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THE HINDU

Red gram may bring cheer to farmers



THE HINDUA labourer picking cotton in a field which has redgram as intercrop in Ada village of Asifabad mandal in Adilabad District. Photo: S. Harpal Singh

Agriculture officials expect the yield to be between eight and nine quintals per hectare

If you go by the sheet of yellow covering the agriculture fields at many places in Adilabad district at present, it can be said that red gram will bring the much-needed relief to the unhappy cotton and soya bean farmers.

The farmers are expecting a bumper red gram crop and pray for weather to continue to be as conducive until harvesting starts in another couple of weeks.

The initial estimates of the area under red gram decreasing drastically got belied as it was sown in 45,000 hectares against the normal 42,000 hectares. Almost all of the red gram crop was sown as an intercrop in cotton and soyabean fields. Meanwhile, cotton and

soybean crops were failed due to unfavourable weather conditions in the season earlier.

“The two good spells of rainfall in August helped the crop withstand the adverse weather which had prevailed until then,” said Asuri Ravinder, Adilabad Agriculture Officer.

Given the condition of the crop at this stage, he expects the yield to be between eight and nine quintals per hectare against a normal of seven quintals per hectare.

“This is a good development for farmers as they will see some profits through sale of red gram. The investment has been only Rs. 5,000 per acre and the minimum support price is Rs. 4,300 per quintal,” pointed out C. Narsingu, a retired agriculture officer.

All the cotton intensive areas have now become the red gram intensive areas too. The crop can be seen extensively cultivated in the tribal belt and along reservoirs of irrigation projects.

“The yield will be slightly less in the areas which do not have irrigation,” Mr. Narsingu said. He hoped that the intermittent spells of rainfall in the hilly areas would have influenced the yield on the positive side in that region.

Mass de-worming of goats and sheep on November 28 and 29

A reproductive health and de-worming camp for goats and sheep would be conducted in the district on November 28 and 29.

A press release from the Collector V. Dakshinamoorthy said that the Government launched the ‘Scheme for Distribution of Priceless Goats and Sheep’ on September 15, 2011 .

Beneficiaries were given four goats and sheep each.

In Namakkal district, in the past three years, 400 beneficiaries in eight villages received 400 cows while 12,751 beneficiaries in 220 villages received 51,004 goats.

A total of 64,152 young ones of goats/sheep were born under the scheme.

In order to improve their productivity, reproductive health camp for cows and de-worming camp for goats and sheep would be conducted in the district.

The release added that all the farmers who have goats, sheep and cows can bring their cattle to the camp on these two days.

“Those who were not covered under the scheme can also participate”, the release added.

Promoting use of bio-pesticides

Efforts are on to promote use of bio-pesticides among farmers in Vellore. In a step towards this, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Vrinjipuram along with Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), Bangalore, Hope First, Bangalore and Department of Agriculture, Vellore conducted a one-day awareness programme on usage of bio-pesticide in crops for farmers on Tuesday.

Over 90 farmers from Vellore took part in the programme that extended training in usage and application of bio-pesticides to crops, importance of micronutrient application, management of nematodes in polyhouse and in open cultivation, a press release said.

They got to learn about how to enrich bio pesticides with vermi compost and farmyard manure. They were given a free kit comprising a kilogram each of bio pesticides – *pseudomonas florescence*, *trichoderma viride* and *paecilomyces lilaceous*.

M. Pandiyan, professor and head, Agricultural Research Station and KVK, Vrinjipuram said the bio-pesticides kill the disease-causing organisms in the crops.

“The awareness among farmers about using bio pesticides is improving. Like organic fertilisers, farmers are now interested in using bio-pesticides. They want to move from inorganic to organic methods,” he said.

He urged the farmers to effectively utilise the knowledge of scientists about the bio-pesticides and micro-nutrients

“Farmers’ awareness of bio-pesticides is improving”

‘Israel keen to share new technologies with India’

DINDIGUL (T.N.) : Israel is keen to share its latest technologies and innovative ideas with Indian farmers to boost yield and thereby enhance income, said Ziv Shalvi, Deputy Chief of Mission, Head of Administration and Consular and Consulate General of Israel, on Tuesday.

Talking to *The Hindu* after inspecting a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for horticulture crops at Reddiyarchatram near here, he said that more CoEs covering more crops would be opened and the existing ones strengthened.

While Israel has established 29 CoEs in India under eight categories, including fruits, vegetables, flowers and bee-keeping, one centre had been set up at Thali in Krishnagiri district exclusively for floriculture.

More centres

“We want to establish more such centres covering other crops, including mango, for the benefit of farmers. Dindigul may have one more centre exclusively for floriculture. The latest technologies will

help farmers get high yield in a limited area using less water,” he added.

Expanse of vegetable cultivation widens

Agro-climatic conditions prevailing in Tirunelveli district are conducive, say officials

The conducive agro-climatic conditions prevailing in the district after the northeast monsoon set in this October have encouraged the farmers to go in for cultivation of vegetables, especially tuber varieties, wherever paddy cultivation is not possible to take the area of vegetable cultivation to greater heights.

According to S. Raja Mohamed, Deputy Director of Horticulture, Tirunelveli, the recent rains in the district has encouraged the farmers to go in for the cultivation of vegetables as its marketing in the native district and in neighbouring Kerala would fetch them good revenue.

Colocasia or ‘chaembu’ has been cultivated on about 100 hectares during 2014-15 as against 45 hectares in during 2013-14, ‘sirukizhangu’ on 300 hectares as against 160 hectares in 2013-14, onion in 1,700 hectares as against 710 hectares during last year. Colocasia esculenta, also known as ‘Taro’ can be cultivated under shade especially as an intercrop in coconut groves and needs abundant water.

It is a crop suitable for both summer and rainy seasons in optimum temperature ranging between 21 and 25 degree Celsius. Colocasia needs adequate soil moisture for the corm (planting materials) sprouting and development. “This crop can withstand water logged condition. The corms will be ready for harvest in 5 to 7 months. The yield of tubers varies with the maturity stage. The average crop yield ranges from 8 to 12 tonnes per hectare. This crop is being cultivated in Kadaiyam, Ambasamudram, Tenkasi, Shencottah blocks in the district,” said Mr. Raja Mohamed, who visited Colocasia farms.

He, who also visited areas where farmers have cultivated onion and other vegetables along with a team of horticulture experts recently, said the farmers' revenue through selling vegetables this year would be significant as prevailing conditions and availability of water would increase the yield.

- *Colocasia is cultivated on 100 hectares, 'sirukizhangu' on 300 ha, onion on 1,700 ha*

- *As prevailing conditions and water are sure to boost yield, farmers' revenue will also go up*

Farmers celebrate Periyar level reaching 142-ft mark

Offer their felicitations to the State government, Jayalalithaa

Farmers from the district celebrated water level in Mullaiperiyar dam reaching 142 feet at the monthly farmers' grievance meeting held at the Collectorate here on Tuesday.

The farmers garlanded a picture of Colonel John Pennycuick who built the dam and paid floral tributes to the picture and distributed sweets to the officials and the people present.

Representatives from various farmers' associations in the district offered their felicitations to the State government and former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa.

During the meeting, however, farmers from the areas in and around Melur, Melur extension and Tirumangalam complained that there was no water in the tanks in their villages, which seriously affected planting activities.

"Water has not yet reached the 'ooranis' and tanks in our areas. Despite the Public Works Department officials claiming they have been taking measures, water has not been properly regulated and

diverted,” alleged farmers from the tail-end areas of Tirumangalam which has over 80 tanks.

Collector L. Subramanian said despite recent rainfall, the district was still short of 80 mm rainfall against the average requirement of 815 mm of rainfall this year.

“We are focussing on helping farmers with irrigation activities and have been diverting water to agriculture fields,” he stated.

With the recent rains having filled up Madakulam tank to an extent, farmers near that area submitted a petition to the Collector urging the district administration not to hand over the tank to the Fisheries Department as it might be used by private companies for fishing activities.

They asked for steps to be taken to convert the tank into an effective summer storage for water.

