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THE HINDU

Mushrooming trend



Mushroom cultivation has become a small-scale agriculture alternative for many in the northeast. A profitable venture, mushroom farming is suitable to climatic conditions of the north-eastern region.

Realising the potential of this non-traditional cash-crop, many people in the region are shifting their attention towards mushroom cultivation. The Ministry of Rural Development runs a special scheme on mushroom farming, which motivates many farmers to adopt this alternative form of farming.

"The climate of Tripura is suitable for mushroom cultivation. There are wide varieties of mushrooms available in the forests and the tribal people collect them and sell it in the market. But this is not available the whole year. We want to increase mushroom cultivation.

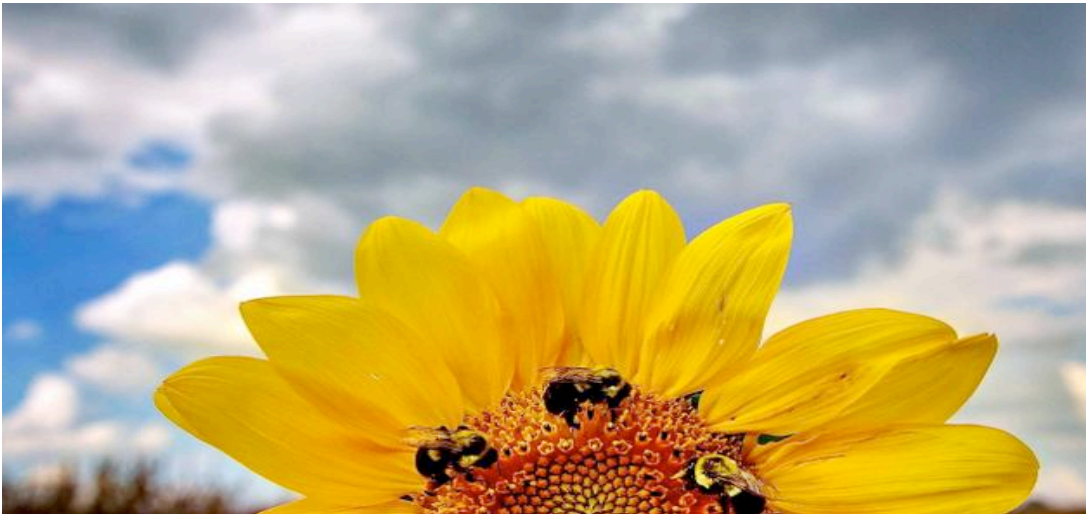
So, the ICAR is giving training to promote mushroom cultivation.” said Hemabati R, scientist, ICAR.

Success story

Nilotpai Sinha, a teacher turned entrepreneur runs “Vivekananda Mushroom centre” at South Hurua in North Tripura. He started mushroom farming in 2003 in a small area and today his centre produces 6 kg of crop everyday. Sinha earns Rs. 25,000 to 30,000 in a month by producing milky and oyster mushrooms. “Mushroom consumption in India is comparatively low, but 55 per cent of the households consume mushrooms in their daily diet.

The consumption in the northeast is a little higher than the rest of the country. As climatic conditions in the northeast suit mushroom farming, efforts are on to encourage more farmers to take on mushroom as an alternative farming option. ANI

Angels of agriculture



Insects, particularly honeybees, play a critical role in agriculture.

Almost 80 per cent of the food we eat -- that is apart from cereals such as rice, wheat, millets -- almost all vegetables, fruits and flowers owe their propagation to these small insects.

Fruits such as mangoes, kiwis, apples, guavas, grapes, pears, pomegranates, watermelons, vegetables such as okra, brinjals, flowers like roses, jasmine, chrysanthemums ... a great number of fruits and vegetables all owe their growth and development to bees.

Stingers and angels

When we say bees, it is only but natural that many immediately think in terms of an insect that stings. But in actuality there are two varieties of bees: one that is wild, lives in rocks, crevices and forests; and the other domesticated, grown in wooden boxes in fields and in home gardens for honey [incidentally, this is called beekeeping].

It is the wild bees that sometimes get in the way of people while walking or working in the fields and sting them.

The box reared ones rarely sting except when disturbed or not handled properly. They can be taken out and held in the palm without any fear of being stung.

Honeybees are also called the angels of agriculture or winged fairies because their work in pollinating plants.

