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‘TANUVAS mineral mixture’ popularised

Veterinary College and Research Institute, Tirunelveli, and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) jointly organised a special camp at Sokkaattaa Thoppu near here on Friday to popularise ‘TANUVAS mineral mixture’ among the dairy farmers.

Dean, Veterinary College and Research Institute, Tirunelveli, S. Prathaban, who presided over the function, distributed the TANUVAS mineral mixture to 50 beneficiaries under the NABARD-funded scheme.

He highlighted the objective of establishment of Veterinary College and Research Institute at Tirunelveli and appealed to the farmers to fully utilize the services of the scientists of the college.

Assistant General Manager, NABARD, Tirunelveli, K. Ramalingam, released the pamphlet on the ‘Importance of TANUVAS mineral mixture in dairy cattle rearing.’

Professor and Head, Instructional Livestock Farm Complex, VC and RI, V. Thanaseelan, Professor and Head, Department of Animal Nutrition, M. Chellapandian, Professor and Head, Department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Extension Education, C. Manivannan stressed the need for employing proven scientific methods in increasing dairy products.

Principal Investigator and Assistant Professor, Department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Extension Education, VC and RI, Tirunelveli, S. Senthilkumar and others participated.

Panel to probe into allegations

A three-member committee will be set up to probe into the allegations of adulteration in gypsum fertilizer, seeds and distribution of substandard agriculture equipment by the Agriculture Department, zilla panchayat president Umesh Kolkur has said. He said action would be taken against erring officials, if the allegations were found to be true.

Mr. Kolkur made this announcement at the zilla panchayat's 11th general body meeting here on Thursday, after some members complained that the department was supplying adulterated materials to the farmers.

Soumya Kallur, a member, alleged that gypsum fertilizer was mixed with limestone power. The bags did not bear the official seal, she said. She demanded a detailed inquiry into the matter. The committee has been asked to submit the report within a fortnight.

Meanwhile, the zilla panchayat passed a resolution to suspend the assistant director of Horticulture Department of Muddebihal taluk for failing to distribute benefits to beneficiaries.

Farmers should get proper prices for their produce: Sorake

Urban Development Minister Vinay Kumar Sorake said on Saturday that it was essential that farmers got proper remuneration for the agricultural and horticultural crops grown by them. He was speaking after inaugurating the two-day Krishi Mela organised by the Zonal Agricultural and Horticultural Research Station and other organisations here.

Mr. Sorake said that last year the government had provided a support price of Rs. 1,600 per quintal of paddy. This support price had helped many farmers.

The State government had set up a Farm Price Commission this year. The aim here was to provide proper support price for the produce of the farmers. The government had provided Rs. 83 crore for the arecanut growers whose plantations had suffered from fruit rot in the State.

Encouragement

Some farmers were losing confidence in agriculture. It was necessary to provide proper encouragement to them so that they continued in it. Though the foundation stone for the Brahmavar Sugar Factory and the Varahi Irrigation Project was laid at the same time in 1980, the former materialised, while the latter is still under construction.

The factory, which began functioning in 1985, stopped crushing sugarcane in 2004, amid mounting losses. The State government was giving priority to expediting the Varahi Irrigation Project, he said. The construction of the Left Bank Canal of Varahi Irrigation Project would be completed by the end of the year.

This would provide irrigation facilities to large tracts of agricultural lands, Mr. Sorake said. K.M. Udupa, a progressive farmer and Executive Trustee of Bharatiya Vikas Trust, expressed concern over farmers choosing cash crops over paddy, the chief agricultural crop in the district.

Some farmers were leaving their fertile agricultural lands fallow. Instead they should lease their lands to small farmers or do cooperative farming.

The government should re-start the system of Gram Sevaks, who can inform the farmers about the latest agricultural equipments and other farm information to the farmers, he said.

Quality of Vellayani lake water plummets

Study blames pollution from urban, farm sources



Pollution from urban and agricultural sources, coupled with poor management and protection measures, has contributed to a steady deterioration in the water quality of the Vellayani lake in Thiruvananthapuram, a study conducted by the National Centre for Earth Science Studies (NCESS) has revealed.