Farmers from Usilampatti said work on a hanging bridge near Uttapanayakanur under 58{+t}{+h}canal scheme had been held up for long.

While PWD officials said shortage of workers had let to a delay in the construction, the farmers themselves offered to help with bringing in workers from their areas.

Mr. Subramanian asked officials from the PWD to meet the farmers of the area soon and arrive at a consensus about the same.

The seeds of revolution

Remembering C. Subramaniam, father of the first green revolution

The food that you easily take for granted, today, was scarce some 50 years ago. India was grappling with a devastating famine, then. The problem of feeding the increasing population was a huge task in front of the government. Former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri even made a public announcement to citizens of India to forgo one meal a day if possible to tighten the belt. . During this time, the task of finding a solution to this food scarcity problem was entrusted to a young and brilliant minister C. Subramaniam. Experiments in his garden

C.S, as he was popularly called, was a staunch congressman. C.S believed that if India could get hold of some high-yielding seeds then the food problem could be confronted to an extent. He managed to get some good growing wheat seeds from America from another eminent scientist called Norman Borlough. At first, there were many in the cabinet who did not accept C.S.'s approach. C.S. decided to plant those wheat seeds in his own garden. After some months, he invited the government officials to come and see the result for themselves. To their surprise, the new wheat seeds, indeed had produced double the quantity. Previously, the older seeds available in the country could hardly match the yield of this American variety.

Green signal

The government gave its green signal to popularise this variety and nearly 1,000 trial farms across the country started sowing the American wheat seeds.

The government made use of radio and newspapers to create awareness among people and farmers about the new seed variety. Indira Gandhi, who succeeded Sastri as Prime Minister, encouraged C.S to continue with his mission. Tremendous results

In 1967 India for the first time since Independence harvested nearly 15 million tonnes of wheat. Many schools in North India were closed and the classrooms were used to store the wheat grains. From here India started her trek towards what was called the famous Green Revolution in achieving more food production.

In recognition for his commitment towards the county agrarian, C.S. was conferred the nation's highest civilian honour Bharat Ratna in 1998. C. Subramanian is rightly called Father of Green Revolution.

NAF, a Public Charitable Trust, was founded in 2000 by him when he turned 90 years to usher the Second Agricultural Revolution, as well as to energise rural India. Apart from several projects of the foundation, its farm school activities are quite popular.

To educate the urban school children appreciate the importance of agriculture in India and to encourage them to help the rural community in a meaningful way, the Foundation has been conducting educational trip for the students to the rural area. Students are also taken to the Research and development Centre at Taramani, Chennai to learn about soil testing, food safety and personal hygiene etc.

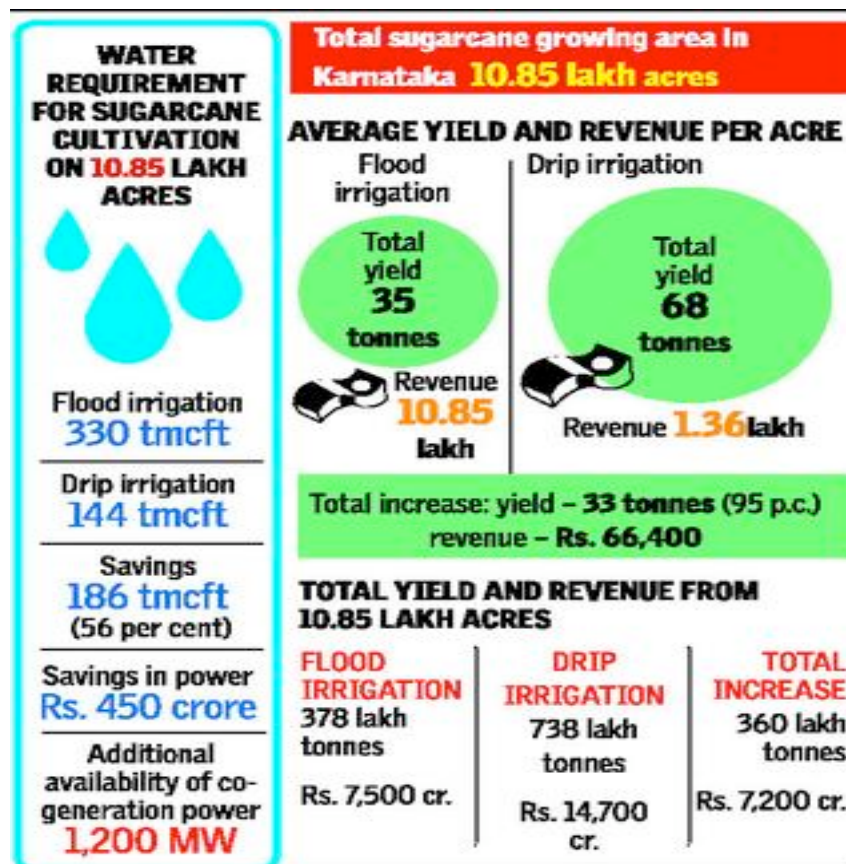
(M.J. Prabu is The Hindu's Agriculture correspondent. He writes the popular Farmer's Notebook. Write to him at prabu.mj@thehindu.co.in)

HERE IS A CHANCE TO VISIT KVK

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research invites school students from Kancheepuram district to visit its Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), a resource and knowledge centre for farming, at Kancheepuram. To participate, all one has to do is to send a one-page write along with a photograph highlighting the students' activities and involvement in agriculture to The Editor, The Hindu In School at

school@thehindu.co.in. The schools will be shortlisted on the strength of the activity and interest. As many as 25 students from each school can participate. The short-listed schools will be intimated about the date and time allotted for their visit.

Drip irrigation to be mandatory for sugarcane cultivation from February



Taking a formidable step towards water conservation, Karnataka, which has the country's second largest extent of drought-prone land, is set to make drip irrigation mandatory in all the irrigation command areas from February 2015. The government is getting ready to install drip irrigation system in the fields of seven lakh growers in a phased manner in the next three years, involving a cost of Rs. 4,500 crore.

By making the growers of water-guzzling crops such as sugarcane to switch over to drip irrigation, the State plans to conserve an estimated 186 tmcft of water (roughly equal to four times the storage capacity of the Krishnaraja Sagar) besides saving energy worth Rs. 400 crore that is being used to pump water in some areas, according to Water Resources Minister M.B. Patil.

At a press conference here on Tuesday, the Minister said the current sugarcane cultivation consumed 250 to 330 tmcft of water a year. Besides saving water, the drip irrigation method, which would also have provision for fertigation system for supplying liquid manure, would help increase the yield from the present average of 35 tonnes an acre to 68 tonnes, he said. Such an increase in yield would bring an additional income of Rs. 7,200 crore to growers besides helping sugar factories to generate 1,200 MW of additional energy through co-generation, he said.

The government is in the process of finalising a business model for installation of drip irrigation system, which would have a tripartite agreement with farmers, government and sugar factories, he said.

Subsidy

While it would cost Rs. 40,000 to install drip irrigation system in an acre of sugarcane field, the government would provide a subsidy of Rs. 10,000 and sugar factories have agreed to contribute Rs. 5,000. Efforts were on to get another Rs. 5,000 from corporate social responsibility funds so that the growers would have to contribute only 50 per cent of the cost, the Minister said.

He said the government was also considering bringing paddy under drip irrigation, tentatively from June next.

State to initiate world's biggest micro irrigation project

Karnataka is set to embark upon what is said to be the world's biggest micro irrigation project with the proposal to bring seven lakh hectares of land in various lift irrigation schemes under drip and other micro irrigation systems, according Mr. Patil.

Presently, the world's largest micro irrigation project was the one taken up in South Africa on two lakh acres of land, he said. He told reporters here that most of the areas proposed to be brought under the micro irrigation system were in drought-prone districts such as Kalaburagi, Bagalkot, Vijayapura, Raichur, Koppal, Gadag, Chitradurga and Haveri.

Plans were afoot to set up an agro industrial corridor in this belt by holding an exclusive global investors' meet to take advantage of the likely increase in agricultural yield due to the micro irrigation system, the Minister said.

