

NABARD comes to the rescue of mango farmers

Labourers sorting mangoes at a stall in Nunna Mango Market near Vijayawada.- Photo: Ch.Vijaya Bhaskar

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development has taken up a study on value chain analysis of mango produce in Andhra Pradesh in a bid to extend all means of support to farmers in the coming years.

The four-month research, with main focus on existing marketing system at various levels, from farmers to consumers, is expected to be completed by August end. “We are looking into reasons for interference of middlemen which adversely affected the farmers. Middlemen deprive farmers of their due returns on investments,” intern for the NABARD project Rajita Varma told *The Hindu* .

Ms. Rajita of University of Hyderabad’s School of Economics accompanied by Krishna district-based NGO Nestham has completed her study in Chittoor and parts of Krishna district – Nuzvid, Agiripalli, Mylavaram and Vissannapeta. Other areas to be covered in coming months include the two Godavari districts and parts of Northern Andhra Pradesh.

“The immediate concern of NABARD is to bring the maximum possible extent of land under mango cultivation to harness its true potential and demand. Apart from financial support to the farmer, NABARD will also be looking into provision of infrastructure facilities such as storage facilities,” Ms. Rajita added.

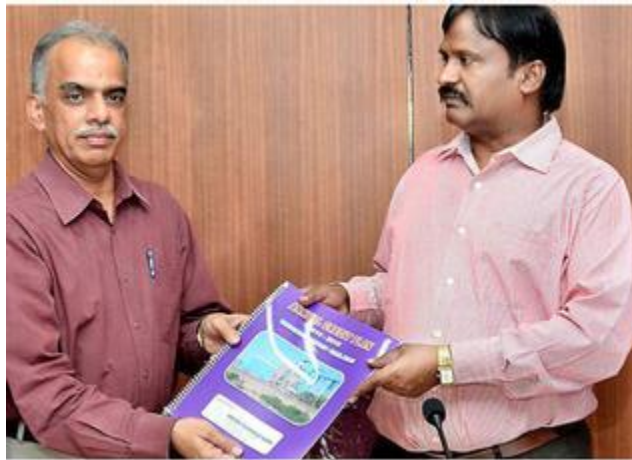
The existing problems of the mango farmer in Nuzvid and other areas in Krishna district have been documented from the perspective of all stakeholders in mango farming and marketing.

“Quality-based price spread of the mango and viable conditions to increase the extent are also being examined” she added.

We are looking into reasons for interference of middlemen which adversely affected the farmers

Rs. 3,384 crore for agriculture activities

Annual Credit plan for Tirunelveli district released



Development note:Collector M. Karunakaran releasing the plan in Tirunelveli on WednesdayPhoto: A.SHAIKMOHIDEEN

The Annual Credit Plan 2014 - 2015 for the district, which was released here on Wednesday by Collector M. Karunakaran, envisages a total credit outlay of Rs. 4,790 crore, an increase of Rs. 620 crore over the last year's allocation.

Indian Overseas Bank, the lead bank, prepares the plan every year after taking into consideration various aspects.

The plan envisages Rs. 3,384 crore (70.65 per cent) for agriculture. While the industry sector will get Rs. 340 crore (7.10 per cent), service sector will get Rs. 1,066 crore (22.25 per cent).

A major thrust has been given equally to all sectors and employment generation by way of investment in income generation activities in services and industries sectors. As per a directive of Reserve Bank of India, every village with a population of 2,000 and above will be provided banking services so as to liberate the rural masses from the clutches of moneylenders.

Major share of the credit plan has been taken by IOB (22 per cent) followed by Pandyan Grama Bank (16.07 per cent), Canara Bank (12.74 per cent), State Bank of India (9.17 per cent) and Tamilnad Mercantile Bank (9.16 per cent).

As Dr. Karunakaran released the plan, the first copy was received by R.S. Varadarajan, Chief Regional Manager, IOB and convener of District Consultative Committee.

Assistant General Managers from RBI, S. Sundaresan and I. Gandhi, AGM, NABARD, K. Ramalingam, Project Officer, DRDA, H. Vijayakumar, Lead District Manager, S. Alagarsamy and other district coordinators from various banks and government departments participated in the meeting.

Continuous rain brings cheer to delta farmers

Continuous rain in the Cauvery delta districts of Thanjavur and Tiruvarur and Chief Minister Jayalalithaa's assurance on uninterrupted power supply from June 1 have brought cheer to farmers.

These districts experienced heavy rain on Wednesday, too. Agriculture Department officials said the rain would benefit both Kuruvai paddy and cotton crops.

Due to poor storage in the Mettur dam, the plan this year in Thanjavur district is to raise Kuruvai on 28,000 hectares, against the normal 45,000 hectares. “Only in 2007-08 was nearly the normal coverage of 43,000 hectares achieved. Thereafter, Kuruvai is mostly raised in pumpset-irrigated areas, extending to 25,000-28,000 hectares,” the officials said.

Kuruvai transplantation has been completed on 6,000 hectares in the district this year. Nursery has been raised on 200 hectares.

Farmers who raise Kuruvai in pumpset-irrigated areas are happy that they will get uninterrupted power supply from June 1. They have demanded that the government ensure three-phase supply for at least 12 hours a day.

S. Ranganathan, secretary of the Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, has a word of caution for farmers of canal irrigated areas with respect to Kuruvai cultivation. Four parameters should be taken into consideration, he said. Though the groundwater level was comfortable, thanks to the rain this month, the storage in the Mettur dam was poor. The announcement of uninterrupted power supply gave pumpset-irrigated farmers some hopes, he said, underscoring that the timely onset of the monsoon was the most important.

Pointing out that the current spell of rain was not due to the monsoon, but only summer rains, he saw no possibility of Kuruvai cultivation in canal-irrigated areas before the last week of June. “Only by June-end, if the Mettur storage stabilises, late Kuruvai cultivation can be taken up. Otherwise, it should be skipped in canal-irrigated areas,” Mr. Ranganathan said.