The study published in the latest issue of the Journal of Applied Geochemistry evaluated the difference in chemical composition of nutrients like nitrates and phosphates and metals like iron in the surface, bottom, and interstitial (trapped in the pore spaces of sediments) waters of the Sasthamcotta and Vellayani lakes, two perennial sources supporting the freshwater requirements of Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram cities.

The authors, Sheikha E. John, K. Maya, M.K. Vishnu Sagar and D. Padmalal, note that the Vellayani lake is undergoing a steady deterioration in water quality, compared to Sasthamcotta. The report observes that human intervention and pollution from urban and agricultural sources are well registered in the Vellayani lake. The nitrate content was found to be higher in the surface, bottom, and interstitial waters of the lake.

Fertilizer-intensive farming in the adjoining paddy fields and the exponential rise in the quantity of N-P-K fertilizer use in Thiruvananthapuram district from 1961 to 2010 are cited as reasons. A substantial portion of the unused nutrients in the catchment area would reach the lake through surface and groundwater pathways, especially during monsoon, the paper says.

However, the concentration of phosphates and iron was marginally higher in the overlying waters of the Sasthamcotta lake. The interstitial samples of the Vellayani lake again recorded higher levels of phosphate and iron.

The paper points out that the overexploitation of water from the Sasthamcotta lake, a Ramsar site since 2002, is responsible for the drying up of the peripheral areas in summer. It calls for steps to mitigate the adverse impact of unscientific human interventions on both the lake systems.

- *Study compared Vellayani with Sasthamcotta lake*
- *Nitrate content found to be higher in Vellayani*

Karnataka to take ADB loan to implement Rs. 1,377-cr. irrigation project

With Karnataka facing frequent droughts, the government is set to implement a Rs. 1,377-crore mega irrigation project. It will borrow Rs. 918 crore (\$150 million) from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the remaining amount of Rs. 459 crore (\$75 million) will be the State's share.

The loan repayment period is 30 years and the interest is 0.75 per cent. The project — Karnataka Integrated and Sustainable Water Resources Management Investment Programme — will be implemented during 2014–2021, according to officials of the Karnataka Neeravari Nigam Ltd (KNNL).

The two-phase project will help KNNL staff roll out river basin management plans. Funding under the first phase will be used to modernise the Gondi irrigation system (Shimoga district). In the second phase, Vijaynagara canals and the Tungabhadra Left Bank Canal will be improved.

The project is aimed at increasing water use efficiency, reducing the gap between the actual and potential area that can be irrigated, and promoting water efficient techniques and technologies. Currently, irrigated farmland (around 3.09 million hectares) suck up over 84 per cent of the State's total water, but agriculture only contributes 16 per cent to the State's GDP. Agriculture remains the main source of employment (55 per cent).

At present, poor infrastructure and lack of water-saving technologies in canals result in substantial waste. Major drawbacks are insufficient maintenance and lack of water control structures, management constraints (low service quality of operators), and limited promotion of water saving crops and practices.

The ADB would provide funds in two tranches with the first amount being \$31 million.

Farm income

The project report said that after improving irrigation efficiency, saved water will be used to irrigate an additional 1.6 lakh hectares. Annual farm incomes are projected to rise by as much as 50 per cent for some marginal households as a result of increased crop production, and about 1.5 million people can benefit overall.

From land to lab, for better yield

Know
IT EARLY

THE MECHANISM DEvised BY MALOTHU RAMESH CAN BE USED TO CHECK IF A PARTICULAR BANANA VARIETY CAN GIVE BETTER YIELD

“ Generally, it takes eight months for farmers to know if the plant will have the yield. If the yield is not good enough, the entire expense goes waste. Our research helps farmers know the yield of the sapling at the plantation level itself

MALOTHU RAMESH,
Assistant Professor
of Biotechnology, JNTUK



Malothu Ramesh at work at the JNTU biotechnology laboratory in Kakinada.
— PHOTO: BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

- 1 Farmers can check the outcome by sending a tissue to the biotechnology laboratory and get the result within 24 hours
- 2 Those who cultivate banana on black soil can bring down unnecessary expenses by going for the new method
- 3 Ramesh is now working on undertaking similar research on citrus plants, and it may benefit Rayalaseema farmers

JNTUK faculty member gets patent for yield prediction test. "The DST also encouraged me by conferring the 'Young Scientist' award. Here, at JNTUK, Vice-Chancellor Tulasi Ram Das wanted us to reduce the gap between lab and land, which made me think of taking up research of banana cultivation.