For Osmanabad's soybean farmers, a winter of discontent and devastation



Unseasonal rains decimated Phulchand Tambe's two-acre soybean crop in Deolali village in Osmanabad district. Photo: Shoumojit Banerjee

While 2012 and 2013 were bad-rainfall years, recent showers in the rain-shadow Marathwada region have extensively ruined acres of soybean crop.

A sense of imminent calamity envelops farmers in Deolali village in Maharashtra's Osmanabad district. After having borne drought for consecutive years, they now face the ravages of unseasonal rain.

While 2012 and 2013 were bad-rainfall years, recent showers in the rain-shadow Marathwada region have extensively ruined acres of soybean crop across the district with its farmers struggling to keep the wolf from the door.

The irregular bouts of rain, coupled with a flash hailstorm in March that wreaked havoc on Osmanabad's horticulture and agriculture, has driven Deolali's 700-odd families to a perilous hand-to-mouth existence.

"A 10 quintal-bag of soybean (approx 30 kg) yields an average Rs. 2500- Rs. 2700. But this time, we expect less than half the market price owing to the poor quality of corn, made wet by rainwater," says Prithviraj Tambe, whose better part of his 16 acre-farmland has been wrecked by unseasonal rain, destroying his cotton, jowar and fruit crops.

"The paltry revenue I earn from the damaged soybean crop will have to see off my family till the next kharif season," he says stoically.

However, those not so stoic, like 55-year-old Madhukar Tambe, caved in and committed suicide on his farm.

"He was found hanging from a tree near his field last week. While he did not owe debts to any moneylender or bank, he had borrowed heavily from his friends," said Anand Tambe, Madhukar's nephew.

“The burden of guilt weighed heavily on my father. He was ashamed,” remarks his eldest son, Neminath, in a poignant tone.

Less than a fortnight earlier, Dadasaheb Bharati, another farmer committed suicide in the village of Tandulwadi in the district’s Paranada taluk, allegedly stunned by the loss of his soybean and mango crop.

In March, after the devastating hailstorm attack ruined crops on his 12-acre farm, Rajendra Lomte of Deolali attempted to immolate himself in a fit of despair, sustaining 70 per cent burns in the process.

According to official figures, more than 200 farmers have taken their lives in Marathwada in the last six months. A majority of them, reeling under the onslaught of elemental forces, saddled with heavy debts, have taken the extreme step. Osmanabad district accounts for more than 30 deaths during this period.

“Every farmer, big or small, owes some debt to the local moneylender. With the rain gods playing truant and then descending on us in an unwelcome fashion, there is no other alternative,” says Yuvraj Tambe.

Most farmers in the village steer clear of the decrepit Osmanabad District Cooperative Bank, headed by the shadowy former NCP MP, Padamsinh Patil.

While recent showers have palliated the drinking water problem to an extent, the main water source for the district, the Sina-Kolegaon dam, continues to be nearly empty in a region suffering a 42 per cent rainfall deficit.

“After experiencing two crushing seasons of drought, we thought the showers in August would see the Rabi crop through this year. When the rains returned in October, we knew our hope was a fragile seed,”

says Phulchand Tambe, whose two-acre soybean crop was ruined by the unseasonal rain.

Need to improve agriculture productivity: scientist



Surinder Kumar Vasal, former scientist of International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre, delivering a lecture at the University of Agricultural Sciences.— PHOTO: SANTOSH SAGAR

Surinder Kumar Vasal, former scientist at International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre and the winner of World Food Prize, stressed the need for advanced hybrid technology to improve agricultural productivity to meet the increasing demand for food grain globally.

He was delivering the First Foundation Day lecture at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur

here. "The global population is estimated to increase from 7.2 billion now to 8 billion by 2021, the agriculture sector across the world would have to face a new challenge of meeting increased demand for food grains. It is possible with the multiplying productivity by undertaking intense research and innovations in hybrid technology," he said. He emphasised that the advancement of hybrid technology should be directed towards addressing the current and the future effects of climate on agricultural productivity.

“Concern for climate change is real and in more recent years we are experiencing extremes of weather conditions. Adopting crops to climate change is thus important and necessary investments must be made now to mitigate the challenges arising out of this change. Hybrid technology has the firepower to make rapid advances in this direction,” he said. Dr. Vasal pointed out that the advancement of hybrid maize technology in the 20th century had enabled both developed and developing countries to increase maize productivity.

“The technology has proven to be exemplary as it has evolved continuously and revolutionised maize production in many countries,” he said.

He called upon hybrid breeders for introducing new strategies and tactics on a continuous basis to achieve goals in both hybrid performance and improving economics of hybrid maize seed production, the two prerequisites for successful commercialisation of any hybrid.

Farmers stage demonstration

Urge Centre to stop the proposed reservoir project by Karnataka

Farmers affiliated to Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam staged a demonstration outside the Hosur Municipality near here on Tuesday, placing a slew of demands including intervention by the Centre to stop the proposed reservoir project by Karnataka.

Condemning Karnataka’s proposal for reservoir project, farmers here demanded the intervention of the Centre to put a stop to any project that would divert water meant for the farmers of Tamil Nadu. Farmers have also demanded the implementation of the Cauvery-Thenpennai-Palar linking scheme.

Demanding compensation of Rs.50,000 per acre for crop depredation by elephants, farmers have also demanded an increase in the solatium for human casualty by elephants to Rs.10 lakh.

In addition, alleging discharge of effluents from industrial units in Hosur, farmers of Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam demanded monitoring and action against such industrial units and also providing for an annual compensation of Rs.1 lakh per acre for agricultural lands affected by effluents.

According to the protesters, agriculture was affected by the diversion of water from the Kelarapalli checkdam across River Thenpennai for industrial use. The water should be for agricultural use exclusively and should be used to fill up the intervening lakes.

Similarly, the government was yet to provide patta lands for farmers who had lost their lands for the KRP dam. The government should provide for alternative patta lands, the protesters demanded.

Union Minister to inaugurate farm machinery fair at Puttur

Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh will inaugurate a three-day agriculture machinery fair at Puttur in Dakshina Kannada on January 24, 2015.

Organised by the Arecanut Research and Development Foundation (ARDF) and the Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Ltd. (CAMPCO), the fair would be conducted on the premises of Vivekananda Institute of Technology. Addressing presspersons at Dharmasthala on Tuesday, D. Veerendra Heggade, president, ARDF said that about 200 persons have registered to set up stalls. The fair is expected to attract farmers from all over the State and neighbouring States. He said that the ARDF has instituted an award in memory of late Varanashi Subraya Bhat, founder president,

CAMPCO. It would be presented to a best researcher/team of researchers among the engineering students at the fair.

Konkodi Padmanabha, president, CAMPCO said that the venue of the fair would be spread over eight acres.

Also, demands were made for increase in the procurement price of milk at Rs.40 per litre, 30 per kilo for paddy, Rs.5,000 per tonne of sugarcane. Lastly, farmers also demanded a special monthly pension of Rs.5,000 for farmers above 60 years of age.

CPI(M) seeks more focus on promoting organic farming



CPI(M) State unit secretary Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurates a seminar on waste treatment and disposal in Kannur on Tuesday.— PHOTO: S.K. MOHAN

Communist Party of India (Marxist) State unit secretary Pinarayi Vijayan has said that organic farming has to be promoted along with decentralised waste treatment initiatives.

Inaugurating a seminar on waste treatment and disposal held here on Tuesday as part of the CPI(M)'s State-wide campaign for a waste-free Kerala, Mr. Vijayan said that excessive use of chemical pesticides had contaminated agricultural products, including fishery products. Diseases such as cancer were on the increase due to

consumption of contaminated products, he said, calling for efforts to promote organic farming.

He said that decentralised waste treatment plans had to be identified in the backdrop of the opposition to centralised waste disposal plants from local residents. CPI(M) leader and former Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac presented the topic. He spoke on the Alappuzha model of waste treatment. CPI(M) leader M.V. Govindan presided.

James Mathew and C. Krishnan, MLAs; and party leaders P. Jayarajan, M.V. Jayarajan, K.K. Shylaja and district panchayat president K.A. Sarala were present.