Dairy farmers air grievances



Dairy farmers at a meeting with Animal Husbandry Director in his chamber in Puducherry on Wednesday. Photo: T.Singaravelou

A group of around 30 dairy farmers in Puducherry, led by the CPI (M), marched to the director's office on Wednesday at the animal husbandry and animal welfare department, alleging poor facilities at the centre and negligence by staff.

In a list of complaints, the farmers alleged that recently a doctor from the department had administered a wrong medicine to a cow, leading to its death.

They also said that cattle are often taken away by municipality staff on the ground that they were found roaming on the roads. These cattle are not given proper food, leading to many of them dying or taking ill. "Often, when these cows are taken away, they collect fines from us but do not give receipts for them," said one of the farmers. Puducherry does not have any grazing area. The department can give a warning to the farmers instead of taking away the cows," said R. Ragankam, CPI (M) secretariat member.

Addressing the issues raised by the farmers, director of the animal husbandry and animal welfare department, Dr P. Padmanabhan said, "The farmers have given us a list of demands. I have told them to contact the veterinary team at each commune and if they are dissatisfied with the response, they can get in touch with me directly.

As regards the medicines, we have assured them that we have sufficient stock of medicines and vaccines to deal with sick animals and pets.

Dredge water bodies before monsoon, farmers urge officials

Bring Cauvery water to Perambalur and Ariyalur districts from Musiri: farmers



A farmer presenting his grievance at the redress meeting in Perambalur on Wednesday.—

PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Farmers have urged the district administration to take steps to dredge and deepen the supply channels of various lakes and irrigation channels in the district ahead of the onset of the south-west monsoon.

Making this representation at farmers' grievances redress meeting here on Wednesday, the Tamizhaga Eri and Aatru Paasana Vivasayigal Sangam — Tamil Nadu State president P. Viswanathan said dredging and deepening of supply channels besides strengthening its bunds would pave the way for adequate storage of water in the lakes benefitting farmers and increasing the water table. At a time when the south-west monsoon was to set in, the district administration must accord priority to these works and execute them at the earliest, he said.

The sangam sought the construction of check dams across the Kallalar passing through Venbavur, Krishnapuram, Vengalam, and Pandagapaadi villages in Veppanthattai block.

Construction of check dams would ensure storage of rainwater which would help increasing water table, Mr. Viswanathan said.

Farmers' fraternity of Perambalur district would be immensely benefitted if the administration initiated steps to bring the Cauvery waters to Perambalur and Ariyalur via Thuraiyur from Musiri by constructing canals.

As cane growers in the district were unable to get profit, the district administration should take steps to distribute good quality cane and offer advices in this regard to farmers besides suggesting ways to reduce the cultivation cost, he said.

Early construction of Chinnamutlu dam and steps for increasing the price of small onions were among the sangam's other demands.

Another farmer — Ramesh — appealed to the authorities to guarantee supply of fertilisers as sought by farmers. Chelladurai, another farmer, sought early construction of check dams across the Marudhaiyar. The meeting was presided over by Collector Darez Ahamed and attended by officials of various government departments at the Collectorate.

Rain beats the heat in Erode



RATHER UNEXPECTED:A sudden downpour on Wednesday evening in hampered visibility,requiring vehicles to turn on headlights.—PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

Heavy rain accompanied by strong wind lashed Erode city and surroundings for about an hour on Wednesday causing the heat conditions that prevailed in the forenoon hours to subside substantially.

The unexpected rain threw life out of gear.

The roads looked empty as the visibility was poor warranting use of headlights by motor vehicles. Disruptions in movements of vehicular traffic were reported.

The downpour coincided with a notable increase in inflow into the Bhavani Sagar Dam owing to heavy rain in The Nilgiris.

With inflow of 917 cusecs, the Dam's level stood at 46.16 feet with storage of 3,576 million cubic feet.

On Tuesday, the inflow was 243 cusecs.

Discharge was maintained at 155 cusecs: 150 into Bhavani River and five cusecs into the Lower Bhavani Project canal.

The Dam area received 13.2 mm rainfall in the last 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Wednesday.

Farmers urged to dig percolation ponds

Demand for a clinic and health centre to be considered, says Collector



Collector K. Vivekanandan addressing the farmers grievances redress meeting at the Collectorate on Wednesday.-Photo: Special Arrangement.

District Collector K. Vivekanandan urged the farmers in the district to dig percolation ponds either on their land or on the adjacent *poromboke* land with the hundred per cent subsidy, which is being provided by the Government for the same.

Addressing the farmer's grievance redress meeting held here on Wednesday, Mr. Vivekanandan asked the farmers to take all measures to prevent accidents pertaining to open/abandoned bore wells.

Subsidy

He said that the farmers can take soil deposited in the catchments of Vaniyar Dam for agriculture purposes in tractors.

Under the National Food Processing Scheme, the Union Government is extending 25 per cent subsidy for commissioning machineries and buying equipment. Farmers can avail the facility of levelling their land with the bull dozers rented out by the Agriculture Department for Rs. 910 per hour.

Clinic

Demands by the farmers regarding establishing a veterinary clinic in Vellichandhai and sub health centre at Konanginayakkanahalli would be considered, Mr. Vivekanandan said.

Farmers thanked the collector for taking action so that the tractors, seized by the banks for failure to repay the loans, were returned to them.

Farmers also demanded the Collector to make fodder available at all the veterinary clinics.

District Revenue Officer P. Ramar, Joint Director of Agriculture, Mohan, Project Director, DRDA Sridhar, Personal Assistant to Collector (Agriculture) R.R. Susila, representatives from Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam and individual farmers participated.

Managing paddy straw in Cauvery delta

Paddy straw is the staple food for cattle in Cauvery Delta, as rice is for humans. Consequent to the labour scarcity and escalating wages, farmers have started harvesting paddy with combined harvesters.

Cauvery Delta farmers heavily depend on harvesting machines resulting in spill over of chopped paddy straw in the field.