Bridging the gap between the laboratory and the farm, Malothu Ramesh, an Assistant Professor of Biotechnology at Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University -Kakinada (JNTUK) has devised a mechanism to check if a particular banana variety can give better yield. Farmers can check the outcome by sending a tissue to the biotechnology laboratory and get the result within 24 hours.

“It is the result of eight-month-long continuous research, and I was awarded patent right by the patent office in Chennai recently,” Mr. Ramesh, also the head of the Biotechnology department said. Born in a farm labourer family at Chilukodu in Dornakal mandal of Warangal district, Mr. Ramesh did B. Tech in Chemical Engineering from JNTUK. Later, he did M. Tech in Biotechnology under the sponsorship of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), New Delhi. Subsequently, he obtained a Ph.D from JNTUK and has been working with the University for the last eight years.

“The DST also encouraged me by conferring the ‘Young Scientist’ award. Here, at JNTUK, Vice-Chancellor Tulasi Ram Das wanted us to reduce the gap between lab and land, which made me think of taking up research of banana cultivation,” recalled Mr. Ramesh. Farmers who wish to cultivate banana on black soil can reduce unnecessary expenses by applying the new method.

“Generally, it takes eight months for farmers to know whether the plant will have the yield. In the meantime, they have to spend more than Rs. 50,000 per acre on cultivation. If the yield is not good enough, the entire expense goes waste. Our research helps farmers know the yield of the sapling at the plantation level itself,” said the 35-year-old scientist, who is now focusing on undertaking similar research on citrus plants, which is expected benefit farmers from the drought-hit Rayalaseema region.

“I must thank my wife Usha Rani, who encourages me to undertake research on farm-related issues. The support from the Vice-Chancellor and staff of JNTUK needs special mention,” Mr. Ramesh said.

Bamboo brings profit to farmers in

Many progressive farmers in Wayanad district try their luck in bamboo cultivation, with the hope of securing a sustainable income.

Low inputs compared to other crops; better return in a short span of time; no recurring expenses; and the huge demand for bamboo poles in the market are the major attractions for these farmers. Hussain of Uliayappanchalil at Padinharethara has cultivated nearly 1,000 plants on ten acres of land after clear-felling rubber trees.

Bamboo is the fastest growing plant and there is no recurring expense for irrigation, fertilization, and pesticides, Mr. Hussain says. Harvesting can start from the fifth year and an average income of Rs.1 lakh can be expected from an acre a year, for a period of 30 years, he adds.

He has cultivated three varieties of thornless bamboo on his land after consulting the scientists of the Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi.

Dearth of skilled labourers for tapping rubber and uncertainties prevailing in the sector prompted him to switch to bamboo.

Doubts over quality of anti-rabies vaccine

Farmers say cows died despite being given the shots

Farmers doubt the quality of anti-rabies vaccine administered on cattle, claiming the medicine has been found futile in making any effect in saving the animals when mauled by rabid dogs and fox.

They anchor their doubts over the recent incident when cows died despite being given three or four shots of anti-rabies vaccine.

“We would have been compelled to believe that the vaccine is effective if at least one cow was saved from death. Here, no fewer than any 30 cows in three panchayats perished due to rabies,” P. Hassan, a dairy farmer from Kottoor panchayat said.

Several other dairy farmers from the region, too, say time has come to conduct a quality test on vaccines supplied through the veterinary department. T.K. Sreedharan, president of Kottoor grama panchayats, where eight cows died recently, says they have already placed the farmers' concerns before all the responsible government bodies. "Even after the medicine was found futile, the department is administering it on live stock," he says.

The loss of faith in the medicine has led the farmers to kill the animals without waiting for any other remedial measures, say the panchayat authorities. "Several cows were killed by the farmers themselves and some others were administered high-dose pain killers to ensure painless death," they say.