Bees are special

Though today we have developed technologies to artificially pollinate some crops in the lab, there is no substitute for the wide-ranging and critical role played by the bees.

Your botany textbooks are sure to talk about pollination, perhaps typically with a diagram of a hibiscus flower where the pollen, the stamen, petals are graphically explained in detail and mention is also made of how pollen is carried by the wind, birds like the humming bird and insects like honeybees which visit a flower to suck the nectar and the pollen gets stuck to their bodies and gets dispersed far and wide.

In this process of pollination, the bees are very special because apart from pollinating they also turn the nectar into honey. Except honeybees, no living species in the world is known for making something so sweet like honey.

Flowers have nectar, a sugary water like substance inside them, and the bees suck this up. On their return to the hive the insects regurgitate the liquid into the hives. There are worker bees inside the hive which take on themselves the work of fanning the sugary liquid till the water evaporates, thickening the sugary substrata, eventually turning it into honey.

Under threat of near extinction

While this may sound grand and interesting to read, the job and life of the small insects are today under threat to the point of near extinction.

Modern methods of growing food, which stress spraying chemicals and pesticides over crops, have caused untold damage to the fragile ecosystem and to the life of these wonderful insects.

Though carrying quite a sting, bees are actually quite sensitive to the environment and do not like even the slightest disturbance. But in the obsession with development, we have not cared enough for them.

(M.J. Prabu is The Hindu's Agriculture correspondent. He writes the popular Farmer's Notebook. Write to him at prabhu.mj@thehindu.co.in)

Bid to revive African traditional food



Duncan Senoga, a volunteer with Slow food International in Uganda, helps pupils of Buiga Sunrise Primary School in Mukono District, Uganda photo:afp

Powerful herby coffee, sun-dried fish and succulent beef from Ankole cattle are just some of the Ugandan delicacies in a mushrooming movement across Africa to safeguard traditional foods.

Slow Food, a global grassroots organisation that promotes "good, clean and fair food", is spreading its reach across Africa after making its first inroads on the continent a decade ago.

Today the movement counts 30 African projects as food communities preserve, and rediscover native breeds, plant varieties and products, from Moroccan Zerradoun salt, to Ethiopia's Tigray white honey, Zulu sheep in South Africa and Sierra Leone's Kenema kola nuts.

For Ugandan schoolboy Isaac Muwanguzi, that meant finding a vegetable known as eggobe springing up in his school garden when he returned from the holidays.

"In the village it's very rare," said the 13-year old, whose country is at the heart of Africa's slow revolution.

Eggobe, which has a plantain-like taste and softens when steamed, is also said to be handy for treating diabetes, hypertension.

It's one of a handful of vegetables a group of students at the primary school here at Banda Kyandaaza, a village about 20 kilometres outside Kampala, are hoping to put back on Ugandan plates. Eggobe has been nominated for Slow Food's Ark of Taste, an online "living catalogue of delicious and distinctive foods facing extinction."

Spreading its wings

Founded in 1989 and headquartered in Italy, Slow Food started with one Ugandan local chapter in 2008, since growing into 13 across the east African country. In Uganda, they've helped students create 75 gardens in more than 50 schools to taste and test products.

In the school garden in Banda Kyandaaza, students are now growing cassava, cabbage, pumpkin, African eggplant and black nightshade, as well as eggobe.

Boosting rare produce

Recent Ugandan additions to the list include small white mushrooms called Namulonda, as well as the Nakitembe banana, which is traditionally presented by the groom to a bride's family, but is at risk of disappearing due to the "continuous and indiscriminate hybridisation of bananas."

"We use the gardens to restore the crops that are at risk of disappearing," said Edie Mukiibi, 28, a Ugandan agronomist who was in February appointed co-vice-president of Slow Food International, alongside the influential US chef and author Alice Waters.

The country's capital Kampala may now be home to a handful of international fast food chain outlets, but Mukiibi said he was "proud" that Uganda had been "slow" to adopt fast food compared to other countries he'd visited.

Late last month he accompanied about two dozen Ugandan students, farmers, cooks and restaurant owners to Slow Food's Salone del Gusto, the world's largest food and wine fair, and Terra Madre, a concurrent global gathering of food communities in Turin in Italy. About 450 delegates from 45 African countries took part - and Ugandan bananas, vanilla and coffee were on display.