Centre puts State in a quandary over maize procurement

The NDA government's decision to not support Karnataka's initiative to procure maize at Minimum Support Price (MSP) has put the State government in a quandary. The issue appears to precipitate relations between the Centre and the State.

According to sources, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is expected to write to the Centre expressing the State government's displeasure. The Centre has decided not to support the State in maize procurement as the commodity is not being used under the public distribution system (PDS). The Centre has asked the State to spend from its own resources for maize procurement from farmers.

The State is expecting to produce around 12 lakh quintals of maize this year.

"Last year, we had spent about Rs. 480 crore on procurement and it is our duty this year too to rescue farmers from any possibility of a price crash," Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister T.B. Jayachandra said on Tuesday.

The Union Agriculture Department, in its letter dated November 19, 2014, had categorically stated that it would not reimburse the amount spent by the State government towards procurement.

The Centre had declared a MSP of Rs, 1,350 per quintal of maize but the price had dropped to Rs. 900 per quintal in the State.

“Why should the Centre fix MSP for the crop if it is not ready to bear the cost,” Mr. Jayachandra questioned.

When asked whether he saw it as a politically-motivated move of the BJP-led NDA government, he said “it appears to be so”.

It has asked the State to spend from its own resources to procure maize from farmers

State to initiate world's biggest micro irrigation project

Karnataka is set to embark upon what is said to be the world's biggest micro irrigation project with the proposal to bring seven lakh hectares of land in various lift irrigation schemes under drip and other micro irrigation systems, according to Water Resources Minister M.B. Patil.

Presently, the world's largest micro irrigation project was the one taken up in South Africa on two lakh acres of land, he said. He told reporters here that most of the areas proposed to be brought under the micro irrigation system were in drought-prone districts such as Kalaburagi, Bagalkot, Vijayapura, Raichur, Koppal, Gadag, Chitradurga and Haveri.

Plans were afoot to set up an agro industrial corridor in this belt by holding an exclusive global investors' meet to take advantage of the likely increase in agricultural yield due to the micro irrigation system, the Minister said.

Pisanam paddy cultivation in full swing in Tuticorin



Farmers busy transplanting paddy on a field at Athimarapatti village near Tuticorin on Tuesday.— Photo: N. Rajesh

With good rainfall, pisanam paddy cultivation is picking up in Tuticorin. Paddy nurseries have already been raised and transplantation is expected to be carried out on 17,500 hectares across the district soon, according to Joint Director of Agriculture N.K. Dhakshinamoorthy.

Paddy transplantation is on in Srivaikuntam and Alwarthirunagari blocks over 5000 hectares. Paddy crop is normally raised in Karungulam, Srivaikuntam, Alwarthirunagari and Tiruchendur. Some parts of Tuticorin are also conducive for paddy.

To offset the shortfall in paddy cultivation during the kar season, the focus is now on improving cultivation in the pisanam season. Normally, 4,000 hectares would be covered under paddy during kar season, but this year the crop was raised only on 1,348 hectares. “The average paddy cultivation area in the pisanam season is 13,500 hectares but this time it is expected to go up to 16,000 hectares,” Mr. Dhakshinamoorthy told *The Hindu* on Tuesday.

Besides, the farmers are also gearing up to transplant paddy in rainfed blocks, mostly in Kovilpatti and Kayathar. Paddy cultivation is expected to be taken up in Ottapidaram block and partially in Pudur block also. It is likely to be cultivated over around 1,000 hectares in these rainfed blocks this year.

He said, "Tuticorin is largely dependent on northeast monsoon that begins in the middle of October and ends by December 15 with seasonal showers.

Northeast monsoon rainfall accounts for two-third of the district's average annual rainfall of 662 mm." Water bodies, including the PWD tanks numbering 134, 53, Tamirabarani system irrigation tanks and 430 non-system tanks have considerable storage owing to good rainfall this year.

So far, 550 tonnes of certified paddy seeds have been distributed to farmers and a stock of 40 tonnes is being maintained.

Tuticorin district requires 9,900 tonnes of urea for all standing crops and 4,300 tonnes of urea has so far been sold to farmers and the rest of the demand will be met in three phases.

The Collector has constituted a squad to check irregularities in the sale of urea by private fertilizer outlets. Already, licences of five outlets in Ottapidaram and Kovilpatti had been suspended, Mr. Dhakshinamoorthy informed.

Sericulture awaits a big boost in Chittoor



THE HINDUA malbari plantation near V. Kota in Chittoor district. File Photo.

District administration to provide all facilities to farmers under one roof

Sericulture in Chittoor district is expected to get a boost, with the district administration deciding to provide all facilities to farmers under one roof.

District Collector Siddarth Jain has directed the sericulture wing to submit a report by December 15 on the feasibility of either the full waiver of property tax or bringing it down to the maximum level for silkworm rearing sheds in the district, with Madanapalle, Palamaner and Kuppam forming the core belt. The collective efforts of farmers and officials are expected to transform a stagnant rural economy into a dynamic and buoyant industrial economy.

Officials brought to the notice of the Collector that municipalities were imposing property tax on rearing sheds up to Rs. 5,000 a unit, which farmers have opposed. The Palamaner area contributes more than 800 metric tonnes of silk annually, thanks to the presence of over a hundred rearing sheds.

Similarly, Kuppam and Madanapalle zones, too, make substantial contributions to silk production. In spite of steps taken by the government to bolster silk production, the rural industry still depends on Karnataka for the final output, resulting in huge expenditure at the domestic front.

Considering the fact that 70 per cent of malbari plantation in the State is spread across Rayalaseema, with Chittoor contributing a significant share, the district administration aims at strengthening the existing reeling units at Palamaner, with more subsidies on buildings and rearing sheds, involving youth in the industry, apart from conducting periodical awareness campaigns for the benefit of entrepreneurs.

BETTER DAYS ARE HERE

*District Collector has sought a report from the sericulture wing on the feasibility of waiving property tax for rearing sheds

*The combined efforts of farmers and officials are expected to transform a stagnant rural economy into an industrial one

*Palamaner area contributes around 800 metric tonnes of silk annually, and govt. is considering strengthening units there

*The rural silk industry still depends on Karnataka for the final output, resulting in huge expenditure at the domestic front

HOW PALAMANER GETS A BOOST?

*More subsidies on buildings and rearing sheds

*Involving youth in sericulture

*Conducting awareness campaigns for entrepreneurs

'Rechristen Karnataka Red Gram Development Board'

State government urged to take a decision in the Cabinet meeting on November 28

Karnataka State Red Gram Growers Association has demanded that the State government rechristen the Karnataka Red Gram Development Board as the Karnataka State Pulses Development Board for a comprehensive development of the cultivation of pulses and the improvement of marketing avenues for the pulses.

President of the association Basavaraj Ingin and secretaries V.B. Karaddi and Mallikarjun Patil Hulagera told presspersons here on Tuesday that the State government had responded positively to the proposal mooted last year and meetings had been held with stakeholders for broadbasing the activities of the board and a consultant had been appointed to prepare a detailed action plan.

"However, the state government developed cold feet later and kept the proposal pending," they said.

Mr. Ingin said that establishing a pulses board will help those farmers involved in the cultivation of pulses in 11 districts of the State and also help to increase the pulses production.

The board should be empowered to take up processing of the pulses and help in marketing the finished product. "The November 28 Cabinet meeting in Kalaburagi should take a positive decision of establishing the pulses board as a gift to the people of North Karnataka," they said.

He reiterated the demand of the association to fix the procurement price of red gram at Rs. 6,000 per quintal this year and asked the government to make an announcement in this regard well in advance before the beginning of the harvesting of red gram in December.

The association also wanted the government to set up procurement centres in all the hoblis in the districts of Kalaburagi, Bidar, Raichur, Yadgir, Koppal, and Vijayapura to enable small and marginal farmers to sell their produce easily at the procurement centres without having to bring their produce to the taluk or district headquarters.