Serious neglect

P. Unnikrishnan, a social activist from the region, says the Veterinary Department officials are showing serious neglect on the issue without undertaking any quality check to support the farmers in the sector.

"When we contact them for discussing the issue, they come up with a very rude response," he says. Mr. Unnikrishnan also points out that the local people are worried of the efficiency of the medicine administered on the patients who are bitten by the rabid dogs.

"In the Balussery government hospital alone, around 350 doses of anti-rabies vaccine were administered on patients since the beginning of this year, but fortunately none of them were found affected by rabies," he says.

But an official from the Veterinary Department says the department has been administering only the prescribed anti-rabies medicine which was supplied by the government after going through all the recommended quality parameters. He also refused to comment on the quality of vaccines administered so far on cattle mauled by rabid dogs.

- *Farmers prefer killing the rabies-affected animal*
- *They seek a quality test on the vaccines*

Farmers cultivating donated land seek ownership rights

Activists of the Karnataka Bhoo-Vidyadhana Shala Jaminu Geni Raithara Horata Samiti, an association of peasants engaged in the cultivation of land donated for government schools, staged a protest here on Saturday demanding the government grant ownership rights.

Addressing the protest meet, Kallur Megharaj, president of the samiti, said that more than 10,000 acres of land was donated to government schools during Bhoo-Vidadhana movement initiated by the late Kengal Hanumantaiah in 1952. The peasants cultivating such lands since then were paying annual rent to the government, he said.

The Karnataka Land Reforms Act, 1974 had called for abolition of all forms of tenancy. Though the peasants engaged in cultivation of land donated for schools were demanding ownership rights over the land, the government had not taken proper action in this regard. The officials of the Department of Public Instruction were trying to evict the peasants for absurd reasons.

The delay in conferring land ownership rights amounted to violation of human rights and it was against the spirit of Karnataka Land Reforms Act, he said.

Meanwhile, when the protesters tried to block the road, the police arrested them and released after a while. Later, the protesters submitted a memorandum to C.J. Hunagund, member of the Karnataka State Human Rights Commission.

Mr. Hunagund told the protesters that he would talk to senior officials of the departments of Revenue and Public Instruction and try to resolve the issue at the earliest. Members of the samiti N. Manjuladevi, Suvarna Nagaraj, E. Erappa and P.D. Manjappa took part in the protest.

Turbid waters

With this year's moody monsoon North India's cup of woe, as far as safe drinking water is concerned, seems ready to overflow



Handpump water is often a health hazard. PHOTO: S. HARPAL SINGH

Belated monsoon activity in Northern India relieved people slightly from the sweltering weather. Kedarnath again stared at the disastrous June of 2013 as weathermen warned people to remain alert against heavy downpour. Similar warnings were released for Himachal as well.

On the other hand, drought like conditions prevailed all over the nation, including U.P. Besides, Punjab, known as the food bowl of India and famous for its fine quality golden wheat and Basmati rice, reeled under similar conditions. Known for the five rivers (*punj aab*), Punjab now faces scarcity of clean drinking and irrigation water.

Today more than a thousand villages of Punjab get drinking water only from the hand pumps installed by the government. But inadequate monsoon over the last few years in addition to overdrawing of ground water for paddy irrigation has resulted in alarmingly low water levels. The situation is further worsened by the contamination of ground water due to the excessive use of pesticide and chemical fertilizers.

The ground water has been increasingly contaminated with toxins and is not fit for consumption. This simply means 'the land of five rivers' is turning into another Agra or Indore. Other than Punjab, the ground water level has receded to alarming levels in almost 12 states of India. This year witnessed the 12th time in the past 113 years that the monsoon was deficient as it recorded around 45 per cent less monsoon till the middle of this year. Inflation, price rise, hoarding and hunger are just by-products of the prevailing climatic conditions.

One wonders how and why all of a sudden UNICEF has become interested in Aligarh district of U.P. Recently they conducted tests on drinking water from the hand pumps. The results were just horrifying. The UNICEF report says the people of Aligarh are drinking poison instead. The water from almost 75 per cent of hand pumps installed by the government is contaminated with human faeces, Polio virus and other deadly toxins and bacteria. The report is already with the government. The area belongs to the BJP leader Kalyan Singh who after demolition of the Babri Masjid, migrated to Samajwadi Party for some time before returning to the parent party.