Large-scale use of combined harvesters led to the situation wherein disposal of paddy straw became an issue resulting in burning of paddy straw in a few pockets. On an average, about 4 to 6 tons of paddy straw/ha is obtained per crop.

Combined harvester

During khariff season, rice crop is harvested by combine harvester using the chain type of harvester because of the excess soil moisture.

The left over paddy straw is incorporated into the soil by puddling owing to the availability of canal water/ North East monsoon after the harvesting during rabi season.

During summer, burning of paddy straw by a few farmers causes human health problems, emission of green house gases especially carbon dioxide, loss of plant nutrients due to ammonia and potassium volatilisation, loss of beneficial microorganisms in the soil surface and adverse impact on soil properties in addition to wastage of valuable crop residue.

Advantages

Instead, the paddy straw if mulched back into the fields has the following advantages:

Weed growth is arrested, straw acts as a soil mulch leading to conservation of soil moisture and one third of potash requirement can be saved for the succeeding rice crop.

Another option to solve this problem is, modifying the combine harvester to collect and remove the paddy straw from field by proper adjustment in the harvester which needs to be designed and tested under field conditions by agricultural engineers.

(R. Rajendran is Director in charge, Tamil Nadu Rice Research Institute (TRRI), and R. Natesan is Prof, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Aduthurai 612 101, Tamil Nadu, Phone : 0435- 2472098, email: dirtrri@tnau.ac.in)

Drop in paddy cultivation

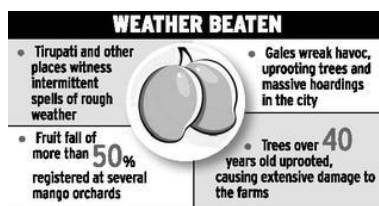
Paddy cultivation has been taken up on 1,042 hectares in various parts of this district, according to Joint Director of Agriculture N. K. Dhakshinamoorthy.

Half of this cultivation area was covered in April in potentially identified blocks of Alwarthirunagari, Karungulam, Tiruchendur and Srivaikuntam. The ayacut area in these four blocks was large. “The targeted cultivation area for paddy is 4,000 hectares but average cultivation of this crop in the ongoing season is about 1,500 ha to 2,000 ha,” he said here on Wednesday.

About 7,500 to 8,000 kg of wet paddy could be got in one hectare and average yield of dry paddy (rice) was 4, 800 kg to 5, 000 kg per hectare, Mr. Dhakshinamoorthy has said.

Rice/ fallow pulses had been cultivated on 1,200 ha in these blocks. Since paddy farmers had been relying on irrigation tank based cultivation, they were looking forward to release of water from reservoirs. Only when surplus water was released from the dam, paddy crop could be raised. So, farmers had been anticipating early onset of monsoon for rainfall, he said.

Rains, gales dash hopes of mango farmers



Summer, though despised for its inclement weather, is cherished for one particular reason – mangoes. Every year farmers as well as consumers eagerly wait for the ‘king of fruits’

to enter the market, but this time the entry might be delayed with rains and strong winds playing spoilsport.

In the past few days, the temple city and several other places across the district witnessed intermittent spells of rough weather. Life came to a standstill as gales wreaked havoc , uprooting trees and massive hoardings in the city. The brunt of mother nature was evident at several places with collapsing of walls, traffic poles, trees and banners. An 82-year-old, retired RTC driver, A. Krishnamurthy died as minaret of a mosque collapsed on him.

In the rural areas, a fruit fall of more than 50 percent was registered at several mango orchards. According to statistics furnished by Assistant Director of Horticulture (Tirupati) at some places, trees over forty years old were also uprooted at the rate of 1-2 per acre, causing extensive damage to the farms. Areas like Puttur, Kalikiri, B.N. Kandriga, Sitaramapuram, Nagari and several places were the worst affected in this regard.

Regional Agricultural Research Station's (Tirupati) Meteorological Department, recorded an actual rainfall of 50 mm against the normal 75 mm rainfall, on May 26 and 27.

Though wind velocities remained marginal, the scientists maintained that the flow would vary from place to place. Horticulture officials are yet to estimate the overall crop loss in the district.

‘GM crops will be put on the back burner’

Irrigation project a la Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana soon



Radha Mohan Singh at a press meet in New Delhi on Wednesday.— Photo: Sandeep Saxena

In a reversal of the UPA regime policy, genetically modified crops will not be a priority for the new government, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said here on Wednesday.

“Only if absolutely necessary can genetically modified crops be looked at,” said the 64-year-old Cabinet Minister after taking charge of his Ministry. The UPA government had promoted GM crops as a panacea for food scarcity.

Expressing concern at the possibility of a deficient monsoon, he said the Centre had advised States to set aside 10 per cent of their share of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana funds as a cover. The Ministry had written to them, asking them to be prepared with contingency plans and be ready with seeds of short-duration and late-sown crops.

The Centre would soon launch a Prime Minister’s Rural Irrigation Project on the lines of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana started during Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s tenure.

The project would seek to complete unfinished water projects so that small and marginal farmers were benefited.

The four-time MP from Bihar expressed confidence that the new government would keep a tight check on the prices of essential commodities and also ensure that farmers got a good price for their produce. The Agriculture Marketing Produce Act would be reviewed.

New MSP likely

He said a Farmers Income Insurance Scheme would be launched to ensure returns on investment during a calamity.

At the same time, from the next kharif onwards, the government might give farmers a minimum support price — about 50 per cent higher than the input cost — for their crop.

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- States asked to prepare contingency plans for poor rainfall*
 - Govt. to launch Farmers Income Insurance Scheme*
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Summer showers raise hopes of fishermen

The 47-day fishing ban period ends at midnight of May 31

A VOYAGE FOR LIVELIHOOD	
<i>Almost 50 per cent of 600-odd mechanised boats, 100 mini-trawlers and big trawlers and 250 to 300 beach landing craft opt for voyage in the first batch</i>	
Good sign <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Prediction of normal monsoon	Formalities <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Renewal of registration completed
Investment <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Rs.2 lakh to Rs.3 lakh on oil tank, bottom propeller, wood, fibre change and painting work for each boat	Target catch <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Pink brown shrimp, white and tiger prawn

Summer showers and the prediction of a near-normal monsoon have raised the expectation level of boat operators here who are all set to resume fishing season after end of 47-day annual ban period from midnight of May 31.