Last year the government had fixed the procurement price of red gram at Rs. 5,000 per quintal as compared to the Minimum Support Price of Rs. 4,300 fixed by the Union government.

This year the Union government has increased the Minimum Support Price of red gram to Rs. 4,350 rejecting the demand to increase it.

“The State government should help red gram growers by increasing the procurement price by announcing a incentive of Rs. 1,650 per quintal and fix the price at Rs. 6,000 per quintal taking into consideration the increased labour cost and cultivation expenditure.”

Protecting agro-biodiversity of Malabar

After scripting a success story in conserving the traditional rice varieties of Wayanad, tribal farmers in the district are now on a mission to protect agro-biodiversity of the Malabar region.

The members of the Wayanad Adivasi Vikasana Samiti (WAVS) and SEEDCARE, two grassroots institutions nurtured by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation here, are engaged in promoting agro-biodiversity conservation of the region.

“The Central government had honoured five farmers of the Samiti with the Plant Genome Saviour Community Recognition Award in 2012 for our collective effort in conserving traditional paddy seeds.

“By utilising the interest amount of the award money (Rs.10 lakh) we have instituted two cash awards for tribal farm families in the Malabar region from this year. We are planning to award Rs.25,000 to the

family which conserves the maximum number of native rice varieties, and Rs.15,000 to the family which conserves maximum plant and animal breeds on farm. A team experts will select the winners,” A. Devaki, president, WAVS, said. Apart from this, the organisations will jointly launch a three-month awareness programme with the support local bodies and the Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB).

Growers demand minimum support price for rubber

Karnataka State Rubber Belegarara Hitarakshana Vedike, Ujire, has urged the State government to come to the rescue of rubber growers by announcing a support price of Rs. 5 per kg of natural rubber under the market intervention scheme as prices of rubber have crashed.

In a memorandum to Chief Minister Siddaramiah president of the Vedike Sridhar G. Bhide said the Kerala government had announced a support price of Rs. 5 per kg to rubber growers.

He said that prices of rubber crashed from Rs. 175–Rs. 240 a kg during 2013 to Rs. 110-Rs. 120 a kg now, which was below the production cost. At the same time input cost had gone up. Karnataka had about 60,000 hectares under rubber and more than five lakh farmers were dependent on it. Rubber was mainly grown in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Shivamoga, Uttara Kannada and Chikkamagaluru districts. Crash in prices had affected the growers. The memorandum also requested that the government waive farm loans of growers.

In another memorandum to Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, the Vedike said the government should ban import of natural rubber. If this was not possible, import duty on natural rubber should be hiked to 70 per cent from 20 per cent.

Horticulture fair in Bagalkot from December 12

The University of Horticultural Sciences will organise a four-day horticulture fair on its campus at Bagalkot from December 12.

Vice-Chancellor of the university D.L. Maheshwar said here on Tuesday that the focus of the event would be on 'mechanisation for prosperity'.

The event was expected to attract nearly five lakh people, including farmers, traders, horticulturists, scientists, landscape designers, gardeners, and construction engineers from the State as well as Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Goa.

Around 350 stalls would showcase new generic machineries, equipment, shade nets, high tech horticulture inventions, seeds, planting material, farm publications and field demonstration.

The event would also feature technical seminars on current issues and interactive sessions between scientists and farmers on mechanisation in horticulture, precision farming and other topics. The university would felicitate 23 best horticulture farmers from the districts under its jurisdiction.

For details, call event chairman on 08354-201352 or 9480696381 or email to de@uhsbagalkot.edu.in.

Chef's Choice: Wood oven baked Kolkata Bakti recipe



Wood oven baked Kolkata Bakti

Wood oven baked Kolkata Bakti

Ingredients

Kolkata Bakti Steak (240 gms)

Olive oil (20 mls)

Pommery mustard (2 gms)

Galangal paste (3gms)

Garlic juice (1 ml)

Salt (5 gms)

Freshly Crushed black pepper (6 gms)

Fresh Pomegranate juice (100 ml)

New baby Potatoes (40 gms)

Chili Flakes (2 gms)

Bengal Lime (01 no)

Method:

- * Marinate the Kolkata Bektı with lime juice, mustard, galangal paste, garlic juice, salt and crushed pepper properly.

- * Fire the wood fired oven and bring the temperature till about 200 degree centigrade.

- * Boil the pomegranate juice and prepare a reduction, cool and keep aside.

- * Boil the new potatoes along with the skin after thoroughly washing them in running water to get rid of any soil or dirt.

- * Heat a pan and put little olive oil, when sufficiently hot sear the marinated fish steak.

- * Just after searing the steak, put it in oven and cook for about eight minutes reducing the temperature to 120 degree Celsius after three minutes.

- * Stir fry the potatoes meanwhile with some salt and chili flakes. Add the chili flakes later so that it does not burn.

- * Once the fish is cooked remove from oven and serve hot with the potatoes and drizzle the fish with the reduced pomegranate juice.

- * You can also serve a slice of lemon on the side.

- * This dish can also be served with a side portion of sprouted black grams and soaked yellow lentil salad.

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

Tomorrow's Forecast

Wednesday, Nov 26

Max 30° | Min 24°



Partly Cloudy

Sunrise: 06:12

Sunset: 05:39

Barometer: 1012

Thursday, Nov 27

Max 30° | Min 24°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday
Nov 28



30° | 25°

Partly Cloudy

Saturday
Nov 29



33° | 27°

Cloudy

Sunday
Nov 30



34° | 27°

Cloudy

Monday
Dec 1



34° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday
Dec 2



34° | 27°

Sunny

10 reasons why you should try yoga



10 reasons why you should try yoga (Thinkstock Photos/ Getty Images)

Are you a die hard gym person? Do you spend hours on the treadmill or lifting weights? The fact is that the benefit you get from spending one hour doing yoga is far more than spending the same time in the gym every day.

Holistic health guru Mickey Mehta believes that yoga makes one wholesome and yoga makes one holy. He says that while gyms have a lot of equipment, they only work on the periphery while yoga touches your soul and mind too. "Yoga has a lot of different structures and dimensions to it. There are different organs that get squeezed and that improves their functioning and rejuvenates them with vitality. The life of the organs also gets renewed." He says that when one does yoga asanas, there is a stretching and constricting of every nook and corner and micro cell.

"And most importantly, there is maximum blood flow to the brain. Yoga helps us in our perception and strategy and improves our nervous system, both sympathetic and parasympathetic. It is ideal for

psychosomatic disorders and the emotional quotient and only yoga can guarantee heightened immunity. There is proper secretion of antibodies and there is elimination of toxic waste from the right channel," he adds.

Yoga can change not just your body but your brain as well from the first day you begin to practice it, says yoga trainer Yogesh Chavan. He adds, "It does not tire you out, rather, it rejuvenates and energises you." Here are a few reasons why you should practice yoga...

1. Because you need to unplug

With most of us glued to our computers all the time, and when off that, we have our phones to check, update, upload, text, email etc. Research has shown that most of us aren't really 'in' the moment. We are all the time thinking of deadlines and schedules while going on with daily work and that takes us away from our 'present'. Yoga gives us the opportunity to unplug. It makes us focus.

2. Because you can burn more

It is said that a 45-minute yoga session is equivalent to two hours in the gym. You end up burning more in much less time.

3. Because it is easy and effortless

Practising yoga is easy and effortless. You do not need expensive equipment. All you need is a mat and a place where you can roll it out and begin. There are a lot of yoga studios with qualified teachers in the city, and unlike a gym where you have to go and practise, when it comes to yoga you can practise all the asanas on your own, once you learn the proper methods to do them.

4. Because your brain needs gymming too

Exercising in the gym can help your body, but doing yoga can help not just your body, but your brain too. Yoga is like a gym for your brain — the workout your mind gets, the extra blood flowing to the

remote cells and neurons helps your brain function better. Yoga is said to improve your brain functions, remember things better, focus on your activities and also make you feel energetic and rejuvenated.

5. Because the comfort is to die for

Yoga outfits are the relaxed, loose-fitted ones that you are most comfortable in. There are also some cool ones with printed messages for youngsters.