"We musn't only speak about poverty in Africa, we have to speak about culture, about the natural richness that you have in different recipes," said Serena Milano, General Secretary of the Slow Food Foundation of Biodiversity, who coordinates African activities.

"It's fascinating the diversity of products and recipes that Africa has."

With about 85 percent of the population involved in the sector, Mukiibi called agriculture Uganda's backbone.

Slow Food was working to address the "many injustices" facing the country's small-scale farmers. "You find some supermarkets importing potatoes from France and South Africa," he said. "Slow Food creates a market for the local uncommon products to compete."

In the traditional Ankole kingdom in southwestern Uganda, the indigenous long-horned Ankole cow symbolises wealth. From its milk come so many traditional dishes and other products," said Mukiibi. These include the eshabwe ghee sauce, also listed in Slow Food's Ark of Taste.

But Mukiibi said many years ago an influx of imported animal breeds began being mixed with local ones, encouraged by "the NGO world."

Now, some locals are starting to discard the Ankole cow, saying it takes too long to grow and gives very little milk.

Slow Food are working with one of Uganda's biggest slaughterhouses in Kampala, so producers can sell the animals they raise directly to them.

They're also providing training on improving meat quality. Meanwhile, in the school garden, students who used to view farming as a punishment are now realising the value in spending two hours a week out of class, learning everything from how to water crops to managing an agriculture enterprise.

"You farm, you get food," said Muwanguzi, bending over in a cabbage patch. "You farm, you get money."AFP

Grooming 'agropreneurs'

A.S. Thamothren of Iyarkai Herbal Products is a confident man, looking for business opportunities for his products that include herbal mix powders and herbal soup vending machine.

A native of M. Anumanpalli village in Erode, he walked a year ago into the Agri Business Incubator at the Directorate of Agri Business Development of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, looking for guidance and support to scale up his business, fine-tune his manufacturing process and financial support.

Today, he has filed patent for vending machine, which is pending, and has tested his products for safety and absence of pesticide residues and is on the verge of expansion.

Mr. Thamothren is one of the many 'agropreneurs' (agriculture entrepreneurs) the Directorate has groomed in the past seven years since its inception in 2007, says Director R. Murugesan.

Aspects

The Directorate works in two broad aspects – marketing the technologies developed within the University and its allied institutions by faculty, researchers and students and helping people outside in technology, processes and machines.

Recently, the Directorate helped in the University's pest-free storage bin find market in Assam. A visiting team from the State was interested in the product, which was developed in-house, and following negotiations a deal was clinched.

Likewise, the Directorate marketed the SRI power weeder, developed by the Farm Machinery wing of the Agriculture Engineering Department.

Patents

Mr. Murugesan says that in the process of helping 'agropreneurs', the Directorate had helped them file 65 patents. It had also arranged for marketing assistance.

The cost at which the people in the incubator could get their products tested, certified or patented was a fraction of what was charged outside.

After using the incubation facilities for a maximum of three years, the entrepreneurs move out to set up their own establishments, he adds.

‘Govt. should consider increasing costs while fixing support price for red gram’

Association asks State govt. to increase support price

The Karnataka Pradesh Red Gram Growers Association (KPRGA) has asked the State government to increase the support price, in addition to the Minimum Support Price (MSP) announced by the Union government, for red gram. President of the KPRGA Basavaraj Ingin and Secretary Mallikarjun Patil Hulagera on Tuesday slammed the Union government for continuing its policy of unscientific fixation of MSP for red gram and criticised the government’s decision to increase the MSP of red gram by only Rs. 50 per quintal from Rs. 4,300 to Rs. 4,350 per quintal this year.

“The government while fixing the MSP for red gram, had not taken into account the increase in the cost of labour, agricultural inputs and the increasing land cost,” Mr. Ingin said.

“The government must open procurement centres in all the hoblis, so that farmers can directly sell their produce at the procurement centres,” he said. Last year, the State government announced a support price of Rs. 700 per quintal over and above the MSP of Rs. 4,300 fixed by the Union government and purchased the red gram directly from the farmers paying Rs. 5,000 per quintal.

Mr. Ingin said the State government must increase the support price and fix the procurement price of the red gram at Rs. 6,000 per quintal.

Mr. Ingin wanted Municipal Administration and Waqf Minister Qamarul Islam to convene a meeting of the farmers, elected representatives and market representatives on the issue of fixing MSP to red gram and take up the issue with the Chief Minister.

