

DATE:15.11.2014


# THE HINDU

## Planters differ with board on coffee production figures



Ripened coffee berries in a plantation in Kodagu.

COFFEE PRODUCTION IN INDIA (IN TONNES)			
Year	Arabica	Robusta	Total
2009-10	94,600	1,95,000	2,89,600
2010-11	94,140	2,07,860	3,02,000
2011-12	1,01,500	2,12,500	3,14,000
2012-13	98,600	2,19,600	3,18,200
2013-14	1,02,200	2,02,300	3,04,500
2014-15*	1,05,500	2,39,250	3,44,750



\*POST-BLOSSOM ESTIMATES

SOURCE: COFFEE BOARD

Coffee planters have pegged coffee production in the country in 2014–15 at 3 lakh tonnes (post-blossom estimates) against the Coffee Board's projections of 3,44,750 tonnes.

The reason for stagnation in production is attributed to rampant attack of white stem borer (WSB) pest across Arabica growing regions in Karnataka, which accounts for 70 per cent of the country's output. To avoid spread of the pest, many planters are uprooting the infected plants.

### **WSB pest attack**

Incidence of WSB pest attack is severe in Arabica plantations in Kodagu, Chikkamagaluru and Hassan districts, according to Karnataka Planters Association (KPA) outgoing chairman D. Govindappa Jayaram.

The board has estimated domestic Robusta production at 1,05,500 tonnes and Arabica at 2,39,250 tonnes.

While the KPA said the board's estimate would be reached as far as Robusta production was concerned but not with regard to Arabica. Arabica production would reach only 60,000 tonnes this year. Hudhud cyclone had caused severe damage to Arabica plantations in Andhra Pradesh too, the KAP said.

The board's estimation for Karnataka is 2,48,300 tonnes — 80,700 tonnes of Arabica and 1,67,600 tonnes of Robusta. Coffee planters deliberated on various issues confronting the industry during the 56th AGM of the KPA here.

Home Minister K.J. George, who was a guest, said a meeting between growers and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah would be convened for addressing grievances of the industry.

BJP MP from Udipi-Chikmagalur Shobha Karandlaje, who wanted active functioning of the board so as to address the problems the industry is facing, said no pesticides had been found effective to tackle WSB in the country.

“Now, the infected plants are being removed or burnt to prevent the spread of the pest,” she said.

The severe incidence WSB is due to continuous dry weather from October 2013 to April 2014 and high temperature during the summer months, planters said.

The board has set a target of achieving 4 lakh tonnes of coffee bean production in the country through area expansion and productivity enhancement in the next five to 10 years, a growth of more than 30 per cent over the current production level. In 2013–14, production stood at 3,04,500 tonnes.

## Federation of farmers' club formed

*FPOs eligible for equity and credit guarantee support from Central government*



Collector N. Subbaiyan handing over welfare assistance to a farmer at Ammanpettai in Thanjavur district on Friday.

About 20 farmers clubs, aided by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in Thiruvaiyaru block of Thanjavur district, have come together to form the Thiruvaiyaru Farmers' Club Federation.

Collector N. Subbaiyan, who handed over the registration certificate to the federation at a meeting held at Melathirupoonthuruthi near here on Friday, said it was a good step towards empowering farmers and urged the federation to work for betterment of farmers in coordination with various departments and banks. Its members should work as a team to reap the benefits. It should function as a facilitating agency to get benefits for the entire village.

K. Subramanian, District Development Manager, NABARD, said the focus was to form federation of farmers' clubs at the block level to strengthen their activities. The NABARD has been promoting clubs in rural areas to empower farmers for availing benefits of government schemes as well as credit facilities from banks in a fair manner.

Well performing federations could be promoted as Farmers Producers Companies (FPOs). The FPOs were eligible for equity support and credit guarantee support from the Central Government.

The NABARD had approved 150 farmers' clubs in the past five years in this district. It would provide financial support for the first three years to these clubs with the hope that they would attain self-sustainability thereafter.

N. Punniamurthy, Professor and Head, Ethno Veterinary Herbal Training and Research Unit, VUTRC, Thanjavur, and Gajendranathan, lead District Manager, spoke.



Formation of farmers' clubs and its federation was facilitated by the GAWDESY, Karuppur.

Dr. Subbaiyan visited a successful Farmers' Club, the Rajendram-Manikkarambai FC, promoted by the Indian Bank, Ammanpet branch, during the day. Zonal Manager, Indian Bank, Kumbakonam, B. Veeraraghavan, and Branch Manager, Ammanpet, T. Saravanan, expressed their satisfaction in extending banking services to the village through the farmers' club.

## **1,800 tonnes of urea despatched in Tiruchi**

Adequate quantity of urea has been stocked at all the primary cooperative bank godowns and sales depots in the district, the Agriculture Department has said.

An official release here on Friday said that 1,800 tonnes of urea had been despatched to the societies' depots. This apart, 800 tonnes of urea had been stocked at private depots.

Steps had been taken for ensuring uninterrupted supply in future. Another 3,400 tonnes would reach Tiruchi in course of time. A special vigilance committees had been constituted for monitoring sale of urea through private outlets.

The dealers had been advised to issue receipts and should not compel farmers to purchase other fertilizers.

The release has advised farmers to contact the Assistant Director of Agriculture (Quality Control) for preferring complaints about excess price over and above the prescribed rates.

Farmers can call 9443446683.

# Wholesale price inflation dips

*Industry calls for Reserve Bank to slash interest rates*

<b>ENCOURAGING SIGNS</b>			
<b>SHARP DROP IN FUEL AND FOOD PRICES BRINGS DOWN INFLATION</b>			
		<b>Sept. 2014</b>	<b>Oct. 2014</b>
All commodities		2.38	1.77
Primary articles		2.18	1.43
Food articles		3.52	2.70
Non-food articles		0.52	-1.41
Fuel & power		1.33	0.43
Manufactured products		2.84	2.43

Rate of Inflation (in %)

Base: 2004-05 = 100

Slowing for the fifth consecutive month, wholesale price inflation cooled to a five-year low of 1.8 per cent in October against 2.4 per cent in September. The decline was led by softening food prices and the favourable statistical effect of a higher base last year.

Food inflation cooled to 2.7 per cent from 3.5 per cent in September, show the official Wholesale Price Index (WPI) data released on Friday. Inflation in vegetables dropped to minus-19.6 per cent. Prices of wheat, vegetables, eggs, fish and meat fell.

Industry chambers cheered the steep fall and made renewed calls for the Reserve Bank to slash interest rates. Economists, however, warned that the moderation was in some part a statistical illusion and the trend could change after December.

At 11.4 per cent, inflation in prices of milk remained elevated, though its pace was slightly lower than in the previous month. For rice too, inflation remained high at 6.5 per cent despite being marginally lower than September's 6.9 per cent. The moderation was only marginal in cereals, slowing to 3.3 per cent from 3.5 per cent in September.