The high operational cost notwithstanding, almost 50 per cent of 600-odd mechanised boats, 100 mini trawlers and big trawlers and 250 to 300 beach landing craft have opted for voyage in the first batch.

The boat operators used the ban meant for conservation of fish resources, after their numbers dwindled due to overexploitation, on repair and retrofitting of their vessels.

Each mechanised boat owner has spent nearly Rs.2 lakh to Rs.3 lakh on oil tank, bottom propeller, wood, fibre change and painting work. At least 500 to 600 metres of wire rope has been replaced.

“The showers experienced during the ban period have come as a big boon. This apart, the prediction of a near-normal monsoon has raised our expectation of a big catch during post-ban period,” Ch. Veeraju, a boat owner told *The Hindu* on Monday.

Most of the boat owners have completed renewal of registration of their vessels with the Fisheries Department and Marine Product Export Development Authority. Insurance of crew is also completed.

Voyage is normally undertaken for 15 days towards north. The boats will hunt for catch mostly pink brown shrimp, white and tiger prawn towards Gopalpur and Paradip of Odisha. Miscellaneous fish like vanjiram and pomfret come as bonanza.

“The repair works are almost complete. Now we have started procuring ice, oil and provisions for crew,” said Ch. Satyanarayana Murthy, president of Dolphin Boat Operators’ Welfare Association.

The fishermen from Visakhapatnam had a bumper catch last year during post-ban voyage and this time also they are confident of a repeat.

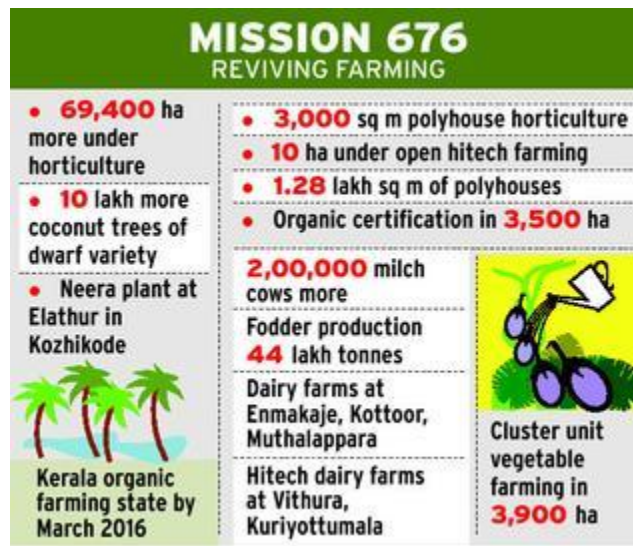
□ *'The prediction of a near-normal monsoon has raised our expectation of a big catch during post-ban period'*

□ *Voyage is normally undertaken for 15 days towards north*

The 47-day fishing ban period ends at midnight of May 31

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Farm department unveils action plan for Mission 676



The Department of Agriculture has unveiled an action plan aimed at achieving self-reliance in vegetables and milk and reviving coconut farming in the State by 2016.

To be taken up under the government's Mission 676, the plan seeks to bring an additional 69,400 hectares under horticulture to achieve a production target of 8.69 lakh tonnes by 2015-16.

Addressing the media here on Wednesday, Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan and senior officials said 10 lakh coconut trees of the dwarf variety would be planted across the State by February 2016 under a flagship programme to revive the coconut sector and address the shortage of tree climbers. Mr. Mohanan said the Neera production plant being set up at Elathur in Kozhikode by the Kerala State Coconut Development Corporation was expected to be commissioned by December 2015. The plant would have a capacity to produce 1,000 litres of Neera a day.

The action plan includes a variety of schemes aimed at making Kerala an organic farming state by March 2016. The programme seeks to bring 3,000 sq m under polyhouse method of horticulture at Vadavathur in Kottayam and Kodumon Estate, Pathanamthitta by November this year. The State Horticulture Mission will take up a project to set up 1,28,000 sq m of polyhouses and introduce organic certification in 3,500 hectares. Cluster units will be set up in Kannur, Wayanad, Idukki, and Palakkad to extend vegetable farming to 3,900 hectares.

As many as 2,00,000 milch cows will be added to the cattle population while the annual production of fodder will reach 44 lakh tonnes. Three new dairy farms are to be set up at Enmakaje, Kottoor and Muthalappara in Kasaragod district. Two new hi-tech dairy farms are expected to be commissioned at Vithura in Thiruvananthapuram and Kuriyottumala in Kollam by August 2015.

Bar on farm loan recovery extended

Cabinet nod for police station for Guruvayur temple

The Cabinet on Wednesday decided to extend the moratorium on recovery of agriculture loans by one year.

The moratorium, declared earlier, had expired on February 14. This would now be extended to February 14, 2015, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy told the media after a Cabinet meeting.

The Cabinet decided to sanction a police station exclusively for the Guruvayur temple. The station would function on the temple premises. The station was being set up against the background of incidents in which temple workers allegedly beat up devotees.

Trawling ban

The ban on bottom trawling in the coastal seas would start from June 15 to July 31 (47 days), the Chief Minister said.

The Cabinet sanctioned 78 posts for six of the 10 newly sanctioned government colleges at Kondotty, Koduvally, Mankada, Balussery, Chelakkara, and Thrithala. The Chief Minister would take the decision with regard to the other four colleges at Thalassery, Payyannur, Kattakkada, and Neyyattinkara. The new colleges were sanctioned as per the policy of the government to sanction colleges in Assembly constituencies without a government college.

The validity of the rank list for appointment of teaching and non-teaching staff in aided colleges would be fixed as one year, amending an earlier order.

The government tribal lower primary school at Echipara in Thrissur district would be upgraded to upper primary school. The Hanuman temple trust in Ernakulam would be granted 17.5 cents of land, subject to norms.