6. Because you need to strengthen your core

Asanas often involve holding certain poses for a while and breathing right, and this increases your core strength. Your muscles are toned and strengthened, thanks to the yoga poses. Also, your flexibility increases to a large extent.

7. Because you need to hear silence too

In the gym, you cannot escape loud music. And gymming without music does not really work. Even when there is no music, you are exposed to the dull buzzing noise of the treadmill and the sudden loud clanks of the weights etc. Traditionally, yoga gives us some quiet and tranquil time. You get to hear the silence and revel in it.

8. Because you need the 'me-time'

Yoga can help you make time to look inside your being. It can help you reflect and think. You learn to observe and evaluate yourself and your thoughts. Yoga is about individual practice and that means you are not talking while you are doing yoga, unlike when you are gymming.

9. Because you need a stress buster

Research has proved that yoga is a great stress buster. The slow, rhythmic movements and the deep breathing actually release toxins and make you stress-free.

10. Because it is good for your heart and bones

Risks of heart diseases can be lowered, and also bones can be strengthened if yoga is practised regularly.

Healthy habits to beat the winter chill

will protect you from ailments that afflict people in winter

Winter has already marched on to our doors and as temperatures fall winter appetites can spin out of control. Winter brings in a lot of problems due to the dry and humid weather bringing changes drastically in our body. The drop in temperature aggravates cough, cold, pneumonia and acute bronchitis.

We even tend to eat more during the winter months, with the average person gaining at least 1 to 2 pounds and those who are already overweight likely to gain a lot more.

There are a number of factors that entice us to eat more during winter. Eating is not a problem, but unhealthy eating can be a big worry. Eating healthy during winter is very important to keep ourselves fit and warm during from the cold.

Dr Fatima Chatriwala, Dietician at Sterling Wockhardt Hospital, Vashi said, "Hot foods and drinks should be preferred more during winter in order to keep the body warm. Eating fruits and green leafy vegetables rich in Vitamin C can help boost up immunity and reduce the risk of infections."

She added that there are 80% more likely to get a cold in winter, so making sure your immune system is in tip-top condition is important. Milk and dairy products such as cheese, yoghurt are great sources of protein and vitamins A and B12. They're also an important source of calcium, which helps keep our bones strong.

Winter even brings in common skin-related problems, such as infections, allergy, itching and rashes. Skin cannot replenish its moisture naturally due to less humidity in air. Low humidity due to indoor heating, hot showers and bath exaggerates this condition and skin is bound to become dry and irritated. Dry skin tends to crack and bleed. Cracked skin loses its ability to protect the body and increases the risk of infection.

Vaidya Smita Naram, MD at Ayushakti Ayurved said, "The best ways to keep the skin soft, healthy and moisturized during winter is to avoid long hours of bath, using body lotions, also twenty to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise everyday can give your skin a healthy glow." Ayurveda stresses on massaging body with oil during winter as it reflexes the muscles and joints from any kind of stiffness and relaxes the body.

Working out during pregnancy

When Aashima Mishra, 32, got pregnant, she was elated. But when well-meaning family and friends cautioned her against her regular jog and gym routine, she was worried.

Having always been health and fitness conscious, Aashima didn't want to completely stop exercising during her pregnancy, neither did she want to put herself or her foetus at risk. Unsure about what to do, she decided to check with her doctor, who told her that moderate exercise was alright during pregnancy.

Exercising during pregnancy

"A woman can exercise throughout pregnancy, right up to labour. But before starting on any regimen, it is necessary to take a clearance from your obstetrician. In early pregnancy, the safest and simplest option is walking," says gynaecologist Dr Suman Bijlani.

Adds Dr Parul R Sheth, a health consultant specializing in reproductive biology, "Pregnancy is a good time to get active. Exercise can help you prepare for delivery and keep you in shape post delivery. You can include low-impact exercises throughout your pregnancy. Avoid bouncing, leaping or running during the last three months."

What to do

Walking, swimming, aerobics, Pilates, yoga, Kegel exercises, etc., are safe. Talk to your doctor about the type of exercises, depending upon your health status.

Start slow and gradually increase your workout. Avoid sudden unaccustomed exercise and those exercises which require you to lie down on your back after the fifth month.

Always keep yourself well-hydrated. Keep a water bottle handy so that you can sip on water in between exercising.

What to avoid

Avoid high-impact exercises like jumping, hopping, bouncing, horse riding, skiing, contact sports such as football, basketball, volleyball or gymnastics and avoid overstretching.

Avoid exercises, which involve balancing, such as cycling, aerobics, ballet, especially in later pregnancy.

Don't push yourself; listen to your body. Don't reach a point where you become so breathless that you cannot speak.

Over-exercising harms the foetus

Says Dr Bijlani, "What one means by over-exercising could vary. It could mean unaccustomed exercise, inappropriate exercise, not following the rules, unsupervised exercise without the permission of the obstetrician. Over-exercising, especially rigorous sessions can cause dehydration and reduce blood sugar levels. Over-exercising without proper precautions on a regular basis could lead to smaller or premature babies in some cases."

Adds Dr Sheth, "Over-exercising or high-impact exercises can cause increased pressure in the womb leading to premature labour or bleeding. Pushing your body too hard can put your baby at risk. For instance, strenuous exercises can raise your body's temperature and this can then be harmful to the baby especially in the first trimester when your baby is in the developing stage. Also, if you are out of breath while exercising, your baby may not get enough oxygen."

How much is too much?

The topic of exercising during pregnancy was in the news recently after an international report brought to focus a case of a Los Angeles-based fitness enthusiast, who worked out and lifted weights till just before her due date. "I believe that in this case, it is not as much a matter of 'lifting weights' as it is about doing something that her body is used to. While it is fine for her, it is obvious not appropriate for other women. Besides, heavy weight-lifting, which increases pressure on the abdomen, is not appropriate for a 'weak cervix' or certain

pregnancy conditions, which may predispose to premature rupture of membranes," says Dr Bijlani.

Adds Dr Sheth, "If you have been doing intense exercise before you got pregnant, then you may be able to continue the same as long as your doctor says it is safe for you and your baby."

5 foods for your hair

Suffering from hair loss? Include these foods in your diet to maintain healthy mane.

Eggs: Rich in biotin, a B vitamin essential for hair growth and overall scalp health, eggs are great for hair. Include these protein-rich foods in your diet or you can even opt for a homemade hair mask containing egg and olive oil. Mix two egg whites with four tablespoons of olive oil. Make it into a thick paste and apply it on your hair. Leave it for 30 minutes and then rinse. Some other high-biotin foods include peanuts, almonds, wheat bran, avocado and low-fat cheese.

Spinach: A good source of folate and iron, this leafy vegetable can go a long way in inducing hair growth. Folate helps building red blood cells, which then carry oxygen to the hair follicles. Have spinach regularly as a part of your salad.

Bell peppers: The colourful red, yellow and green bell peppers are great source of vitamin C, which is necessary for hair health. Vitamin C is needed to ensure that there is enough iron in red blood cells to carry oxygen to hair follicles. It is also used to form collagen, a structural fiber required for hair follicles to stay healthy. Vitamin C deficiency can lead to dry, splitting hair that breaks easily.

Lentils: Along with tofu, soybeans, starchy beans, and black-eyed peas, lentils are a great vegetarian source of iron-rich protein, which is necessary for cell growth, including hair cells.

Sweet potatoes: Rich in vitamin A and beta-carotene, sweet potatoes are great for hair growth. Some other beta-carotene-rich foods like carrots, kale, dark green lettuces, asparagus, and pumpkin can also work wonders on your hair.

Is chocolate good for you?

There has always been some or the other debate going on about the benefits of chocolates and whether it is good for you or not. But that hasn't stopped chocolate enthusiasts in indulging in the sinful act of indulging themselves in chocolate.

But latest researches have shown that chocolate, if eaten in reasonable amounts, can be actually good for you. Chocolate helps you make emotionally better and improves the working of body's endorphins, which is also good for your heart.

