the US.

Tight supplies and the drought had driven cotton prices to a two-year high in March before the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) came up with a bearish report.

Last week’s hammering, however, was despite the USDA forecasting the crop for the 2014-15 season beginning August lower for the third consecutive year.

Output, offtake

Though the production is projected at a five-year low of 115.5 million bales (of 218 kg each) against 117.13 million bales, demand is expected to be lower than the output.

Production in China and India, which together make up 50 per cent of the global output, is expected to decline to 29.5 million bales and 28.5 million bales (36.5 million bales of 170 kg), respectively.

China’s output is projected to drop eight per cent and India’s three per cent. Overall, global production is seen dropping 1.15 per cent.

However, what will hold prices is a meagre 2 per cent rise in mills use at 111.8 million bales.

Consumption in China is estimated to rise four per cent to 37 million bales, while offtake in India will rise two per cent to a record 24.5 million bales.

China’s statistics

The other bearish factor weighing in the cotton market is a drop in global trade to 36.3 million bales, some 10 per cent lower than the current season. It will also be the lowest since 2010-11.

Chinese imports are expected to drop for the second consecutive year, while US exports could drop by seven per cent to 9.7 million bales, the lowest in 14 years. Imports by China could fall to 8.5 million bales, down 30 per cent, next season.

Chinese farmers are likely to cut plantings following uncertainty over their Government’s stockpiling programme. China has stocked some 10 million tonnes of cotton in the last two years. The stocks make up 60 per cent of the global stocks, according to the USDA.

A poll of Chinese cotton farmers revealed that at least one in every four farmers planned to cut acreage.

Cotton exports from India could drop 35 per cent to 5.7 million bales.

Swelling carryover

All these will result in global carryover stocks at the end of the next season rising to a record 101.7 million bales. China is seen holding 60.5 million bales of stocks. Stocks outside of China could rise 3 million bales.

Carryover stocks in India, the second largest holder of stockpiles, are expected to surge to 10.7 million bales.

The global stocks-to-use ratio is projected at 91 per cent, up from 90 per cent in this season. It will be more than double the 2010-11 level.

Indian picture

In the domestic market, cotton prices are ruling stable around Rs. 42,000 a candy for the Shankar-6 variety, which is in demand for exports. Prices are stable on account of lower export enquiries and slack demand from spinning mills.

Prices in the domestic market will be swayed by cotton plantings, the new Government's policy on minimum support price for the fibre and revival in economy.

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Sugar industry body seeks hike in import duty to 40% from 15%

Sugar industry body ISMA expected that the new government would provide a stable policy for the sector that supports 50 million farmers and sought hike in import duty of the sweetener to at least 40 per cent.
Import duty currently stands at 15 per cent. Industry has been demanding an increase in import duty to boost sales of domestic sugar as the country has surplus production."The sugar industry has great expectations from the new government as it is facing financial

difficulties for a long period and needs stability. We urge the government's support in providing a stable policy for the Indian Sugar Industry and help the rural economy grow further," Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) President Ajit Shriram said in a statement.

Industry owes about Rs 12,000 crore to sugarcane farmers due to high cane price compared with sugar prices. Noting that sugar industry supports about 50 million farmers and generates employment for about 12 per cent of the total rural population, he said: "a stable policy will benefit all stakeholders- farmers, consumers & industry.

"We are also hopeful that the new regime will give enough impetus to green energy and push the ethanol blending programme to save foreign exchange and also increase import duty on sugar to at least 40 per cent."

The ISMA President also expressed confidence that the country will see development & growth under the able leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Sugar production of India, the world's second largest producer and biggest consumer, fell by 3.23 per cent to 23.9 million tonnes till May 15 during current 2013-14 marketing year 2013-14 ending September.

For the entire year 2013-14, sugar production is pegged at 24.2 million tonnes, four per cent less than the last year's level of 25.1 million tonnes.

The annual domestic consumption is estimated at 23-23.5 million tonnes.

DECCAN Chronicle

Food safety raids continue at fruit stalls, bakeries and hotels

The special squads under the Commissionerate of Food Safety carried out extensive raids at fruit stalls, bakeries and hotels across the state as part of the observance of food safety week.

Extensive raids were carried out at Kollam, Idukki, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasargod districts.

Around six mango samples, 13 oil samples, two milk samples and two vegetable samples were collected in the day-long raids and have been sent for lab scrutiny. A top official of food safety said that warning notices were issued to eateries to rectify minor violations. A total of 28 hotels, eight bakeries and seven fruit stalls were raided on Tuesday.

“We were able to address 30 of the 36 grievances received from the public immediately. The rest of the complaints will be looked into seriously,” said the official.

Around 88 food business operators took part in the awareness programme organised in Wayanad. In Kannur, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Kozhikode around 175, 241, 221 and 150 hoteliers took part in the classes.

Those having complaints should register them on the toll free number – 1800 425 1125.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Training on diversified agriculture at PAU

A training programme on "Perspectives of Diversification in Agriculture" was recently organized at PAMETI at Punjab Agricultural University (PAU). In this programme, 26 extension personnels from department of Agriculture, Soil and Water Conservation, Dairy Development and Animal Husbandry participated.

A spokesperson for PAU said that delegates were educated on problems and prospects of cultivating alternate crops like maize, pulses, agro-forestry, fruits, sugarcane and herbal plants. He added that futuristic aspects of cultivating exotic vegetables and turf grass were also discussed. A visit to round-the-year state of the art Mushroom producing unit and Sukhjit Starch and Chemicals limited at Phagwara was also arranged.

H S Dhaliwal, Director PAMETI interacted with the participants, discussed the need of diversification and presented the Road-Side-Display model for marketing the diversified products.