Plus Two batches

Replying to questions, the Chief Minister said that applications from all districts were being considered for sanctioning of additional batches of Plus Two courses and decisions would be taken on receipt of recommendations.

When the government invited applications for new schools, higher number of applications was from south Kerala.

As new schools were not being sanctioned this year, additional batches were being given in southern districts also.

Applications had earlier been invited for new batches only from districts north of Ernakulam.

Mr. Chandy said the government had taken no decision to supersede Additional Chief Secretary Aruna Sunderarajan.

A misunderstanding was created because of creation of an additional post.

- Bottom trawling ban to start on June 15*
 - 78 posts for six government colleges*
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Coconut tree saplings

The Kozhikode district panchayat will distribute saplings of a dwarf variety of coconut tree to farmers from June 11, as part of its initiative to promote dwarf coconut trees in the region.

The saplings have been produced at the Koothali farm under the Agriculture Department, said a district administration press release here on Wednesday.

The dwarf variety was being promoted with a view to overcoming the scarcity of skilled employees to pluck coconut as well as to improving the production of coconut in the region.

High-yielding variety

“The saplings are of a high-yielding variety,” the press release said.

A sum of Rs.50 will be charged per sapling. Those interested may contact the district panchayat.

Pepper project wound up, leaves farmers in the lurch



The Spices Board of India has stopped the Special Project for Rejuvenation of Pepper in Idukki.

: The pepper farmers in Idukki district are in for a shock. The Spices Board of India has stopped the Special Project for Rejuvenation of Pepper in Idukki, which was funded by the National Horticulture Mission (NHM) under the Ministry of Agriculture.

A senior official of the board told *the Hindu* on Monday the scheme had been discontinued since April 1 following an order. The special offices too were being closed down. The project period was from 2008-'09 to 2012-13 with the financial assistance from Agriculture Ministry.

The aim of the project was to increase the production of pepper in the district, and Rs. 45.87 crore had been utilised till March end. This includes development of pest-resistant vines and supplying them to farmers for replanting in the areas which were once major centres of pepper production.

The new order received by the board, which is under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, said its mandate was only export promotion of all 52 spices listed under the Spices Act 1986 and production of small and large cardamom. The production aspect of all other spices was vested with the Union Agriculture Ministry and the respectState government.

The Spices Board official said the pepper project was taken up as a special case as its export had fallen drastically. Since the project has now been wound up, the board will not extend any help to pepper farmers.

The order has come at a time when the pepper farmers are faced with drop in production because of diseases, change in climate and soil conditions, making replanting a failure in the high range areas of Idukki.

Squad formed to check unauthorised sale of fertilizers

The Department of Agriculture has formed a vigilance squad to prevent unauthorised sale of fertilizers in the district. The team will be led by Sannakki Maruti, Assistant Director, Department of Agriculture. Agriculture Officers Arun and Ramappa are members.

Deputy Director of Department of Agriculture K. Madhusudan told *The Hindu* that the team would test fertilizer samples collected from shops.

He said stern action would be initiated against the traders who sell low quality fertiliser. The team would also ensure that fertilisers are sold at the stipulated price and purchase bills are issued to farmers, Mr. Madhusudan said.

It may be mentioned that Anjanappa and Nagesh, residents of Challakere, were arrested recently on the charges of selling fertilizers in an unauthorised manner at Nagenahalli village in Shikaripur taluk.

The department has received complaints that representatives of unregistered fertilizer agencies from neighbouring districts were selling their products in an unauthorised manner in rural areas, Mr. Madhusudan said.

It is against the law to sell the fertilizers without availing license from authorities concerned.

Farmers can lodge complaints with the nearest Raitha Samparka Kendras. They can also call 9591987304 and 9591987365 to lodge complaints with the vigilance squad, he said.

The team will test samples collected from shops

Water level

Mettur:The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 37.54 feet on Wednesday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet.

The inflow was 1,405 cusecs and the discharge 500 cusecs.

TIRUNELVELI:The water level in the Papanasam dam on Wednesday 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 water level stood at 21 feet in Pechipparai dam, 45.75 feet in Perunchani, 7.94 feet in Chittar 1, 8.03 feet in Chittar 11, 6 feet in Poigai and 54.12 feet in Mamabazathuraiyaru dam.

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Thursday, May 29

Max Min

34° | 28°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:41

Humidity: 70

Sunset: 06:31

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1008

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Friday, May 30

Max Min

39° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

May 31



40° | 29°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday

Jun 1



39° | 28°

Sunny

Monday

Jun 2



38° | 28°

Sunny

Tuesday

Jun 3



37° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday

Jun 4



37° | 28°

Sunny

Airport Weather

Chennai

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:24

Humidity: 38

Sunset: 07:12

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1004



Govt to boost irrigation, farm insurance



Radha Mohan Singh, Agriculture Minister

The Narendra Modi-led Government's focus on the agricultural sector is likely to be more on improving irrigation and insurance coverage for farmers rather than hiking the minimum support price (MSP), a dominant formula of the UPA regime.

Hinting at this, the new Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said that the Government intended to give farmers a minimum 50 per cent return over their costs of cultivation.

“But this is not going to happen in the immediate term. The 50 per cent return is our long-term goal,” Singh told reporters after assuming charge of the Ministry on Wednesday.

He said that the Government would look into the issue of MSP for the forthcoming season.

Irrigation, insurance

Singh also made it clear that the current Government's flagship programmes for the farm sector would be a 'Pradhan Mantri Sinchayi Yojana' (Prime Minister's Irrigation Scheme) and a comprehensive farm income insurance scheme which guarantees that their costs would be covered even in the event of crop failure or price crash.

The proposed irrigation scheme would be on the lines of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana that was started during the previous NDA regime and is expected to bring more area under irrigation.

At present, about 44 per cent of the 14.4 crore hectares is under irrigation.

The Minister also maintained that curbing food inflation and boosting farm productivity were among the key concern areas of the new Government.