Welcoming the easing wholesale price inflation rate, Chandrajit Banerjee, Director-General, Confederation of Indian Industry, called

upon the Union government on Friday to address the issue of price rise comprehensively to prevent it from becoming an episodic issue. He recommended that the government do this through structural policy steps aimed at reducing supply-side bottlenecks, especially in the farm sector.

“Alleviated inflation creates room for a more accommodative stance from the Reserve Bank in terms of rate reduction in the policy to be announced next month,” A. Didar Singh, Secretary-General, Federation of India Chambers of Commerce and Industry said in a statement here on Friday.

“The lowering of inflation for the fifth consecutive month is indeed a positive sign for the economy ... However, these numbers should be viewed with caution.... The base effect is pronounced and will be so in November too,” Care Ratings chief economist Madan Sabnavis said, in a report on the wholesale data.

Inflation could pick up again post-December by when the favourable statistical effect of a higher base could peter out, Deloitte economist Anis Chakravarty said in a note. Inflation could rebound if the Agriculture Ministry’s forecast of a lower kharif output for cereals, pulses and oilseeds comes true, he said.

Falling global crude prices tempered fuel inflation from 1.3 per cent in September to 0.4 per cent in October. Fuel inflation was minus 7 per cent.

***Inflation could rebound if there is lower kharif output, says economist***

## Applications invited

Under the National Food Security Mission, a project management team is proposed to be set up here in the district. The Mission envisions increasing productive income among farmers and to streamline its goals, the team is to be constituted with a post each of district consultant and technical assistant.

The post of district consultant requires a candidate with a qualification in MSc Agriculture, Agronomy, Agriculture Extension, Soil Science, Entomology, and Plant physiology. The applicant must have not less than 10 years experience in one of above fields. The post of technical assistant requires a candidate with a BSc in Agriculture. Freshers may apply. According to an administration release, the posts are temporary. Interested persons may apply in person or via post at the earliest, to the office of Deputy Director, Combined Agriculture Department complex, Collectorate, Ramapuram, Krishnagiri – 635115.

## Punjab to partner with Lockheed for solar power

The Punjab government on Friday decided to join hands with international global security and aerospace company, Lockheed Martin, for supply of "cost effective" Nano technology-based solar panels as well as import latest technology for converting agriculture residue into energy.

The state government plans to install solar panels over various canals and use new technology to deal with the problem of burning rice straw every year, an official release said after the minister for Non-conventional energy, Bikram Singh Majithia, met a delegation from Lockheed Martin led by its CEO, Martin Shaw.



## **Villagers give green signal for Penganga Project canal**

Villagers from Jainad and Bela mandals on Friday demanded the construction of the right flank canal of the proposed inter-State Lower Penganga Project (LPP) at the earliest to irrigate more land. They spoke unanimously in support of granting RFC environmental clearance at the public hearing for the project, which was held at Gimma village.

Irrigation Nirmal Superintending Engineer Suresh Kumar explained the salient points of the proposed canal to the villagers who had come from Bela, Kamai, Mandagada, Karanji, Makoda and Gimma. Environmental engineer from the Nizamabad Regional Office, K. Ravi Kumar, gave audience to the villagers and said the government would have no objection in providing the clearance if the villagers wished. Among those who spoke in support of the canal, which will irrigate about 50,000 acres in the mandals of Tamsi, Jainad and Bela, were former sarpanches of Gimma Gram Panchayat M. Bhagwanth Rao and Lachanna and retired Joint Director of Agriculture M. Mohan Rao.

## **Vellore farmers will not face any urea shortage this season**

*District gets 597 tonnes in addition to existing 1,300 tonnes*

With Vellore district getting 597 tonnes of urea in addition to the existing stock of 1,300 tonnes, farmers can look forward to getting supply of fertilizer without any shortage.

On Friday, a total of 2,600 tonnes of urea reached the agriculture fertilizer godown at Katpadi. The stock arrived at Katpadi railway station via goods train. Of this, Vellore district will get 597 tonnes of urea, according to a press release.

The remaining stock will be distributed to various districts — 258 tonnes of urea for Kancheepuram, 546 tonnes for Tiruvallur, 68 tonnes for Villupuram, 440 tonnes for Krishnagiri, 307 tonnes for Cuddalore, 316 tonnes for Tiruvannamalai, 17 tonnes for Salem and 51 tonnes for Dharmapuri.

The specified stock will be sent to the respective districts through lorries. In Vellore district, the fertilizer will be sold to farmers through the fertilizer outlets.

Already, the district has a stock of 1,300 tonnes of urea, totally 1,897 tonnes with the latest arrival of stock.

With this stock, urea fertilizers will be sold to farmers without any shortage. They can purchase the urea at the agriculture urea outlets.

Farmers should utilise the fertilizers to improve the agricultural yield, said Collector R. Nanthagopal, who inspected the arrival of the stock.

The Central government has fixed the rate as Rs. 270 per pack of 50 kg of urea. There is no change in the price.

The Collector asked farmers to purchase other fertilizers such as DAP and potash after checking for the cost mentioned on the packs.

Joint Director of Agriculture, Vellore R. Jayasundar was also present.

## **Heavy rain disupts normal life**

Normal life was disrupted in Ongole and other parts of Prakasam district as heavy rain continued to lash the district for the third consecutive day on Friday, under the influence of a low pressure area developed in the Bay of Bengal.

Vehicular traffic between Ongole and Chirala was suspended as Gundalakamma river was in spate. The traffic between Ongole and Kothapatnam was disrupted as Nallavagu flooded the low-level causeway.

Meanwhile, irrigation authorities stepped up outflow from 13,700 cusecs in the morning to 18,500 cusecs from Obul Reddy Gundalakamma reservoir, anticipating that inflows would go up to 25,000 cusecs by night. Water entered several houses in low-lying areas including Bhagyanagar, Housing Board Colony and Pragathi Colony.

Ongole received 13.8 cm rainfall in the last 24 hours, weathermen said. Several rivulets including Chilakaleru in Mundlamuru, Dornapuvagu in Talluru and Nallavagu in Addanki were in spate. "There is no threat of breaches to any of the 952 tanks, including 363 minor irrigation tanks in the district," irrigation Superintending Engineer D. Koteswara Rao said.

Municipal workers swung into action to free the clogged drains, facilitating faster disposal of rainwater to Potharaju canal as the rains had left many roads submerged. Meanwhile, the Meteorology Department had predicted more rain in the next 24 hours.

With the north-east monsoon remaining active, farmers are hoping to take up rabi farm operation in full swing after drought in all the 56 mandals in the district dashed their hopes of decent returns in kharif. "The rain will be beneficial to cotton, red gram, and chillies," Agriculture Joint Director J. Muralikrishna said. Prakasam district received an average rainfall of 40.3 mm in the last 24 hours ending at 8 am on Friday with Maddipadu recording the highest of 180.2 mm followed by S.N.Padu (149.4mm), Tangutur (133.4 mm), Jarugumalli (105.4 mm), Kothapatnam (102.8 mm), Singarayakonda (96.8mm), N.G.Padu (96.4), Talluru (90.2 mm), Chimakurthy (84.2 mm) and Kandukur (68.8 mm).