The government should also adequately compensate the farmers who had lost their standing crop in more than 400 acres of land after the released water from Bennethora main canal entering their fields in Chitapur taluk, he said.

Govt. to run all new fair price shops

The State government will henceforth not issue new licences to individuals to run fair price shops, Minister of State for Food and Civil Supplies Dinesh Gundu Rao has said.

At a State-level public interaction on the 'National Food Security Act – 2013, State Rules and the PDS', organised by the Right to Food Campaign, Karnataka, here on Monday, the Minister said all wholesale distribution would be taken up only through the department and cooperative societies.

The Public Distribution System (PDS) Control Order would shortly be amended to incorporate this decision. Although the existing individual licences would not be cancelled, new licences to individuals would not be issued henceforth, he said, and added that this was part of the reforms being brought about in the system.

“We have decided to run shops whose licences have been cancelled for various reasons and any more new shops (based on the requirement) through the Karnataka Food and Civil Supplies Corporation, Food Corporation of India, Taluk Agricultural Produce Co-operative Marketing Society and other cooperative societies,” he said.

Participants from various districts narrated the problems they faced in PDS after the government issued new circulars and orders.

Neetu Sharma of the National Law School of India University presented the process followed by them in preparing the suggested draft State Rules under the National Food Security Act. Kathyayini Chamaraj of the Right to Food Campaign placed the demands of the campaign for a universal or at least near-universal PDS, giving up the distinctions between APL and BPL.

'New licences will not be given to individuals to run the shops'

Farm equipment hiring centres to become functional in Shivamogga soon

Seven such centres will be opened across the district

The centres of custom-hiring of farm equipment are likely to become functional in Shivamogga district from the first week of December.

The Department of Agriculture has launched the scheme to address the problem of shortage of labour in the agricultural sector. The scheme will be implemented on the public-private partnership model.

In Shivamogga district, such centres will be established at seven places comprising Ayanur (Shivamogga taluk), Kudligere (Bhadravati taluk), Agrahara-Konandur (Tirthahalli taluk), Anandapura (Sagar taluk), Humcha (Hosanagar taluk), Anjanapura (Shikaripur taluk) and Anavatti (Sorab taluk). These centres will function in rented buildings.

Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development Trust (SKDRDP) will be the implementing agency in the district. The department will contribute 75 per cent of the cost to be incurred on the purchase of equipment, while the SKDRDP will bear the remaining cost.

In Shivamogga district, paddy, maize, ginger and arecanut are the main crops. Joint Director of the Department of Agriculture Madhusudan told *The Hindu* that a list of the machinery used by farmers in the cultivation of these crops had already been prepared, in consultation with local people.

The list of machinery, including tillers, diggers, cultivators and pesticide sprayers, had already been approved by the district-level committee, headed by Chief Executive Officer of the zilla panchayat, which would monitor the functioning of these centres. The purchase order had also been released in this regard, he said.

Farm equipment worth Rs. 50 lakh would be provided for each centre. Every centre will have five workers, including administrative and technical personnel. The fee for hiring farm machinery had been worked out after collecting the information about the fee being charged by private persons and the paying capacity of small and marginal farmers.

The fee collected from farmers for using the machinery would be utilised for paying the rent for the building and workers' wages. The centres will function on a no-profit, no-loss basis, he said.

· *Objective is to address problem of labour shortage in agricultural sector*

· *SKDRDP will be implementing the scheme in Shivamogga district on PPP basis*

Inauguration of building for agriculture training centre on November 9

A spacious building has been constructed at a cost of Rs. 4.5 crore near the Agriculture Research Station in Naganahalli in Mysuru taluk to house the agriculture training centre.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will inaugurate the building on November 9.

The training centre had been located in a horticultural farm in Ramasamudra in T. Narasipura taluk.

The centre will train farmers and extension officers on various aspects of agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry. Training camps will be organised for farmers on modern methods of agriculture. They would also be educated on steps to be taken in case of drought or excessive rainfall.

Farmers from various districts will be invited to attend comprehensive training programmes. Food and accommodation would be provided at the centre.

Shivakumar, Deputy Director of Agriculture Department, told *The Hindu* that the centre would organise training programmes on agriculture and allied aspects apart from providing farm advisory services. It would also hold workers' training programmes, both at the institutional and village-level, besides organising workshops, seminars and farmer-scientist interaction sessions.