Singh said the Government proposes to implement programmes to improve the local cattle breeds.

Stand on GM crops

Replying to a query on the genetically modified (GM) crops, Singh said the Government was not in favour of them at present, but may allow these in future, if necessary.

On the preparedness to deal with below normal monsoon, Singh said the States had been asked to provide seeds of short duration crop varieties and ensure fodder availability.

Volume rises at Coonoor tea sale

A volume of 12.92 lakh kg is being offered for Sale No: 22 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction to be held on Thursday and Friday.

Of this, a volume of 8.48 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 4.44 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades.

As much as 12.20 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 72,000 kg, orthodox variety.

A volume of 34,000 kg of teas unsold in previous weeks is being re-offered this week.

Last week, about 20 per cent remained unsold when prices rose Rs. 2 a kg over the previous week.

In the Leaf auction last week, among corporate buyers, Hindustan Unilever Ltd bought better liquoring varieties. In the dust auction, Godfrey Philips bought medium varieties.

There was good demand for brighter liquoring teas from upcountry buyers.

Overall, internal buyers were less active. Exporters chose mostly plainer grades.

Limited buying holds edible oils steady

A steady trend was witnessed in edible oils market on Wednesday, tracking thin volatility in futures markets amid limited physical demand.

Barring rapeseed oil and sunflower expeller refined oil, which declined by Rs. 5-10 for 10 kg, all other edible oils ruled steady.

Malaysian crude palm oil closed flat on hopes of higher demand at lower level.

Sources said the market was cautious, tracking high volatility in currency and futures markets.

During the day, Liberty and Ruchi together sold about 850-900 tonnes of palmolein at Rs. 573.

Towards the day's close, Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs. 573, super palmolein Rs. 588 and soyabean refined oil Rs. 665.

Ruchi was trading palmolein for Rs. 573; Allana at Rs. 573/576 ex JNPT/Khapoli, soyabean refined oil Rs. 667 and sunflower refined oil Rs. 670. Resellers were offering palmolein at Rs. 570 ex JNPT.

Mewah quoted palmolein at Rs. 576 and super palmolein Rs. 586.

In Saurashtra, groundnut oil *Telia* tin was Rs. 1,115 (Rs. 1,110) and loose (10 kg) was Rs. 695 (Rs. 695).

Malaysia crude palm oil June closed at MYR 2,508 (MYR 2,509), July at MYR 2,505 (MYR 2,505) and August at MYR 2,503 (MYR 2,505).

Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs. /10 kg): groundnut oil 750 (750), soya refined oil 660 (660), sunflower exp. ref. 580 (590), sunflower ref. 665 (665), rapeseed ref. oil 675 (680), rapeseed expeller ref. 645 (650) cottonseed ref. oil 650 (650) and palmolein 572 (572).

Sheet rubber drops below Rs. 150/kg

Physical rubber prices lost ground on Wednesday. The market opened steady but declined later mainly following the selling from dealers.

Sheet rubber dropped to Rs. 149 (Rs. 151) a kg, according to traders. The grade dropped to Rs. 149 (Rs. 150) and Rs. 146 (Rs. 147) respectively, according to the Rubber Board and dealers.

June futures improved to Rs. 151.22 (Rs. 149.07) and July to Rs. 150.60 (Rs. 148.97) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) firmed up to Rs. 124.31 (Rs. 122.97) at Bangkok. June futures closed at ¥194.2 (Rs. 112.25) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg): RSS-4: 149 (151); RSS-5: 146 (146); Ungraded: 140 (142.50); ISNR 20: 140 (141) and Latex 60%: 120 (121).

How the Modi regime can achieve 'food balance'



Petr Jilek/shutterstock

On May 16, we saw a new chapter being written in Indian democracy. India has woken up to a new leadership, new set of policies and it looks forward to a new direction for development.

In this article, I will focus on some of the challenges and opportunities that India faces in the food sector. I want to introduce the term food balance to distinguish the domestic versus foreign issues that influence the Indian food industry.

To set the stage, let me begin by dividing Indian food balance into two categories: internal food balance and external food balance.

An example of internal food balance is the supply and demand of vegetables where production and prices are not a function of the world markets.

An example of external food balance is the supply and demand of edible oils, where production and prices are a function of the world markets. In addition, food markets are dependent on exogenous variables such as exchange rates, logistics and energy prices.

India has faced challenges of increasing global food and energy prices, and this has been amplified in the last few years by a depreciating exchange rate for the rupee.

India is a net consumer of food in the global context, thus in a depreciating currency regime, India is bound to have a higher food price inflation.

Subsidies can be given to prevent this food price inflation, but subsidies eventually depreciate the currency and the long-run equilibrium would likely be even higher food inflation.

(Note that I have assumed here a specific case related to just food prices and exchange rates with all others unchanged).

A focused approach to Indian food balance can achieve some key objectives: controlling food inflation, achieving food security, and optimising internal versus external food balance.

Optimality in food balance is paramount to achieving correct allocation of labour, capital and technology in the Indian food industry.

There are two broad tools to achieve the food balance.

Predictive policies: Predictive policies can be implemented in order to achieve external food balance. The policy makers should have adequate knowledge of supply and demand that India exports and imports.

An example would be to install incentive structures in sync with the forward curve of commodities such as soyameal, palm oil, sugar, coffee, etc.

These incentive structures would help reduce unnecessary inventory or avoid a sudden spike in demand, smoothing revenues and costs for these businesses.

For example, it is expected that by the end of this year, sugar prices will go up and soyabean prices will drop. Policies should be set now in such a way that the sugar industry is incentivised to capture higher margins, while consumers of soyabean products enjoy expected lower prices in the later half of this year.

Agriculture investments: Investments in the food sector will achieve an internal food balance.

An example would be the creation of clean, deliverable storage units. Investments in warehousing would lead to storage of food that is domestically produced and sold more efficiently.

In my opinion, incentives should be given to producers and/or consumers to build storage capacity, but avoiding overcapacity.

This action would reduce volatility of internal food balance and create greater predictability of food supply.