That chocolate is good for stress has been no secrets, but researches have confirmed that chocolates contain certain acids that are help in relaxation of the mind, plus the sugar contains in the chocolate helps in reducing stress.

And the best thing is, chocolate doesn't make you put on weight. Blaming any one kind of food for weight gain is wrong. Until you eat more calories than you can manage to burn, you will not put on weight.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Reversal of levy rice procurement policy irks AP millers

Kakinada, November 25: The kharif paddy crop is being harvested in the two Godavari riverine districts in Andhra Pradesh, which contribute the bulk of levy rice to the FCI (Food Corporation of India), and arrivals in the market will gather momentum from the first week of December and reach a peak by mid-January.

However, this year the Union Government has reversed the procurement policy, casting a shadow over the process. Till October this year, the FCI was procuring levy rice (for public distribution at a pre-determined price) in the ratio of 75:25, with the millers milling and giving 75 per cent of the paddy they bought from the farmers to the FCI as levy and selling the rest in the open market, either in the domestic market or exporting it.

However, the ratio has now been reversed and the FCI will take only 25 per cent as levy and the millers will have to sell the rest in the open market. The millers are not ready for the sudden policy reversal and have appealed to the State Government and the Union Government to change the ratio to at least 50:50.

East Godavari Rice Millers' Association President A Ramakrishna Reddy said, "We are not questioning the policy of the Government but the decision has been taken without taking into account market realities.

"The millers in the two districts have always bought paddy from the farmers at the MSP [minimum support price] or even slightly higher. It was possible because of the assured 75 per cent levy given to the FCI.

Millers could buy paddy from farmers easily but it would not be possible now. "It is not easy for the millers to find a ready market for the 75 per cent and most do not have the holding capacity. Even big millers will be put to great hardship," he said.

He said that some of the varieties grown in the Godavari districts such as Swarna are not consumed locally but given to the FCI as levy or sold elsewhere. It was not easy for millers to find a market for these varieties in a hurry.

AP Rice Millers' Association President G Venkateswara Rao said the Government should offer some relief to millers in the implementation of the new policy and the millers should be allowed to sell to the FCI the fixed levy quota immediately and then buy the rest from the farmers at the MSP.

Otherwise, farmers would be stuck with the stocks.

Cardamom rules steady despite rising arrivals

Kochi, November 25:

Cardamom prices ruled steady last week at auctions held in Kerala and Tamil Nadu on matching demand and supply, even as the arrivals continued to rise.

Domestic demand was so strong that all the upcountry dealers were actively covering, trade sources in Kumily said.

At the auction held today in Cardamom Planters Association, Bodinayakkanur, arrivals stood at 62.8 tonnes and of these 60.2 tonnes were sold. Maximum price was Rs. 876 a kg while the auction average was Rs. 731.51.

According to the trade, since it is the peak harvesting period, good green coloured and bold capsules were available in good volume. Therefore, many were buying it for replenishing inventories, they said.

Exporters were slow but still bought an estimated 60 tonnes of capsules last week. The exportable variety was available in good volumes. But the higher prices were said to be restricting them. At the Sunday auction held by the Kerala Cardamom Processing and Marketing Company, arrivals increased to a record 135.3 tonnes from 126.2 tonnes at the previous Sunday and the entire quantity was sold out. The maximum price was Rs. 1,010 and the minimum was Rs. 572. The auction average was Rs. 757 against Rs.762.02 the previous Sunday, PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *BusinessLine*.

Total arrivals during the season so far stand at 7,389 tonnes (8,356 tonnes) while the sales were at 7,257 tonnes (8,086 tonnes) respectively. The individual auction average as on November 23 was at around Rs.760 a kg (Rs. 625).

Prices of graded varieties (Rs. /kg): 8mm bold 950-1,000; 7mm-8mm 800-830; 6mm-7mm 720-730; below 6 mm 650-660.

CCI to procure Rs. 12,000 cr worth cotton this year

Prices have fallen below minimum support price in most cotton growing States

Mumbai, November 25:

The Cotton Corporation of India is gearing up to procure cotton worth Rs. 12,000 crore this season as prices in most cotton growing States have fallen below the minimum support price announced by the government.

CCI is expected to buy 60 lakh bales (of 170 kg each) of cotton across Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Currently, it has an inventory of eight lakh bales.

The Government has fixed an MSP of Rs. 3,750 a quintal for medium staple cotton and Rs. 4,050 for long staple cotton for the 2014-15 season.

Speaking on the sidelines of 'Cotton India 2014', a trade event, BK Mishra, Chairman and Managing Director, CCI, said that funds for procurement would be sourced from a consortium of 14 banks led by Bank of Baroda.

"Till date we have bought eight lakh bales in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and a small quantity in Madhya Pradesh," he said.

The Corporation plans to offload its inventory over 15 months depending on market conditions. On the possibility of exports, Mishra said going by the current price trend and future forecasts it is unlikely that the Corporation would look at overseas market this cotton season. India's cotton output is estimated to touch 40 million bales against 37 million bales recorded last year. The yield per hectare in India is among the lowest at 550 kg while globally it averages about 900 kg.

Cotton exports from India have almost come to a standstill with the domestic prices ruling five cents above the global market. China, which imported 50 per cent of the 12 million bales shipped by India last year, is cutting down on shipments.

Dhiren N Sheth, President, Cotton Association of India, said cotton produced in India is valued at \$16.50 billion in seed form and exports account for \$3.30 billion an annum. With the cotton industry economy growing by leaps and bounds, there is an urgent need to review the Technology Mission on Cotton and assess the improvement in infrastructure to process the crop, industry sources say.

Mpeda takes aqua-ponic road to high-value seabass farming



A group of farmers engaged in seabass fish production through aquaponics system at Mpeda, Aquaculture Regional Centre.

Kochi, November 25:

Kochi-based Mpeda [Marine Products Export Development Authority] is encouraging high value seabass fish farming through aqua-ponics.

Aqua-ponics combines conventional aquaculture (raising aquatic organisms in tanks) with hydroponics (cultivating plants in water) in a symbiotic, or mutually beneficial environment.

High-value product

Mpeda's Aquaculture Regional Centre here has taken up a demonstration project in Palakkad, Kerala, for nursery rearing of seabass along with plants in an aqua-ponic system.

This variety of fish is considered a high-value species, fetching Rs. 400-500 a kg for fish weighing 700 gms and above.

M Shaji, Deputy Director of the centre, told *BusinessLine* that a small family with three cents of land could raise a good quantity of fish and vegetables such as tomatoes, spinach, etc through this method with minimal input cost.

Fish seedlings

Farmers are reluctant to culture this brackish water fish because of the lack of availability of the required size fingerlings to stock in fishponds. In a bid to tackle this, the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Aquaculture, the research wing of Mpeda, started producing seabass fish seedlings of 2-3 cm in size at its hatchery in Nagapattinam, which are grown to fingerling size (10-15 cm) in nursery units for stocking in culture ponds.

In normal aquaculture, excretions from organisms being raised can accumulate in the water causing harm to them because of the increasing toxicity. However, aqua-ponics not only produces more with less space, but also cuts down on the toxic excretions.

The irrigation and plant fertilising is carried out automatically by pumping waste water from fish ponds. Besides, it uses only 10 per cent of the water needed for traditional farming, and without inorganic fertilisers or pesticides. In aqua-ponics, fish are kept in tanks and their waste collects at the bottom. This waste is pumped through a filter as ready food for plants.

The plants are set up in grow beds which allow the roots to dangle in water absorbing nourishment from the food waste while the leafy heads absorb sunlight.

Mpeda's regional centre in Kochi has taken up the demo programme in Nanniyode Panchayat in Palakkad. It plans to take the demos to every district in the State to motivate farmers, Shaji added.

Coconut oil prices cool down on slack upcountry buying

Kochi, November 25:

Rally in coconut oil is slowly coming to a halt with prices dipping by Rs. 500/kg both in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

According to Thalath Mahmood, Director, Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA), the market was very weak with prices declining to Rs. 13,500 a quintal in Kerala (Rs. 14,400) and Rs. 12,500 in Tamil Nadu (Rs. 13,000). Copra prices also started moving southwards at Rs. 9,420 in Kerala (Rs. 9,800) where as the figure touched Rs. 8,500 (Rs. 9,200) in Tamil Nadu.