*The centre will train farmers and extension officers
on various aspects
of agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry*

Project to get more yield in guava

Cultivators to be motivated to produce export-oriented fruits



Students of TNAU Anbil Dharmalingam Agricultural College and Research Institute at guava farm on the college premises at Navalur Kuttapattu on Tuesday.— Photo: B. Velankanni Raj

The Tamil Nadu Agriculture University Horticulture College for Women and Research Institute has taken up a special initiative for raising high density guava cultivation to sensitise horticultural farmers to enhance yield through good agricultural practices.

The pilot project taken up under the National Agriculture Innovation Project of the Indian Council of Agriculture and Research, aims at raising 2,222 saplings of guava on a hectare as against the normal 500 plants a hectare under the conventional method.

The project which was taken up six months ago, will give the desired results of higher yield in another six months, says P. Pandiyarajan, Dean of the college. Against the usual yield of six to eight tonnes, the yield under the high density guava cultivation would be at least 18 tonnes and it may reach even 25 tonnes in course of time. The objective is to promote higher yield in guava through good agricultural practices. Apart from monitoring the crop protection strategy, guava

cultivators would be motivated to produce export-oriented fruits, says T. N. Balamohan, former Special Officer of the college.

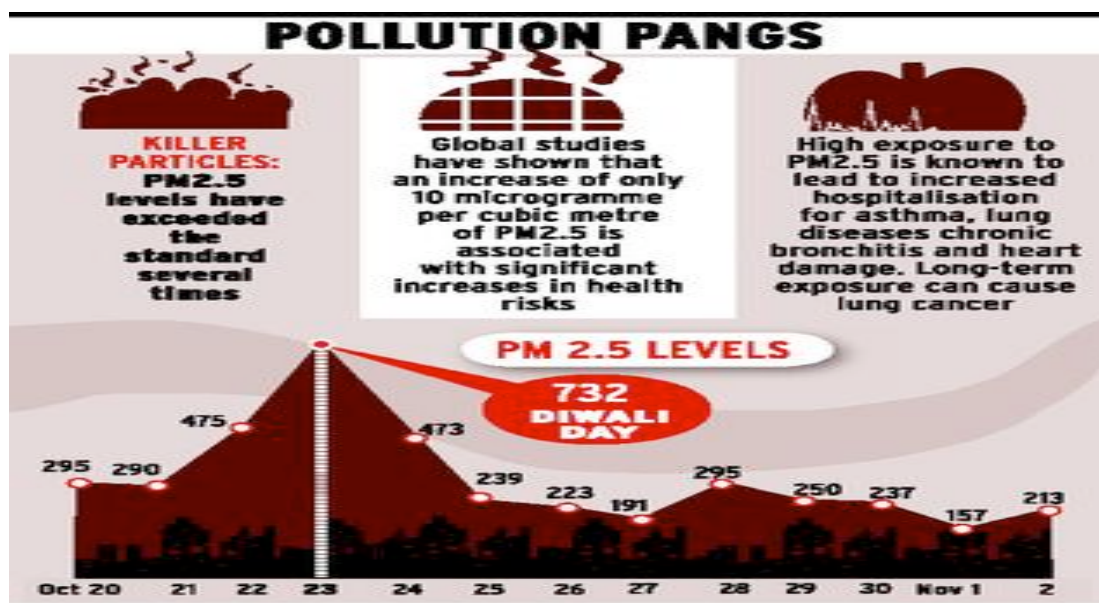
Mr. Balamohan, currently Dean of the TNAU Horticultural College, Periyakulam, initiated the project during his tenure as the Special Officer of the TNAU Horticultural College and Research Institute for Women here six months ago. The high quality species of 'Lucknow 49' had been cultivated at model farm, he said.

The project would sensitise farmers to apply right quantum of fertilisers as part of crop protection strategy.

Students of the Agricultural College and Horticultural College at Navalaur Kuttapattu benefit from the programme as they monitor the growth of the plants at the model farm regularly. A cross section of students of the college told *The Hindu* on Tuesday that the model farm inspired them to learn the importance of ensuring quality in horticultural produce.

Pollution chokes the Capital as respiratory diseases rise

'Particulate matter in air not within safe limits'



If you have been battling a nagging cough/cold or worse an upper respiratory tract infection this season, the city's poor air quality could be the culprit.