For the moment both the governments of Modi and Akhilesh Yadav are mum on the report. At the same time, Delhi NCR, especially Noida (in Gautam Buddha Nagar, U.P.) is experiencing roaring business in unlawful trade of bottled drinking water. The Union Minister for Water Resources, Santosh Gangwar is on record, replying in writing to Rajya Sabha Member Mohammad Adeb, saying Noida tops the nation in clandestine bottled-water business. The Central Authority for Underground Water and the Delhi Government have initiated action against it. Delhi has shut down 26 tube wells and bore wells.

But there are doubts if such cosmetic actions would last or bear any result, because the water mafia has more than enough money to purchase employees, bribe officials and fill the coffers of party funds.

Recently the UNICEF conducted tests on drinking water from the hand pumps. The report says the people of Aligarh are drinking poison instead

Experts in oceanography interact with fishermen

A team from the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation interacted with fishermen at Sambathottam near here on Saturday explaining the assistance being extended to them by the foundation.

The project co-ordinator of MSSRF Velvizhi said that with the help of Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services fishermen were informed about the speed of the wind, height of waves, possible formation of cyclone and other scientific ocean observations through SMS.

It was also providing information for locating potential zone in the sea for a big catch. Fishermen were given handset to exchange communication in case of an emergency.

Tata consultancy has come forward to extend a helping hand to fishermen who developed a software, known as 'Meenava Nanban,' a handset, to be used while venturing into the sea to know climatic change, presence of coral reefs, broken parts of ships, she said.

Fishermen could contact 9381442311, in case of emergency, for any assistance. About a dozen experts in Oceanography from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka interacted with the fishermen.

INDIAN CITIES

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

Tomorrow's Forecast

Monday, Oct 13

Max

34°

Min

26°



Cloudy

Sunrise: 05:58

Sunset: 05:51

Barometer: 1006

Tuesday, Oct 14

Max

34°

Min

26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday
Oct 15



33° | 26°

Cloudy

Thursday
Oct 16



35° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Friday
Oct 17



35° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Saturday
Oct 18



35° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday
Oct 19

34° | 27°

Partly Cloudy

DECCAN Chronicle

Arthritis setting in among youth



Bone facts: n The body grows the equivalent of a new skeleton every seven years. By the age of 30, women lose 0.5 to 1 per cent bone density per year. After menopause, bone loss will increase to 2 to 3 per cent. Women will lose a higher percentage of bone mass over a lifetime than men. The appropriate amount of calcium and vitamin D a person needs varies depending on age and sex. Adults need 1,000 to 1,200mg of calcium a day and 600 international units (IU) of vitamin D. People with vitamin D3 deficiency absorb only half the amount of calcium as compared to those who have an adequate supply.

Hyderabad: Setting in of arthritis at a younger age is becoming a major cause for concern, said state doctors on World Arthritis Day, which was observed on October 12. The week from October 12 to October 20 is observed as World Bone and Joint Week.

Increasing incidences of trauma, sports injuries, wrong exercises and improper diet are adversely affecting bones. Wearing down of cartilages in persons aged between 25 and 35 years is a cause of

concern and orthopaedics feel that there is a strong need to protect bones from wrongful wear and tear.

Dr Raghuveer Reddy, a shoulder and knee specialist, said, “Trauma and sports injury cases are leaving a lot of young people injured. And arthritis is setting in too early for them. Wear and tear, if attended to, will help them heal and stay fit.”

The major causes of early arthritis are obesity, improper diet, remaining immobile due to long hours of sitting and wrong exercises like jogging on uneven surfaces or running on the treadmill on high speeds.

Dr Mithin Aachi, joint replacement and arthroscopy surgeon at Apollo Hospital said, “The most common problem in young patients is obesity. A marginal increase in weight overloads the joints up to four times and leads to faster wear and tear.

The best way to take care of your joints, especially your knees, is to avoid putting on weight.” Sedentary lifestyle is another reason, said experts as such a lifestyle negates the natural elasticity of joints and makes them prone to early failure.