Veggie prices go through the roof

The summer may be coming to an end, but households in Goa are feeling the heat from the escalating vegetable prices. The cost of most commonly used vegetables has doubled from last week, with prices of some like French beans having risen three-times. Vendors attributed the increase in prices to the annual summer phenomenon of lack of water supply and quick deterioration in quality of vegetables due to the heat.

French beans that cost 40 per kg last week are now selling for 120 a kg. The price of cabbage and cauliflower doubled from 10 per kg to 20 per kg and from 20 per kg to 40 per kg respectively within a week.

With a delayed monsoon forecast for India's south-western region, the prices of veggies seem to be set to rise further. "Every year during the summer, vegetable prices increase. It appears that prices may not come down even in June as the monsoon may not be at its height by then. It has to rain for at least one-and-a-half month for vegetable production to benefit. So prices may drop only around August," Haider Ali Talikoti, a vegetable vendor in Panaji market, said.

Cucumber and brinjal that could be purchased for Rs 16 a kg last week are now priced at Rs 30 per kg. The cost of carrots and lady fingers has nearly doubled to Rs 40 a kg from Rs 24 a kg last week.

Most vegetables sold in Goa's markets come from Belgaum and Hubli in Karnataka. Vegetable dealers said that the time spent in transportation increases the risk of the vegetables rotting in the heat.

"Our vegetable stocks in Goa get over fast, but sometimes it takes time for the stock to be sold and if that happens then vegetables perish quickly in the heat. This too affects prices in the summer," said a vegetable seller at the Margao market.

Onions and tomatoes cost Rs 25 per kg now as against last week's Rs 16 a kg. Price of another commonly used vegetable, potatoes, too has gone up by Rs 6 from last week's price of Rs 24 a kg. Only the cost of capsicum has remained constant, though it is already expensive at Rs 40 per kg.

Garnish like coriander too is now costlier at Rs 20 a bunch from the previous week's Rs 10 a bunch.

"Since there is shortage of water during the summer season, the prices increase. It depends on the climate. If it starts pouring heavily, the prices will definitely go down" Ali said.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Agriculture ministry will try to follow Gujarat model: Radha Mohan Singh, Agriculture Minister

Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh is determined to give stability to prices of food and essential commodities and make sure that farmers get adequate returns. The 64-year old politician from Bihar has been involved with the RSS since childhood and has been elected from Motihari since 1989.

He aims to use his grassroots knowledge to help the country's agriculture, which he says has trailed behind other sectors since independence. In an interview with ET, Singh said his government *wants to ensure that farmers have access to new technology, accurate and timely weather forecasts and get remunerative prices. Excerpts:*

What will be your priorities?

I aim to fulfil the dream of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I would like to implement the measures that had taken in Gujarat for empowerment of villages and farmers in the rest of the country. The biggest challenge in front of the country is price rise of essential commodities. Agricultural growth rate has also remained very low.

How do you plan to control prices?

Whenever Congress government comes to power it brings inflation along. But BJP governments ensure prices of agriculture commodities remain under control and farmers get remunerative prices. During the previous NDA government, we capped prices of food and essential commodities. In BJP-ruled states like Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh agriculture production has gone up.

The monsoon, which plays a crucial role for the farm sector, is forecast to be weak. How will you tackle the situation?

We will work to ensure that we are able to decipher how the weather will be a year in advance. We have to invest in technology. Our focus will remain on betterment of farmers and price stability in the country.

How do you plan to deal with middlemen who play a crucial role in price hike?

BJP has always tried to bring new scheme for the benefits of the farmers. In the previous NDA government when Rajnath Singh was agriculture minister, we started a scheme called 'Krishi Amdani Bima Yoyna'. We will bring similar schemes for farmers.

Cardamom succumbs to profit-booking

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Market men said apart from profit-taking by speculators at existing level, fall in demand in the spot markets also put pressure on cardamom prices in futures market.

Sugar futures extend losses, down 0.53 per cent on sluggish demand

NEW DELHI: Sugar prices declined by 0.53 per cent to Rs 2,981 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators reduced positions, tracking a weak trend at spot markets on sluggish demand against ample supplies.

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Similarly, the sweetner for July contracts sheded Rs 11, or 0.37 per cent to Rs 2,971 per quintal in 25,980 lots.

Analysts said besides weak demand in the spot market, ample supplies from millers, mainly led to decline in sugar prices at futures trade.

Indian tea faces stiff competition from lower priced Kenyan tea in Pakistan

Even as the bonhomie between Narendra Modi and Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif continues, Indian tea faces stiff competition from Kenya in Pakistan. The neighbouring nation is buying more tea from Kenya in the current season and going by this trend it will be difficult for India to achieve 50 million kg of tea exports to Pakistan by 2015. Price is the key factor for Pakistan for not buying first flush teas from India. This year, Kenyan production has been on the higher side and the African nation has offloaded tea in the Pakistan market at a much cheaper price.

AN Singh, chairman, Indian Tea Association, said that Kenya has sold teas to Pakistan at a price of $2 per kg. "In some cases, Kenya has offloaded tea at the sub $2 level. On the contrary, our tea is at a higher price. There is a price differential and Pakistan cannot afford to buy tea at a higher price." Pakistan generally buys south IndianBSE 3.59 % teas, which are comparatively cheaper than the Assam and Dooars teas. "The first flush teas from South India were fetching Rs 160 - Rs 165 per kg two months back. So Pakistan preferred Kenyan tea as prices were lower compared to Indian tea. Now prices of South Indian tea have dropped to Rs 130 - Rs135 per kg. Pakistan buyers are slowly picking up some teas from India now," said Gopal Poddar, director of tea broking firm Limtex Group.