Official data has revealed that since the onset of winter, the city has not managed to keep down the level of its cancer-causing particulate matter 2.5 (or PM 2.5) within the safe limits of 60 micrograms per cubic metre. The lowest figure of PM 2.5 this season was recorded at 157 micrograms per cubic metre on November 1.

After battling a choking Diwali week, with the PM 2.5 recorded at 732 micrograms per cubic metre, the levels have remained anywhere between 473 and 213 micrograms per cubic metre.

Urging the Delhi Government to take immediate action to inform people about the air quality on a daily basis and issue health alerts — especially for children, elderly, and those suffering from respiratory and cardiac problems to take precaution — Centre for Science and Environment's (CSE) Anumita Roychowdhury said: "High levels of PM 2.5 is a serious cause of concern."

"Air pollution kills and at immediate risk are those with lung and cardiac problems. The tiny PM 2.5 particles go deep into the lungs and get trapped there. This on a short-term basis aggravates lung and cardiac conditions and in long term is known to cause lung cancer," added Ms. Roychowdhury.

"Half of these million deaths have been caused by ischemic heart disease triggered by exposure to air pollution," it noted.

Stating that world-over cities issue smog and haze alerts almost instantly when pollution reaches alarming levels, Ms. Roychowdhury added: “With the wind gone and high pollution from crackers and vehicles building up quickly very close to the ground level, Delhi is enveloped in a thick blanket of pollution. Every winter, the calm and cool weather makes pollution hang heavy, but the severity of the smog depends on the actual pollution level that is already unacceptably high and rising in the city.”

“While the serious concern over very high levels of tiny particles persists, elevated levels of other pollutants have been now added to the toxic cocktail,” she cautioned.

The city has also recorded high levels of nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and PM 10. Said Dr. Anil Bansal of the Delhi Medical Council said: “Calm weather conditions, increased crop burning by nearby States and spike in local pollution levels has left the Capital choked. The city hospitals are reporting large number of lung, eye and skin-related complications and one of the reasons could be the bad quality of air in the Capital.”

Dr. Neeraj Jain, senior consultant chest medicine, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, said: “Post-Diwali, the number of patients we are getting with compromised lung function has definitely gone up. Worst hit are those with asthma and other breathing problems. Even healthy persons have reported upper respiratory tract infection and cough. What is worrying, however, is the fact that city dwellers are losing lung function, which adversely hits the quality of life.”

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Rain: 0

Humidity: 84

Wind: normal

Tomorrow's Forecast

Wednesday, Nov 5

Max Min

29° | 24°



Partly Cloudy

Sunrise: 06:02

Sunset: 05:41

Barometer: 1008

Thursday, Nov 6

Max Min

34° | 23°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday
Nov 7



30° | 24°

Cloudy

Saturday
Nov 8



31° | 24°

Cloudy

Sunday
Nov 9



30° | 24°

Partly Cloudy

Monday
Nov 10



30° | 25°

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday
Nov 11



31° | 25°

Sunny

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Cardamom gains flavour as exporters scour for supplies



Kochi, November 4: Small cardamom gained flavour on good buying support from the domestic market at auctions last week.

Arrivals continued to be high throughout the week and yet, prices moved up as demand outstripped supply, market sources in Bodinayakannur told *BusinessLine*.

The exportable variety was available in good volumes. But higher prices curbed exporters. Some 50-60 tonnes of the material were bought by them.

Arrivals rise

However, supply continued to increase as harvesting is in full swing. Good variety capsules are arriving in good volume, market sources said.

At the Cardamom Planters Association auction in Bodinayakannur, 53 tonnes of cardamom arrived and the entire quantity was sold out. The auction average was Rs. 769.77 a kg against Rs. 724 last week. Upcountry buyers were actively buying which, according to the trade, gives the impression that pipelines are empty. The Guatemala current crop is reportedly lower and it may arrive in the market by January only.

Auction details

According to the trade, the crop will be normal at around 20,000 tonnes during the current season.

At the Sunday auction held by the Kerala Cardamom Processing and Marketing Company, arrivals stood at 120 tonnes against 107 tonnes the previous Sunday and the entire quantity was sold out. The maximum price was at Rs. 980 and the minimum was Rs. 385. The auction average was up at Rs. 778 (Rs.743.45), PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *BusinessLine*.