He said absence of a local demand and consumer shift to other cheaper edible oils contributed for the price fall. Major buyers like corporate consumers abstained from the market at these higher price levels.

Our Erode Correspondent adds: The price of the coconut oil has decreased sharply within five days. “Suddenly the price of the coconut oil has decreased in Kangeyam and other places in Tamil Nadu. Three days back the coconut oil was sold at Rs. 1,850/15 kg and on Tuesday it declined to Rs. 1,630-50. Even at such a lower price, there were no buyers and minimum orders were received from oil crushing mills,” said RM Palanisamy, an oil dealer. Similarly, copra farmers have stopped buying of coconut from Karnataka and Kerala.

Cotton prices may bottom out early next year

The global cotton market is currently facing an extraordinary glut with rapidly expanding inventory, slowing trade and falling prices.

The extent of inventory burden can be gauged from the expectation that ending stocks for the year could rise to an unprecedented 100

million bales plus or 23 million tonnes, twice the quantum of ending stocks in 2010-11 and roughly equivalent to a year's world consumption.

The current year's fundamentals are largely known. At play are other supportive factors such as falling crude oil prices, a stronger dollar and normalisation of US monetary policy. Multiple scenarios can be built about market conditions next year.

To start with, one can expect a supply response to prices. Disappointed with unattractive prices, growers are sure to plant less cotton next season in the US and in India.

One can reasonably expect that cotton acreage next year would shrink by at least 10 per cent and farmers may compromise on input management, which in turn can impact yields.

Although the geopolitical environment is less volatile at the moment, undercurrents of tension and unease are palpable. Any flare up will push crude higher.

Major producers are likely to take steps including production cuts to defend crude prices. Rising crude prices will have cost implications. The dollar's remarkable rally of the last few months may not continue for long.

Currency experts are predicting a slowdown in further gains for the greenback which in turn will support commodity prices.

Weather is, of course, a major uncertainty. Overall, the world faced benign weather conditions in 2013 and 2014 that supported a rebound in agricultural output. El Nino conditions that South-East Asia and South Asia faced in 2014 were mild with limited impact. A major weather event cannot be ruled out.

Last but not the least, speculative capital has stayed in the sidelines the last two years because of surplus production and poor price appreciation potential. Even a whiff of supplies tightening will bring back speculative capital that has the potential to push prices disproportionately higher.

Cotton market participants have to exercise caution. Low prices may not last long and may begin to bottom out early next year.

Tier-II cities fuelling olive oil offtake: Borges India chief

Competition 'will intensify over time'

New Delhi, November 25: The edible olive oil market has been growing at 45-50 per cent over the last five years, with cities leading the way.

What is significant, however, is that tier-II markets have been growing faster in the same period with affluent consumers exploring healthier cooking options.

"We're seeing a lot of traction in tier-II towns and cities with growth doubling year-on-year. At the same time, annual expansion in tier-I cities has varied between 20 to 30 per cent," said Rajneesh Bhasin, Managing Director, Borges India, one of the major olive oil brands in the country.

"This is happening because Borges has been able to set up infrastructure to cater to 55 cities through direct distribution. The tier-I centres are more mature and there's greater competition between the big players since they all have distributors based there," added Bhasin.

Borges, commands a 35-50 per cent share at the moment, said Bhasin, who believes competition will intensify with players such as

Del Monte and Cargill India ('Leonardo' brand) ramping up distribution and marketing to cash in on the growing demand.

"Borges did have an initial advantage of being the only global player to set up shop here. We invested heavily in category building through above-the-line campaigns and consumer interactions. Others are getting serious now, but it will result in more educated users which will help all of us gain," he told *BusinessLine*.

The company's innovations such as the 'Extra Light' (EL) olive oil sub-category, a refined variant, introduced in 2010, had helped it win a considerable consumer share.

"It had all the health benefits minus the fruity taste which we pitched as suitable for Indian cooking. Today, every brand has an EL variant, which they didn't five years back, and the refined olive oil segment is booming as a result," he added.

Small market

The domestic market has grown from 1,000 tonnes in 2003 to 12,000 tonnes in 2013, according to estimates by the Indian Olive Association.

For a market that consumes about 12 million tonnes of edible oils, olive oil's share works out to just 0.1 per cent.

The goal, Bhasin said, was to expand consumption to at least 1 per cent over the next decade.

Shrinking imports

Imports shrunk by 10 per cent in 2013-14 for the first time in three years due to higher global prices caused by a poor crop in Spain and a steep depreciation of the rupee.

India imports olive oil mostly from Spain and Italy.

“It’s a temporary blip and we see double-digit growth in the near future, say, at 25 per cent, which in five years will be about 35,000-40,000 tonnes and a Rs. 1,000 crore market. Prices are an issue and if they rise at 30-40 per cent, passing them on to consumers won’t help us attract the fence-sitters,” said Bhasin, adding that the company was set for a Rs. 100 crore turnover in 2015.

Organic Harvest eyes expansion in Tamil Nadu

To introduce products across 35 retail outlets

Coimbatore, November 25: Home grown organic personal care brand, Organic Harvest, is eyeing the Tamil Nadu market to expand its foot print.

National presence

The brand already has a strong user base in Delhi – NCR [National Capital Region], Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Bengaluru and Hyderabad. It is planning to introduce its products across 20 retail outlets in Chennai, 11 in Coimbatore and three in Madurai in the next month. Rahul Agarwal, Chief Executive Officer, Organic Harvest, said the company’s product range was currently available at 5 retail outlets in the State.

“We want to expand it to over 35 retail outlets by the end of the year”. Orange Harvest’s product range includes over 40 hair care, skincare and personal care products in addition to 16 varieties of essential oils.

The company is planning to launch a range of products for premium salons soon, he added.

Online shopping

Besides retail selling, the products can also be bought online from sites such as *e-bay.in* , *amazon.in* and *shopclues.in* .

State to make drip irrigation for sugarcane mandatory

Crop violation prompts govt to look for drastic remedies

Bengaluru, November 25: Karnataka is planning to make drip irrigation mandatory for sugarcane growers.

“We will make it mandatory from February 2015 for all sugarcane farmers to switch over to drip irrigation from traditional methods being practised at present. We plan to roll out a scheme through a tripartite agreement involving sugar mills (factories), farmers and the government,” State Minister for Water Resources MB Patil said.

The Rs. 4,500-crore scheme is to shift the entire 4.34 lakh hectares of sugarcane farms involving 5-7 lakh farmers to drip irrigation in three years. The shift to drip irrigation is fallout of crop violation.

Patil said, “The government is concerned that only 50,000 acres are officially permitted in the State. The remaining 10.4 lakh acres are crop violations. The sugar mills and farmers have to accept this new norm.”

The government is awaiting the response of the Centre to the proposal. At present it costs Rs. 40,000 per acre to switch over to drip irrigation. The State government is planning to spend Rs. 10,000 per acre. Sugar mills have to contribute Rs. 5,000. This constitutes 37.5 per cent of the project cost.

“We are trying to increase it to 50 per cent through corporate involvement by way of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The rest will be raised by way of loan to farmers, wherein sugar mills stand guarantee to the farmers. The loan amount is expected to be recovered in three cropping cycle,” said Patil.

“The State government has had a preliminary meeting with major public and private sector banks on providing loans through a sponsor or banks in the form of a soft loan,” he added.

Elucidating the benefits of switching over to drip irrigation, Patil said the scheme would increase area under sugarcane, improve yield, savings from seeds, fertiliser and labour there by providing farmers income by about 80 per cent.

Benefits

Incremental benefit to farmers is Rs. 81,746 per acre, incremental benefit to sugar mills is Rs. 25,668 per acre and incremental benefit of new system to government is Rs. 1.87 lakh per acre.

Sugar mills will also benefit through incremental sugar recovery.

The State government will be able to save 250 to 300 TMC feet of water.

Savings in power consumption will also be enormous, it was stated.