## Rain alters dynamics of paddy procurement



The procurement rate has come down because of rain. Many farmers prefer to sell paddy in the open market.

Farmers in the Gobi-Anthiyur area where paddy harvest is currently in progress are worried as the procurement cost has fallen, in the last two days because of the rain.

A 'pothi' (265 kg) of paddy that was procured for Rs. 4,300 has come down to Rs. 3,500, according to local sources.

### Profit

Yet, the farmers are able to realise a comfortable profit margin, thanks to the productivity in excess of 8,000 kg an acre.

Also, the farmers have saved on transport cost by preferring to sell their produce in the open market rather than the Direct Procurement Centre, because of cost advantage.

Private buyers not only offer Rs. 1 more a kg of paddy but also procure paddy from the fields, whereby farmers save on transport cost.

The procurement rate is higher in Erode as the area under paddy cultivation is much less compared to the delta districts.

## Quantity

About 15 centres in the Gobi-Anthiyur area procure paddy in very less quantities.

But, the farmers want the DPCs to remain fearing that the private buyers will slash down the procurement cost drastically in a situation of monopoly.

## Relieved

Farmers in Gobi area have cause for a little relief since the current spell of rain has ended, going by the weather forecast. And decks have been cleared for them to raise Samba crop for which water has been released from the Kodiveri Dam into the Thadapalli-Arakankottai canals.

## Water level

There is sufficient water in the Bhavani Sagar Dam to wet the fields for the next 135 days.

There was 18.95 tmc water in the dam.

Calculating the inflow, water could also be released for dry crop cultivation in Lower Bhavani Project ayacut area, say farmers with certainty.

## Rainfall

There was 11.6mm rainfall in the dam's catchment areas in the last 24 hours ending 8am on Friday. The dam recorded an inflow of 3,042 cusecs. Water was not let into the river since there was rainfall of 9mm in Gobi area.

*The procurement rate has come down because of rain. Many farmers prefer to sell paddy in the open market*



## 'Gloomy year ahead for tobacco ryots'

Alarmed by the gloomy outlook for Indian tobacco in 2015, the Tobacco Board has urged the growers to voluntarily cut down on the production of Flue-cured Virginia tobacco production to avoid distress sale.

Farmers in Prakasam district switched over to tobacco after their experiment with bengal gram failed. They had got a better average price of Rs. 109 a kg of tobacco, despite violating the acreage cap by 39 million kg.

"The global market situation now presents a gloomy picture. There may be less off-take of tobacco in 2015 than indented due to increased supplies of tobacco from countries like Zimbabwe, Brazil, Tanzania and the USA," Tobacco Board Regional Managers G. Bhaskar Reddy and Sk. Ansar Ahmad said on Friday.

Large carryover stocks from these crops resulted in lesser export demand. Moreover, decline in sale of cigarettes in major world markets have added to this to bring down the overall demand, they pointed out.

Farmers should voluntarily reduce tobacco production by around 20 per cent to avoid marketing problems and low prices for their produce, said Mr. Bhaskar Reddy, who is in-charge of regulating the crop in Southern Black soil (SBS) area platforms of Ongole I and II, Vellampalli I and II, Tangutur I and II and Kondepi.

Farmers should reduce the extent of tobacco cultivation by at least one acre per barn in Southern Light Soil area platforms of Podili I and II, Kandukur I and II, Kaligiri and D.C.Palli, added Mr Ansar Ahamad. After Tobacco Board fixed the crop size of 172 million kg for 2014-15, a major cigarette manufacturer reduced indent by 20 million kg and another exporter cut down indent by 8 million kg.

*Farmers should voluntarily reduce tobacco production by 20 p.c. to avoid marketing problems and low prices for their produce. G. Bhaskar Reddy, Tobacco Board Regional Manager*

## **Sugarcane ryots to observe crop holiday next year**

*All eyes on Harish Rao, who is holding a review meet today*

With representatives of sugarcane factories expressing their inability to enhance the procurement rate from Rs. 2,600 per quintal, which was offered last year, farmers of Medak district have decided to observe crop holiday next year.

The meeting, presided over by Joint Collector A. Sarath and attended by farmers and representatives of sugar factory managements held at the Collectorate, remained inconclusive on Friday, the second day, also. Ganapati Sugars representative Nanda Kumar and others said the factories were in huge losses and not in a position to offer what was paid last year. The view was echoed by the representative of Trident located at Zaheerabad. The farmers repeatedly appealed to the factories' representatives to reconsider their stand but the latter refused to budge.

Irritated over this, the farmers declared that they would observe crop holiday next year as sugarcane cultivation had become unviable and go for alternative crops.

Mr. Sarath said the matter would be taken to the notice of Irrigation Minister T. Harish Rao who would be holding a review meeting on Saturday for suitable action. He also decided to call for a meeting with the Pollution Control Board, revenue officials and public representatives over the violations of sugarcane factories and what action can be initiated against them.

“When a sugar factory located at Mahabubnagar was able to offer a price of Rs. 2,850 per quintal why factories in Medak district could not do the same? Factory managements are trying to exploit the situation as the crop is ready for harvesting and farmers have no other choice but to approach factories for selling the produce,” said Kanji Reddy, leader of Bharatiya Kisan Sangh.

## Water level in Mullaperiyar reservoir touches 140 feet

*Farmers in Cumbum Valley celebrate*



A view of the water level at Mullaperiyar dam at Thekkady in Kerala on Friday.—  
PHOTO: G. KARTHIKEYAN

A long-cherished dream of farmers in southern districts became a reality on Friday as the water level in the Mullaperiyar dam touched 140 feet, thanks to incessant showers in catchments and spurt in inflow. If rain continues for two more days, the storage would reach 142 feet, the level permitted by the Supreme Court.

The first flood warning was issued to wayside villages in Kerala and Tamil Nadu as discharge may increase at any time with the level going up steadily. Monitoring of inflow, storage level and other parameters on hourly basis commenced as per the direction of the Supervisory Committee. Farmers in Cumbum Valley erupted into celebrations by distributing sweets in Cumbum and Uthamaplayam.

Comfortable storage in the Mullaperiyar dam would not only benefit farmers but also prevent migration of farm workers to Tirupur and Kerala. It would benefit rain-fed areas in southern districts and enhance drinking water availability, farmers said.

The Cumbum Valley farmers have planned a celebration at Lower Camp, by inviting farmers in five southern districts, when the level touches 142 feet.

Meanwhile, PWD officials doubled the quantum of discharge to 900 cusecs in the evening from 456 cusecs to avoid any last-minute trouble, if there was a spurt in inflow and sharp rise in storage. Gradual increase in discharge will prevent flood in Mullaperiyar River.