India has many challenges in the food sector but this is the right time to incorporate some of the latest policy tools the world has to offer.

India should gear up to use predictive analysis in the food sector to achieve external food balance and allow greater investments to achieve internal food balance in order to achieve national food security at the lowest cost with the greatest speed.

The writer is based in London and is the founder and Managing Director of OpalCrest (www.opalcrest.com).

Business Standard

Potato prices surge 30%

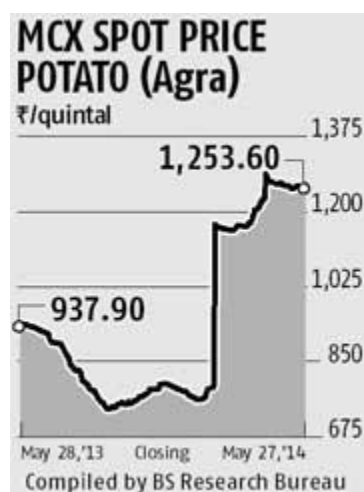


Low production and significant demand from the export market have sent up prices of potatoes. Wholesale market prices are up 28-30 per cent compared to this time last year and could rise more.

Total export was 184,000 tonnes between April 2013 and February 2014, compared to 164,000 tonnes in 2012-13. According to sources, 15-20 containers (each of 28 tonnes) are still shipped daily to West Asia, Pakistan, Mauritius and Malaysia, among other destinations.

And, output is down. “There was intermittent rain in major producing areas like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Bihar during November to February, which affected the crop.. the overall estimate of production loss is 25-30 per cent. Cold storages in major producing areas are only 60-65 per cent filled,” said R P Gupta, Director, National

Horticulture Research and Development Foundation. “Secondly, there has been significant demand from other countries. Pakistan, for instance, has removed the duty on [potato](#) to be imported from India and has allowed 200,000 tonnes of import. These are two main reasons behind the increase in prices of the crop.”



Exporters add that in the past two months, prices have risen 20-25 per cent in the international market, making exports viable. “Pakistan and Bangladesh had a poor crop in the last rabi season due to adverse weather conditions and crop disease. Beside India, these two countries are the major exporters to the Middle East and other Gulf countries. Since production was hit in these two countries, the opportunity was with Indian exporters; demand picked up and the prices,” said Sachid Madan, managing director, Technico Agri Sciences. The company is engaged in production of high-yielding and early-generation seed potatoes for India and neighbouring export markets. Currently, the price for exporters is Rs 15-18 a kg (FOB value, length 50 mm); it was Rs 11-12 a kg in February-March. Compared to last year, they say, prices are 25-30 per cent more.

According to government data, India produced 45.3 million tonnes of potato from an area of 190,000 hectares in 2012-13. It is sown in both kharif and rabi seasons. The kharif produce accounts for five per cent of total annual output, available between August and October. The remaining 95 per cent comes into the market between mid-December and mid-April, termed rabi produce. The rabi potato is stored till November and made available steadily for domestic and export markets.

Traders say the demand for potato would rise further in the coming days due to its substitution for other costly vegetables, due to high temperatures in several parts of the country.

Turmeric extends fall, sheds 1.55%



[Turmeric](#) showed weakness for the third day as prices fell by another 1.55 per cent to Rs 6,106 per quintal in futures trade today on weak domestic as well as export demand against adequate supplies from producing belts.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, turmeric for delivery in July fell further by Rs 96, or 1.55 per cent, to Rs 6,106 per quintal with an open interest of 3,180 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in June lost Rs 86, or 1.42 per cent, to Rs 5,970 per quintal in 13,305 lots.

Analysts said offloading of positions by speculators on weak domestic and export demand in the spot market against adequate supplies from producing regions led to fall in turmeric prices in futures trade.

Chana down 0.9% on higher supply, low demand



[Chana](#) futures witnessed persistent fall in futures trade today as it fell 0.93% to Rs 2,766 per quintal as speculators offloaded positions amidst increased supplies from producing regions.

Besides, lower demand in the spot market put pressure on chana futures.

At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, chana for delivery in June fell further by Rs 26, or 0.93%, to Rs 2,766 per quintal with an open interest of 1,20,900 lots.

Similarly, the commodity for delivery in July declined by Rs 26, or 0.91%, to Rs 2,836 per quintal in 1,05,650 lots.

Potato down 0.7% on weak demand

[Potato](#) prices fell by 0.71% to Rs 1,353.20 per quintal in futures trade today as traders offloaded their positions on low demand in the spot markets amid adequate stocks.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), potato prices for July contracts fell by Rs 9.80, or 0.71%, to Rs 1,353.20 per quintal, with a business volume of 19 lots.

The potato for delivery in June declined by Rs 6.60, or 0.49%, to Rs 1,323.10 per quintal, with a trading volume of 21 lots.

Marketmen said offloading of positions by speculators amid low demand against higher supplies in the spot markets pulled down potato prices.

Farmers prefer cotton over paddy, oilseeds this season



with [cotton](#) sowing in full swing across major producing states, the trend this season indicates a rise in the crop's acreage compared to last year. This is because cotton offers higher returns compared to other kharif crops such as [paddy](#) and [oilseeds](#), as well as the introduction of improved varieties, which cut costs related to pest- and weed-control, and labour.

Sowing is in the final stages in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan; in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, it is expected to last a few more days.

In northern states, the area under paddy is being diverted towards cotton, as cultivation costs for the latter are lower.

Jagtar Singh Brar, a farmer from Mehma Sarji (Bathinda district), in Punjab, said with agricultural labour turning scarce and the water table dwindling, paddy has been becoming less remunerative (farmers in Punjab and Haryana use underground water to irrigate paddy fields and run tube wells; now, this is becoming unviable due to high diesel costs). Also, paddy has an adverse impact on soil, as fields are inundated for two months. Cotton helps loosen the soil and make it conducive for sowing other crops, too.