At this time last year, the average price ruled between Rs. 580 and Rs. 620 a kg. The individual auction average price moved up to vacillate between Rs. 725 and Rs. 780.

Supply of 8mm bold cardamom made up 30 per cent of the lots and good colour bold capsules were fetching Rs. 950-1,000 a kg. Total arrivals during the season stood at 5,464 tonnes (6,646 tonnes). The sales were at 5,373 tonnes and 6,404 tonnes respectively. The individual auction average as on November 2 was at around Rs. 756 (Rs. 595).

Prices of graded varieties (Rs. /kg): 8mm bold 980-1,000; 7mm-8mm 830-860; 6mm-7mm 725-750; below 6 mm 675-700.

Stingless bee-keeping develops more buzz

As the honey has medicinal properties, returns from it are higher



Kochi, November 4: Enthused by the success of its venture on cage fish culture, the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Ernakulam, has now forayed into new areas such as Meliponiculture or stingless bee-keeping.

The idea is to take up the programme as an entrepreneurship development initiative to attract youth to agriculture. Meliponiculture will be a promising enterprise for youngsters, especially women to help generate additional income. The honey collected through this method is 10 times more costlier, especially due to its high medicinal properties, says Shinoj Subramanian, Programme Coordinator.

Stingless honey bees – *Trigona iripipennis* – are India's native breeds and their nests consist of many small honey pots instead of honeybee's regular combs. This 3-mm size insect is not stingless, but its sting is poorly developed. The bees make nests on the ground, hollows of trees, bamboo, rocks or cracks of walls.

Medicinal properties are the main attraction of honey from stingless bees, he said, quoting reports of its antibiotic properties and cancer cure. Besides, its wide usage for eye infections and wounds by tribals proves its healing nature.

Stingless honey bees are effective pollinators as they visit around 1,500 flowers a day to collect honey and pollen. Hence, meliponiculture will be a promising venture which can go along with homestead and high-tech farming in poly houses. They are better than bumble bees, species of bees used exclusively for pollination.

Anyone can handle these bees easily since they do not have sting. They are less aggressive than honeybees and can be kept as pets. Thus Meliponiculture will be suitable for women and children, he said.

Pushparaj Anjelo, Subject Matter Specialist, pointed out that honey from meliponiculture is in demand and fetches Rs. 1,500-2,000 a kg. A farmer with 10 hives could collect around seven kg of honey worth Rs.12,500. The facility will have zero maintenance cost.

The cost of single wooden hive including colonies will be Rs. 1,500 and an empty hive costs Rs. 300. On an average, a bee colony can provide 300 gm to one kg of honey in a year. Splitting the hive into 2 or 3 colonies a year can also fetch income at the rate of Rs. 1,500 for each colony.

KVK has already commenced the programme in Kothamangalam near here by extending a preliminary training to 100 candidates. Apart from the culture, it also envisages to develop capacity building on honey processing, obtaining small scale industry food safety licenses, packing, test marketing, etc.

Rains heat up copra, coconut oil



Kochi, November 4: Rains in Tamil Nadu affected the coconut oil market this week with prices moving up marginally in the absence of arrivals of copra.

Thalath Mahmood, Director, Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA), said prices were up by Rs. 100 per quintal in Kerala and Tamil Nadu touching Rs. 14,700 and Rs. 14,300 respectively.

Lower availability of copra forced leading corporates to purchase the commodity by paying a higher price.

Copra prices are now ruling at Rs. 10,200 a quintal in Kerala and Rs. 10,000 in Tamil Nadu, as traders were holding stocks due to rains, he said.

Bharat Khona, former Board Member, COMA, said that the market seems to be rising due to short supply of copra.

However, this is expected to come down especially because of the sluggish demand from corporates and upcountry buyers.

Our Erode Correspondent adds : Copra prices increased by Rs. 5/kg in Erode during the weekend.

“Copra sold at Rs. 9,700-12,500. Suddenly prices increased to Rs. 10,600. Only a minimum quantity of copra was sold in Erode. Buyers were limited and no buyer from Kerala purchased copra,” said a coconut oil trader.

Coconut oil prices, too, also increased on Tuesday to Rs. 2,130-2,180 for 15-kg loose pack.

Only one or two buyers procured the oil. Oil crushers said there were no major buyers now.

Meanwhile, palm oil too increased and was sold at Rs. 5,350 a quintal and sunflower oil at Rs. 6,200.