## **Four-day fair to promote horticulture in State**

With an objective to promote horticulture in the State, the University of Horticulture Sciences-Bagalkot (UHS-B) will organise a four-day mega horticulture fair from December 12 with the help of the Horticulture Department in Bagalkot, the university Vice-Chancellor D.L. Maheshwar has said.

Addressing presspersons here on Wednesday, he said 'Mechanisation for prosperity' was the theme of the fair. "The reason for selecting this theme is to encourage the farmers to use mechanical equipment, especially when the shortage of labour is a major problem," he said.

Dr. Maheshwar said that the university has invited nearly 450 vendors to set up their stalls during the fair. The university expects the fair to gather around 3.5 lakh visitors, including farmers, researchers, extension functionaries, self help groups (SHGs), distributors and dealers of farm machineries and officials, in four days.

He said there would also be exhibition and sale of quality seeds.

## Going bananas



Banana farmers get information on pest control methods from Dr. R. Thangavelu of the Pathology Division at National Research Centre for Banana's test farm in Thayanur. Photo: R.M. Rajanathinam

*A visit to the National Research Centre for Banana reveals the many vicissitudes of this humble fruit*

It is true that the banana has never had the star appeal of, say, the mango or the orange. Neither has it got the power to bring down governments, like the onion. But its ubiquity is also its consistent quality – no matter where you are in India, a banana (or a bunch of them) will keep you going at a very wallet-friendly price.

And looking into sustaining the nutritional and economic appeal of this perennial fruit is the mandate of the National Research Centre for Banana (NRCB), located in Thayanur, Thogamalai Road, approximately 15 kilometres from Tiruchi.

Established in 1993, the NRCB has done extensive research on the 'poor man's apple', from developing new commercial strains to preserving traditional ones, improving farming methods and advocating eco-friendly pesticides.



There's even a laboratory to find out ways to use the banana and plantain in pickles, biscuits and other innovative ways.

“There's no seasonality for banana, which is its disadvantage. That's why there's a glut in the market and its price suffers. But the banana has among the highest nutrition rates in fruits,” says Dr. M. M. Mustaffa, Director, NRCB.

Tiruchi district was chosen for the centre, he says, because it is a region where polyclonal cultivation – the farming of many varieties – is possible in one place. Tamil Nadu is the leading producer of bananas in the country, and Tiruchi district alone has nine to ten exclusive varieties. “Even though Kerala is famous for Nendran banana in its diet, more than 10,000 acres are under cultivation in our district, and we supply most of the Nendran to that state,” says Dr. Mustaffa. Other indigenous varieties include rasthali, karpuravalli, poovan and pachanadan.

### **Success stories**

Among the success stories of the centre is the Udhayam banana, a substitute for karpuravalli, which does well in most soil types, yields at least 70kg per plant, and is resistant to leaf-spot and nematodes.

The centre is working on bananas fortified with Vitamin A and iron to combat nutritional diseases. “Next year, we will be introducing a dwarf karpuravalli, that can come to maturity within 12 months, and two cooking type of bananas of the high-yielding variety,” says Dr. Mustaffa.

The market is dominated by the commercial Grand Naine (G9), a cultivar of *Musa acuminata* that yields long and evenly coloured yellow bananas, and is much sought after for export.

Unfortunately its popularity has also led to the slow decline of native varieties, says Dr. Mustaffa.

“Tissue culture companies are interested only in G9, because there is no assured demand for the local varieties like rasthali. Besides, traditional varieties need more time and money to multiply,” he says.

The centre serves as a certifying centre for clean plant material by testing samples for genetic fidelity and viruses, usually supplied by the 42 government-accredited tissue culture companies. “There is a serious problem with disease in the banana,” says Dr. Mustaffa. “Our main aim is to identify resistant gene sources so that we can develop some disease-resistant varieties.” The centre has the biggest banana germ plasm (genetic material) collection in the world, with over 350 varieties in its database.

The NRCB also maintains a 100-acre farm nearby for its research activities.

Getting farmers to adopt new planting methods is among the many duties of the centre’s Production Technology lab. “Banana is a special crop that flowers exactly 8,9 or 10 months from the date of planting,” says Dr. V. Kumar, Principal Scientist. “We have developed an organic package where we offer advice on planting to avoid coinciding it with the monsoon, windy or summer seasons.”

The lab has also developed products like bunch covers that can protect the fruit from damage. It also teaches farmers how to use drip irrigation and ‘fertigation’— application of fertilisers and soil amendments through the irrigation system.

While the harvesting remains a manual task, planting has become more mechanisation-friendly as farmers go for the centre’s idea to plant three suckers in a pit and widen the row space in between, says Dr. Kumar.

Eco-friendly cultivation remains a key concern for the centre, and one blend of the old and the new can be seen in the usage of trichoderma-enriched rice chaff grains to fight fusarium wilt, a fungal disease common in banana plants. “We boil the rice chaff grains with jaggery, and use it as an insecticide. The liquid formation for it is also available,” says Dr. R. Thangavelu of the Pathology Division.

### **Old vs. new**

Highlighting the importance of preserving the local varieties, Dr. S. Uma, Principal Scientist of the Crop Improvement Division states the example of the manoranjitham banana. The variety, is native to the Kolli Hills, and is immune to leaf-spot, a disease that takes at least 40 sprays of insecticide to be quelled. “When we went back to get a sample, we realised that it had vanished from cultivation,” says Dr. Uma. “So we developed a tissue culture for that variety with the help of the Department of Biotechnology and are perpetuating it once more among the local farmers in Kolli Hills. Many varieties have been given back to the farmers in this way.”

For those interested in developing ‘value-added’ bananas, the centre also suggests products like banana flour-based cookies, baby food and soup powders. “Banana figs – dehydrated karpuravalli fruits – can last up to three months and are a healthy snack,” says senior scientist Dr. K.N. Shiva. who also shares ideas on how to use the peel of the fruit in pickles.

As its cultivation becomes more profitable, NRCB director Dr. Mustaffa says ‘non-traditional’ states like Uttar Pradesh are shifting over to banana from sugarcane farming, because of the fruit’s steady demand. Ubiquity does have its merits.

## Obama announces \$3 billion contribution to Green Climate Fund



[AP](#)U.S. President Barack Obama speaks at the University of Queensland in Brisbane on Saturday.

U.S. President Barack Obama on Saturday formally announced a \$3-billion U.S. contribution to an international fund to help poor countries cope with the effects of climate change.

“Today, I’m announcing that the United States will take another important step. We will contribute \$3 billion to the Green Climate Fund to help developing nations deal with climate change,” he said in a speech at Queensland University in Brisbane, where he is attending the G20 meeting.

The contribution doubles what other countries had previously pledged ahead of a November 20, 2014 deadline.