Last year, the minimum support price for the short- and long-staple cotton varieties stood at Rs 3,700 a quintal and Rs 4,000 a quintal, respectively. Farmers sold the commodity in the open market for up to Rs 5,000 a quintal.

COTTON STATS

Year	Area in mn hectares	Production in mn bales
'09-10	10.3	30.5
'10-11	11.1	32.5
'11-12	12.2	35.3
'12-13	11.8	33.4
'13-14	11.9	38.5E
'14-15E	13.8	40.0

Source: Cotton Advisory Board and Cotton Association of India
E= Estimates

For farmers in Gujarat and Maharashtra, too, cotton has turned more lucrative compared to oilseeds. Dilip Bhai Patel, president of [All Gujarat Cotton Ginners' Association](#), said, "Last year, prices of oilseeds remained consistently low; so, cotton is being preferred by farmers. The area under cotton could see an estimated rise of 15 per cent."

He added this year, the monsoon might be sub-normal, owing to the El Niño phenomenon. He said a good monsoon last year had filled water reservoirs and, therefore, the predicted shortfall of six per cent in rainfall wouldn't affect yields. Semi-draught-like conditions helped increase cotton yields, he added.

This year, production is estimated at 40 million bales (one bale=170 kg) Arrivals start in October. The spinning sector's annual requirement is 30 million bales. Arun Seksaria, director of a leading cotton trade and export house, said this year, farmers were shifting to cotton. He added they might get good remuneration.

Though exporters aren't bullish, due to the strengthening rupee and the competitive international market, a change in government policy (likely due to the change of guard at the Centre) might drive up exports. Sources at Monsanto, a major supplier of BT cotton seeds in India, confirmed this year, the demand for cotton seeds was higher than last year, across producing areas.

Irrigation schemes, insurance cover: Govt scripts a sop opera for farmers

The Centre on Wednesday mooted two mega schemes focussing on additional irrigation potential and providing insurance cover for small and marginal farmers' income.

After assuming office, new agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh said only 44% of the cultivable land in the country has irrigation facilities, which would be increased through a countrywide programme – the Pradhan Mantri Grameen Sinchayee Yojana.

“We will also start work on nationwide roll out of the Krishi Amdani Bima Yojana where small farmers would protected against crop losses,” Singh told reporters.

He said the insurance scheme will be launched after working out the average income of small and marginal farmers in the last 5-7 years and the Centre will bear the burden of premium for insurance for the small farmers.

"Farmers will take interest in agriculture only when their investment is guaranteed," Singh noted. He declined to give any frame for rolling out of two mega schemes.

As part of the priority area, the new agriculture minister stressed on conserving the indigenous breed of cows so that milk production is sustained.

On providing minimum support price (MSP) to farmers, Singh said that the government will soon take a decision on the proposal on fixing the MSP for the kharif crops.

The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Practices (CACP) earlier had recommended moderate increase of 1-5% in minimum support prices (MSP) of agricultural commodities for the Kharif season 2014-15.

The MSP for paddy has been recommended an increase in the range of 3-5%. The new minister may approve paddy MSP around Rs 1,350-1,380 a quintal as against Rs 1,310 a quintal fixed last year.

Larger groundnuts helpful to farmers

Large seeded groundnut varieties are needed for the benefit of farmers, said K Ramasamy vice chancellor of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU). While speaking about crop research activities on Wednesday, he said that farmers should be encouraged to use such varieties which will get them a better yield and will be healthy than the usual varieties. More than 10 lakh tonnes of ground nuts is produced from the state every year. Using larger seed varieties will give a better yield, with almost the same efforts and inputs, he said.

"The size of the ground nuts, we get from the fields are 1cm in length and 0.5cm wide. Even if farmers use ground nuts which are 1cm long and 1cm wide it can be of great benefit for the farmers," said Ramasamy. This will increase the productivity as well as its price as its applications in the food industry is much more, he said. Any variety which is bigger than the existing seeds should be propagated among the farmers. "There are various varieties like 'Mallika' from Rajasthan and two varieties released from the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) which are high yielding varieties. Farmers must be made aware of this," he said.

Ramasamy cited a few reasons for this logic. He said that spoilage in ground nuts comes to around 20 to 30%. When the nuts are bigger the space between the cover and the nut is reduced which cuts down the space for insects to enter. Ramasamy said that they would provide subsidies and other incentives for the farmers to use these kinds of seeds.

More than 10 lakh tonnes of ground nuts is produced from the state every year. Using larger seed varieties will give a better yield.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Jeera futures remain weak on sluggish demand



Jeera prices moved down by 0.45 per cent to Rs 11,080 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators indulged in offloading positions amidst sluggish demand in spot market.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, jeera for delivery in July lost Rs 50, or 0.45 per cent, to Rs 11,080 per quintal with an open interest of 3,747 lots.

In a similar fashion, the spice for delivery in June shed Rs 45, or 0.41 per cent, to Rs 10,995 per quintal in 7,200 lots.

Analysts attributed the continued fall in jeera futures to offloading of positions by speculators on sluggish demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position that kept pressure on jeera prices in futures trade.

Jackfruit Fest Ends, Tickles Tastebuds

The jackfruit festival organised by the Kudumbashree Mission at Marine Drive concluded on Tuesday.

The fest had jackfruit lovers thronging the venue in hundreds where various displays seek to emphasise the importance of the state's traditional fruit. The first day of the fest saw a sale of around `6 lakh. Several cookery contests were also held as part of the event. The fest, open from 11 am to 11 pm, witnessed the participation of 76 Kudumbashree members from over 10 districts and preparation of 416 items.

“This homegrown, pesticide-free fruit is a treasure that needs to be preserved and should be given its due market value. Festivals like this are vital to counter any tendency towards underestimating the true value of the fruit,” said Rahul Krishnan, state project coordinator. Different kinds of products such as jackfruit jam, squash, ‘bajji’, ‘payasam’, ‘papad’, cheese, halwa, jelly, pickle, and dishes like jackfruit-crab curry, ‘chakkapuzhukku’, are the major highlights of the fest. The festival will conclude on Tuesday.