## G20 climate protesters bury heads in Bondi sands

*“You have your head in the sand on climate change” is what the organisers want to tell Abbott*



photo: AFP

Scores of Australians buried their heads in the sands of iconic Bondi Beach on Thursday to send a message to Prime Minister Tony Abbott about the dangers of climate change.

As world leaders arrived in the northern city of Brisbane for the G20 summit, more than 100 people dug holes in the famous sand so they could plunge their bodies in halfway, holding their position for three minutes.

Organisers said they were telling Abbott: “You have your head in the sand on climate change”.

“Tony Abbott’s refusal to include climate change on the G20 agenda and his government’s overt attempts to stifle the renewable energy industry show that he is determined to keep his head buried in the sand on the most important issue of our time,” said organiser Eden Tehan.



Since coming to power last year, Abbott's conservative government has scrapped a carbon tax designed to tackle climate change, fulfilling a key election promise.

It has also removed another tax on the profits of coal mining, while new investment in renewable energy has fallen 70 percent. Abbott has defended the use of fossil fuel coal as crucial to Australia's prosperity.

"We want to tell world leaders coming for the G20 that Tony Abbott does not represent the view of most Australians who want to see urgent and global action on climate change and for Australia to contribute a meaningful share towards reducing global emissions," Tehan said.AFP

*Tony Abbott's refusal to include climate change on the G20 agenda and his government's overt attempts to stifle the renewable energy industry show that he is determined to keep his head buried in the sand on the most important issue of our time*



---

## Rethinking decisions on breast cancer

American women face conflicting advice about whether to be screened for breast cancer, at what age and how often. The decisions they make are often more strongly influenced by fear or a friend's experience than by a thorough understanding of the benefits and risks of mammography.

In 2009, the US Preventive Services Task Force recommended that women between the ages of 50 and 74 be screened with mammography every two years and that biennial screening of women younger than 50 be considered case by case.

Yet, screening rates have not declined. Under the Affordable Care Act, free screening mammography is available to all women every one to two years. But is this really free, in the fullest sense of the word? Many experts cite hidden costs — financial, medical and emotional.

Before deciding to have a mammogram, you should consider the possible risks and whether they are outweighed by the expected benefits.

Despite the controversy about annual mammograms, I still advocate them. But it behooves every woman to be aware of the arguments for and against annual screening. Too few are equipped to evaluate what Dr Lisa Rosenbaum, a national correspondent for The New England Journal of Medicine, has called “considerable uncertainty and complex trade-offs”.

Although expert groups have issued guidelines based on reviews of the scientific evidence, disagreements among them persist, the result of differing professional perspectives, financial concerns and assessments of the medical consequences.

Screening is largely responsible for the 30 percent decline in the breast cancer death rate since 1990, though advances in treatment have certainly played a role.

So what are the downsides of regular screening? A false-positive result — a suspicious image on mammography that turns out to be nothing — is a major one.

If a 50-year-old woman is screened annually for a decade, she has a 50 percent chance of receiving a false-positive diagnosis somewhere along the way. The woman receiving a false-positive diagnosis may need only a repeat examination, which may show the initial result to have been wrong. And what if a biopsy reveals a malignancy? Then the patient faces another possible consequence of screening: overtreatment.

There are lingering questions about whether every cancer detected really warrants treatment and how extensive the treatment should be. Some cancers don't progress, some may even disappear on their own, and others may grow so slowly they would not become a problem during the remaining years of life. But doctors cannot tell with certainty which cancers are safe to leave untreated.

Decisions relating to breast cancer are often based more on emotion than reasoning. Unrelenting publicity by well-meaning organisations has frightened many women, who are inclined to accept more risk than they might in, say, screenings for heart disease — which actually kills more women than breast cancer.

And too many have seen first hand the devastation breast cancer can wreak. Breast cancer remains the most common cancer among women, and the second-leading cause of cancer deaths among women, many of them in the prime of life.

## Chennai - INDIA

### Today's Weather



Cloudy

Rain: 0

Humidity: 94

Wind: normal

### Tomorrow's Forecast

Saturday, Nov 15

Max 30° | Min 24° Cloudy

Sunrise: 06:07

Sunset: 05:39

Barometer: 1014

Sunday, Nov 16

Max 29° | Min 22°

### Extended Forecast for a week

Monday  
Nov 17



29° | 22°  
Cloudy

Tuesday  
Nov 18



34° | 27°  
Sunny

Wednesday  
Nov 19



33° | 27°  
Partly Cloudy

Thursday  
Nov 20



33° | 27°  
Partly Cloudy

Friday  
Nov 21



34° | 27°  
Cloudy

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Heart exercises protect your brain too

*Daily exercises to maintain good cardiovascular health also benefits brain, protecting us from cognitive impairment as we age, according to a promising study.*

Researchers found that healthy lifestyle helps maintain the elasticity of arteries, thereby preventing downstream cerebrovascular damage and resulting in preserved cognitive abilities in later life.

Our body's arteries stiffen with age and the vessel hardening is believed to begin in the aorta - the main vessel coming out of the heart before reaching the brain.

"Indeed, the hardening may contribute to cognitive changes that occur during a similar time frame," said lead researcher Claudine Gauthier from University of Montreal, Canada.

They found that older adults whose aortas were in a better condition and who had greater aerobic fitness performed better on a cognitive test.

"We think that the preservation of vessel elasticity may be one of the mechanisms that enables exercise to slow cognitive aging," Gauthier added. For the study, they worked with 31 young people between ages 18 and 30 and 54 older participants aged between 55 and 75.

This enabled the team to compare the older participants within their peer group and against the younger group who obviously have not begun the ageing processes in question. The results demonstrated age-related declines in executive function, aortic elasticity and cardiorespiratory fitness, a link between vascular health and brain function, and a positive association between aerobic fitness and brain function.



## Do you wake up with a headache?

*Have you been waking up with a headache quite often these days? If yes, then it's high time to stop neglecting it. Start with finding out what triggers the pain. The reasons can vary from improper sleep to a shrill alarm or a bad night bulb.*

In fact, it a proven fact that migraines are often triggered off in the mornings. Make sure that your mind and body is well rested.

Try to go to bed early. Inadequate sleep is one of the major triggers of migraine. If you wake up with a headache, try a steam inhalation. Put a few drops of eucalyptus oil in hot water and inhale the vapour.

## What successful people do in the morning

*In case you thought your mornings were busy, read on to get an idea of what successful people pack in first thing in the morning*

It's got to do with the positive power of the sun, and the reservoir of energy you build up after sufficient shuteye. Which is why most tasks, when taken on first thing in the morning, turn out far more productively than if you were to tackle it, say late afternoon.

Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, for instance, was up at 5 am to listen to Farming Today on BBC Radio 4. Here's how successful names across the arts, bureaucracy and sports leverage their mornings.

**Mrunalini Deshmukh, Divorce lawyer  
Wakes up at 4:45 am**

She's possibly the woman every warring couple wish they could run to, especially after the launch of her sell-out book, *Breaking Up: Your step-by-step guide to getting divorced*, which is possibly why she begins her day with a caffeine kick. "I down the coffee, and am at my

desk by 5.30 am, going through my case papers, depending on what I am tackling that day. It's only after this is out of the way, that I can get down to some yoga or head out for a walk," she admits. Brushing up on the Domestic Violence Act (1954) at 5 am may seem extreme, but for the woman who's represented celebrities like Aamir Khan, it's all in a day's work. "The one hour after waking up is when my energies and focus are the sharpest," says Deshmukh, who is at court by 9.30 am. "I've been following this routine for eight years. The only day I skip it is on a Sunday."

**Sushil Kumar, World wrestling champion  
Wakes up at 4 am**

Olympic medals don't come easily, which is why Sushil Kumar starts training "immediately after he wakes up". "I eat very little before a work out. Just one banana," he says. The exercise routine changes daily depending on what his coach has planned. It could be running, sprinting or a workout on ropes. "Each session lasts for two hours. Post this too, I don't eat much; either a handful of almonds or the juice of raisins, and it's back to workout," he says, leading us to the baffling question, where does all that muscle come from?

**Himanshu Roy, Jt Commissioner of Police (Crime)  
Wakes up at 5 am**

It doesn't matter what time the six-footer makes it to bed ("It's often post 1 am"), but the IPS officer of the 1988 Maharashtra cadre is up every morning by five. His physique might suggest that he gets on to a treadmill with toothbrush in hand, but Roy says, "The first thing I must do is listen to my favourite sitar maestros — Ustad Vilayat Khan and Nikhil Banerjee. I do this for an hour, and waking up at dawn helps me focus on the music while it's dark and quiet." Once "de-stressed in the head", Roy hits the gym at 6.30 am, where he works out till 8 am before it's time to save Mumbai from crooks.

**Mallika Sarabhai, Dancer-activist**  
**Wakes up at 6 am**

One of the biggest names in Bharatnatyam and Kuchipudi, Mallika Sarabhai has been following the same morning routine for years. She says she doesn't stray from it even when she travels — except for a slight change. "The first thing I must do is let my eight dogs out for a morning walk. But I can't travel with them, so that's missing from my routine when I'm out of town," she says. For the next two hours, Sarabhai enjoys western classical music on radio stations BBC3, Portland Classical and New England Classical. "I like instrumental; the cello, violin and piano." She winds it up at 8.30 am with a session of yoga.

**Raghu Rai, Photographer**  
**Wakes up at 4:30 am**

At 71, one of India's most celebrated photographers, finds his work exciting enough to wake up as early as 4.30 am. A quick one-hour session of yoga later, he's ready to spend the next couple of hours processing ideas for an on-hand project. "I spend the day contemplating the way forward. I feel as if it enters my subconscious when I sleep. And in the early hours, before sunrise, it all comes back to me in a rush. Then I shoot like a looter (bandit), wanting to take away everything from the subject I am capturing."

## **Foods to include in your diet during winter**

*With winter slowly setting in, the body undergoes changes to keep up with the weather. For that, it requires a lot of vitamins and energy. In fact, a change in diet according to each season is a must, as it will help in supplying the body with the right fuel. Here are a few foods that you need to include in your diet this winter...*

**Honey:** Honey is a good alternative to sugar and is used as a sweetener. But during winter you can use it all the more, as it keeps

the body warm and helps fight infections and viruses that might cause cough and cold. Just have a spoon of honey as is everyday or mix it in a glass of warm water or milk.

**Green leaves:** Green leaves like spinach are an ideal inclusion in your winter diet. Spinach is an anti-oxidant and is high in vitamin A and C. It is good for the hair and skin and provides iron, protein, and minerals, apart from vitamins. It helps prevent asthma too, among other things.

**Root vegetables:** Root vegetables like carrots, beetroots, turnips and potatoes are not only nutritious, but are also abundantly available during winter in their freshest forms. Vegetables like carrots are high in vitamin A, which is good for the skin and helps fight cold and other common infections.

**Citrus fruits:** A lot of citrus fruits, especially oranges, are in season during winter and should be included in your diet. Citrus fruits, like oranges, tangerines and grapes, are rich in vitamin C and are good for the skin and metabolism. They also help fight cold and regular consumption keeps viruses at bay. The fibres in them also help control cholesterol.

**Garlic:** While garlic makes our food tasty, there are a lot of health benefits to it too, especially during winter. It helps keep the body warm and has antibacterial and antiviral properties that help fight different winter diseases.

## Exclusive salts for your meals

*Do you know how many varieties of salts that can enliven your meal? Here are a few that you can choose from.*

### **The Himalayan Pink Salt**

This salt with its salmon pink colour is extremely beautiful. Mined in the foothills of the Himalayan mountain range, this salt comes in large chunks just like rock salt and can make any food flavourful.

### **The Hawaiian Black Lava Salt**

This is another variety of salt which is mixed with volcanic charcoal and that is how it gets its black colour. This salt has the capacity to turn any dish tasty. Mix it when you are making salads so that it looks dramatic.

### **The Indian Black Mineral Salt**

Unlike the Hawaiian Black Lava Salt, this salt borders on the same colour but is greyer. This salt has a mineral or sulfur taste to it and is ideal for making soups, salads and sauces.

### **The Australian Murray River Salt**

Unlike popular belief, not all salts come from the ocean. One of the popular varieties of river salt is the Australian Murray River Salt. This salt has a very mild flavour and is mostly used in salads.

### **Bamboo Roasted Sea Salt**

A popular method of using salt in Korea, this salt is made by stuffing it into bamboo shoots and heating it. You can use this in any gravy dish that you prepare or you can also make dry dishes using this salt.



## Eat flowers to keep the doc away

Looks like the good 'ol apple has got competition from the world of pretty petals. A new research states that common edible flowers in China are rich in phenolics and have excellent antioxidant capacity. They can be added to your food to prevent chronic disease.

"Edible flowers, which have been used in the culinary arts in China for centuries, are receiving renewed interest. Flowers can be used as an essential ingredient in a recipe, provide seasoning to a dish, or simply be used as a garnish," researchers have been quoted as saying.

Wondering how exactly does an edible flower look like? Here's a list of some flowers that you may know, but never thought you could eat:

**Apple and Orange Blossoms:** It's clearly the most popular among edible flowers, even though the benefits are unknown. However, they should be had in small quantities.

**Chamomile:** Known for its calming effects, chamomile is often had in tea. It is believed to have anti-inflammatory, anti-carcinogenic and wound healing properties.

**Hibiscus:** Often used as garnish in salads, hibiscus or shoe flower are also brewed as tea. Known to contain anthocyanins and antioxidants, they are also said to lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

**Lavender:** This fragrant flower is used as a flavour in ice-creams and yogurts. However, it also acts as an anti-septic and can also be used to get rid of dandruff.

**Peony:** The lovely peony does not just decorate wedding corsages, but when eaten can also alleviate you from depression.

**Jasmine:** A fragrant flower, it usually blended with green tea and added to salads. It is said to have anti-carcinogenic and anti-viral properties.

### **Marigolds**

Popularly known as genda phool in India, the Chinese are known to use marigolds in tea. The flower is also used topically to heal wounds. The flower is also said to be high on the pigment lutein, also known as eye vitamin, which is necessary to keep eye diseases at bay.

### **Pansies**

These bright coloured big flowers not only makes pretty picture, but is beneficial for your heart, kidney, blood pressure among others as it's high on potassium and other minerals.

### **Rose**

The king of flowers has a special place in Chinese medicine. They are said to contain phenolics, which are believed to have anti-inflammatory properties. Said to be a rich source of vitamins, it is believed to reduce the risk of heart diseases, cancers and diabetes. Looks like it's a king of healing too!

### **Chrysanthemum**

Like chamomile, chrysanthemum is often had in tea form in China. They're said to be high in anti-oxidants and minerals, and have an anti-carcinogenic and anti-inflammatory properties.

### **What you need to remember**

Eat flowers that are known to be edible and grown by you as it has no pesticides. Eat only the petals, not the stamens. If you are prone to allergies, then eat a little at first and watch out for any irritation.

# DECCAN Chronicle

20% city kids obese, says study



Picture for representational purpose

**Chennai:** Childhood obesity is on the rise, with over 20 per cent of adolescents in Chennai obese, according to a study conducted in 2010-2013 by the Madras Diabetes Research Foundation and Dr Mohan's Diabetes Specialties Centre. Dr Dharmaraj, diabetologist, Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, says, "Earlier, children were diagnosed only with Type 1-diabetes, a condition where they don't produce insulin. But now, children are also diagnosed for Type 2-diabetes, the major cause for concern being their poor eating habits and sedentary lifestyle."

"The genetic factor and environment too play a major role: Eighty per cent of children who are obese in their teens are in adulthood too," says Dr Shivraj, consultant diabetologist, Fortis Malar Hospital. "Such

children are more prone to developing hypertension, blood pressure and cardiac problems while girls could develop polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), a condition that affects the ovaries and leads to infertility,” he continues.

However, diabetologists say that it is difficult to make obese children diet. If obese, they tended to be depressed, isolated and therefore, prone to over eating. “Doctors therefore follow a moderate diet pattern, accompanied by vigorous physical exercise,” says nutritionist Meenakshi Bajaj, Tamil Nadu Government Multi Super Specialty Hospital.

The study was conducted on about 18,955 children between 6-17 years from 51 schools in the city, including 31 private schools, where obesity was at 21.6 per cent. Head and chief diabetologist of M.V. Hospital for Diabetes, Dr Vijay Viswanathan says, “After the study, the healthcare manual designed by CBSE and WHO, was in use in five CBSE schools in Chennai.” The children’s eating habits changed and they were exercising regularly too.

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director for WHO South-East Asia Region, says, “People can adopt these lifestyle changes if they have improved access to areas for physical activities. Healthy food should be made available at affordable rates.”

## **FAO okays body for small tea growers, moots separate brand for their produce**

To conduct detailed study of pesticide residues

**Chennai, November 14:**

The Food and Agriculture Organisation, an arm of the United Nations, has approved the setting up of a global body for small tea growers while calling for fixing consumption targets to promote the beverage.

Members of the FAO, at the Committee on Commodity Problems' 21<sup>st</sup> session of Inter-Governmental Group on Tea, also agreed to harmonise the maximum residue levels (MRL) of pesticides for exports. T

he group decided to conduct a detailed study on the impact of MRLs on tea trade.

A report submitted at the meet called for supporting small growers with the help of global bodies such as FAO, while calling for developing a brand for them.

Urging for a link between small holders and Government, global bodies and consumers, the FAO said establishing a confederation such as International Tea Smallholder Society may be beneficial for some countries to cooperate.

The meet took cognisance of oversupply at current price levels and resolved to promote consumption in even producing countries.



It called for setting a per capita consumption target of 400 g in promotional campaigns.

The meet decided to consider green farming methods as a way forward to promote organic tea cultivation.

FAO has also decided to try out the possibility of breeding special tea hybrids to cope up with climate change.

## Turmeric tows futures, dips

Erode, November 14:

Spot turmeric prices, in line with futures, decreased in Erode markets on Friday.

“Though traders are having some fresh demand from North India, they quoted decreased price for the turmeric due to the slide in futures. On Thursday afternoon, a 4 per cent fall was seen in the turmeric futures and it decreased further by Rs. 50 on Friday. But traders purchased a good number of bags”, said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

On Friday, 4,000 bags arrived for sale and 45 per cent was sold. The hybrid finger turmeric lost Rs. 300 a quintal, while the local turmeric was down Rs. 150-200 a quintal.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger turmeric was sold at Rs. 3,210-6,814 a quintal; the root variety Rs. 3,189-6,166. Salem Hybrid: The finger variety fetched Rs. 5,701-7,241 and the root variety Rs. 5,499-6,241. Of the 1,245 bags on sale, 221 were sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger turmeric went for Rs. 5,594-6,764; the root variety Rs.5,404-6,199.

## Kochi tea prices decline despite lower arrivals

### Kochi, November 14:

With low arrivals, prices at Kochi tea auction continue to witness a declining trend. In sale no 46, the quantity on offer in CTC dust grades was 11,56,500 kg, which was low compared to last week.

However, the teas which came under the selection of AVT were firm to dearer, while others were irregular and lower by Rs. 3-4 a kg and sometimes more. The auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis pointed out that improved export enquiry witnessed for grainier varieties.

Despite some improvement in Orthodox arrivals at 19,000 kg, the market was lower and witnessed heavy withdrawals. In Cochin CTC dust quotation, good varieties fetched Rs. 90-140, medium grades quoted Rs. 65-90 and plain stood at Rs. 51-60.

The leaf sales registered some improvement in arrivals with a quantity of 170,000 kg on offer in Orthodox grades. The market for Nilgiri Brokens, Whole Leaf was irregular and lower by longer margins of Rs. 5-10 and sometimes more. With less demand, the quantity on offer in CTC leaf was 63,000 kg. The market for Bolder Brokens was steady to firm. Others were irregular and lower. However, plain Fannings was steady to firm and sometimes dearer.

## Rabi pulses area shrinks

Wheat acreage down as sowing picks up



**New Delhi, November 14:**

The coverage of Rabi crops has picked up with the total area rising to 184.30 lakh hectares (lh) against 80.13 lh last week, according to data released by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics. Sowing in pulses is showing a significant decline.

While the area under wheat is lower at 42.88 lh (52.50 lh), the coverage under rapeseed-mustard has increased to 48.87 lh, compared with 47.01 lh during the corresponding period a year ago. However, the coverage of total pulses shrank to 58.77 lh (70.85 lh), while that of gram was lower at 40.99 lh (53.05 lh), an official release said.

## 'Mangroves are nature's shields against cyclones'

Visakhapatnam, November 14: The destruction of mangrove growth along coastal belts has heightened the damage by cyclones, according to Chandi Prasad Bhatt, the noted

environmental activist and one of the leaders in the Chipko movement in the north to protect green cover in the Himalayas.

He was visiting various Hudhud-hit areas in the Visakhapatnam city and district. He said he had noticed destruction of mangroves in many areas along the coast and said this is why the intensity of the cyclone has been felt so much. Mangroves are the natural wind-breakers and in a bid for industrialisation, they have been destroyed.”

He also made the suggestion that in making efforts to restore the green cover in Visakhapatnam city and other cyclone-hit areas the trees should be carefully chosen. “Traditional species which take deep root and can withstand heavy gales should be chosen. There is no point in planting all sorts of trees which are only decorative and are not suitable for the coastal belt,” he suggested.

Bhatt, a recipient of Magsaysay Award and Gandhi Peace Prize, said the floods at Kedarnath, the recent J&K floods and Hudhud had highlighted the effect of climate change on the country.

## Tracking the malnutrition monster

It could take the form of undernutrition, hidden hunger and obesity. The human and economic costs are staggeringly high

The scourge of malnutrition affects the most vulnerable in society, and it hurts most in the earliest stages of life. Today, more than 800 million people are chronically hungry, about 11 per cent of the global population. Undernutrition is the underlying cause of almost half of all child deaths, and a quarter of living children are stunted due to inadequate nutrition. Micronutrient deficiencies — due to diets lacking in vitamins and minerals, also known as “hidden hunger” — affects 2 billion people.

Another worrying form of malnutrition — obesity — is on the rise. More than 500 million adults are obese as a result of diets containing excess fat, sugars and salt. This exposes people to a greater risk of non-communicable diseases — like heart disease, diabetes and cancer — now the top causes of death in the world.

## **Action call**

Many developing countries now face multiple burdens of malnutrition, with people living in the same communities — sometimes even the same households — suffering from undernutrition, hidden hunger and obesity.

These numbers are shocking and must serve as a global call to action.

Besides the terrible human suffering, unhealthy diets also have a detrimental impact on the ability of countries to develop and prosper — the cost of malnutrition, in all its forms, is estimated between 4 and 5 per cent of global GDP.

Government leaders, scientists, nutritionists, farmers, civil society and private sector representatives from around the world will gather in Rome from November 19-21 for the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2). It is an opportunity they cannot afford to miss: making peoples' right to a healthy diet a global reality.

Current food systems are unsustainable and unhealthy. Creating healthy and sustainable food systems is key to overcoming malnutrition in all its forms — from hunger to obesity. Food production has tripled since 1945, while average food availability per person has risen by only 40 per cent. Our food systems have succeeded in increasing production, however, this has come at a high environmental cost and has not been enough to end hunger. Meanwhile, food systems have continued to evolve with an even



greater proportion of food being processed and traded, leading to greater availability of foods with high energy, fats, sugars and salt.

Our food systems are simply not sustainable or healthy today, let alone in 2050, when we will have to feed more than 9 billion people. We need to produce more food but also nutritious food and to do so in ways that safeguard the capacity of future generations to feed themselves. Put simply: we need healthy and sustainable food systems — that produce the right balance of foods, in sufficient quantity and quality, and that is accessible to all — if we want to lead healthy, productive and sustainable lives.

### **Acting now**

In preparation for ICN2, countries have agreed to a Political Declaration and a Framework for Action on nutrition containing concrete recommendations to develop coherent public policies in agriculture, trade, social protection, education and health that promote healthy diets and better nutrition at all stages of life.

The Framework for Action gives governments a plan for developing and implementing national policies and investments throughout the food chain to ensure healthy, diverse and balanced diets for all. This can include strengthening local food production and processing, especially by family farmers and small-scale producers, and linking it to school meals; reducing fat, sugars and salt in processed food; having schools and other public institutions offer healthy diets; protecting children from marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks; and allowing people to make informed choices regarding what they eat. While government health, agriculture, and education ministries should take the lead, this task includes all involved in producing, distributing and selling food.

## Nutrition for all

The ICN2 Framework for Action also suggests greater investments to guarantee universal access to effective nutrition interventions, such as protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding, and increasing nutrients available to mothers.

Countries can start implementing these actions now. The first step is to establish national nutrition targets to implement already agreed-upon global targets, as set out in the Framework for Action. ICN2 is the time and place to make these commitments.

FAO and WHO are ready to assist countries in this effort. By transforming commitment into action and cooperating more effectively with one another and with other stakeholders, the world has a real chance of ending the multiple burdens of malnutrition in all its forms within a generation.

Graziano is the director general of FAO. Chan is the director general of WHO

## Much ado about nothing?

India's food security agreement with the US obscures the real issues about agriculture

Although the details of the agreement between India and the US are not clear, the promise that it will put an end to the impasse over the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement is welcome news. From the looks of it, in exchange for India's support of the TFA, the country's food security programme will not be challenged indefinitely, or not until its concerns about this issue are met. This is definitely an advance over the peace clause India signed at Bali, which bought the country time until 2017 to become TFA compliant; but there is a touch of exaggeration to the gushing reports about New Delhi scoring a big diplomatic victory.

The truth is much more sobering. While it is true that India has shrugged off the 'deal-breaker' tag, and that too on its own terms, there is no escaping the fact that New Delhi was somewhat isolated and under increasing pressure to support an agreement that will ease transaction costs and procedures. Also, whatever our protestations and concerns relating to food security, the TFA was not a threat to the country's food procurement programme. At stake was the minimum support prices paid for wheat and rice; the WTO wanted the procurement price paid to farmers to be within the cap of 10 per cent of the value of the output. Studies have shown that India's subsidies on input and minimum support prices are well below this prescribed limit, even if we accept the contentious base year of 1986-88 for fixing the external reference price. MSPs, when adjusted for inflation, as is permitted under Clause 18.4 of the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture, are comfortably below WTO caps.

New Delhi's tough posturing abroad has been mercifully balanced by the realisation that it is important to ensure that the rise in MSPs is moderate. But the larger reality is that India urgently needs to revamp its farm policies. Our agriculture policy protects the producer through subsidised inputs (principally fertiliser) and support prices, and the consumer through the public distribution system rather than tariffs. A reduction in input subsidy on urea, accompanied by income support systems that are permissible under the WTO — and efficient in any case — would lead to better outcomes in the form of balanced fertiliser use. Rather than fork out nearly Rs. 1 lakh crore on providing virtually free grain to most of the population through a leaky and market distortionary mechanism, we need to move towards a system of targeted direct cash transfers. Much more investment is required in irrigation, electricity, market infrastructure and development of seeds. All of this would be WTO-compliant, and yet leave everyone better off. But if we think in 'India vs WTO' terms, we will remain stuck with the existing infirmities.