Dr Akhil Dadi, senior orthopaedic surgeon, said, “ A moderate exercise regime is must to maintain good health of the body’s joints. The two major problems of knee degeneration continue to be aging and rheumatoid arthritis; 10 per cent of the population suffers from this problem.

The remaining are lifestyle-oriented. Simple modifications in diet, maintaining proper posture while sitting and walking and balancing your weight will go a long way in maintaining healthy knees.”

Food rich in proteins, simple carbohydrates, fresh fruits, vegetables, lots of fluids and antioxidants help to maintain good bone health.

Apart from this, regular exercise like swimming, jogging and strength training, where the core abdomen muscles are strengthened, help the knees balance the body's weight properly. Joints are healthy when the body's weight is properly balanced.

Alternative therapies

Alternate therapies like hydrotherapy and yoga give relief to joints and mobilise movement which has been stiffened. Hydrotherapy (water-based exercises) helps those suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. Small and regular movements under water give relief from pain and help improve mobility.

Dr Aishwarya B, therapist and ayurveda practitioner, said, "Simply immersing the body or affected parts in lukewarm water will give relief from pain and mobilise the joints."

There is some marked improvement in pain management and mobility through homeopathy. Dr N Srinivas Rao said, "Patients are told that damage already done to the cartilage or bones can't be rectified. But his treatment can help prevent further damage."

Major loss to crops

Vizianagaram: The agriculture sector received a severe setback with the heavy rains and gales in Vizianagaram district. The authorities are also unable to assess the loss till the situation comes under control.

Thousands of acres of paddy crop is submerged in the water under Thotapally, Vengalarayasagar and Peddagedda projects. All the rivers are flowing with more than their capacity. Horticultural crops like papaya, banana and vegetable crops were totally damaged in Salur, S.kota, Kurupam, Komarada mandals.

The towns of Vizianagarm and Parvathipuram submerged in four feet depth. Low level areas like Rajiv Nagar Colony, Thotapalem and Vuda Colony are still submerged.

All the public are sitting in their homes and trying to know the situation of cyclone over phones. But all the communication systems like Internet and telephones went mum. All the towns and villages remained under darkness as the power supply has been stopped as a precautionary measure.

The public are spending time with candles. Even the invertors had been discharged due to usage for a long time. Sugarcane in thousands of acres in Jami, L.Kota, Seethanagaram, Bobbili was totally damaged. Hoardings and telephone, electric poles were damaged.

Food safety to go online soon



As per the Food Safety and Standards Act, all food vendors, roadside eateries, hotels and restaurants, hostels, and all business establishments selling food products should avail of the food safety licence. (Photo: DC/File)

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The new online facility for licensing and registration of food business operators across the State, will be officially launched on Thursday, on the occasion of World Food Day. With the introduction of the facility, the Food Safety Department is planning to bring around one lakh food business operators in the State under the Food Safety and Standards Act.

Commissioner of Food Safety T.V. Anupama said with the introduction of the facility, food business operators would easily be able to avail of the mandatory licence and registration.

Health Minister V.S. Sivakumar will launch the facility at a function to be held at Kanakakunnu Palace here. “As per our rough estimate, there are around one lakh food business operators in the State, but around 60,000 are in the unorganized sector. Our aim is to cover the 40,000 which comes in the organized sector,” said the official.

As per the Food Safety and Standards Act, all food vendors, roadside eateries, hotels and restaurants, hostels, and all business establishments selling food products should avail of the food safety licence.

On the occasion of World Food Day, the Commissionerate of Food Safety is organising a seminar on ‘Healthy Delivering of Safe Food from Farm to Fork’.

Experts and scientists will present papers at the seminar. Experts from the Agriculture University, Veterinary University, Centre for Water Resources Development and Management and National Institute of Technology will present papers.

Business Standard

Tamil Nadu govt asks Centre to continue subsidy for fertiliser plants for Urea

In a letter to the Prime Minister, Tamil Nadu chief minister O Panneerselvam said the closure of these plants would adversely affect the livelihood of hundreds of workers

The [Tamil Nadu](#) government has urged the Centre to continue providing subsidy for naphtha-based fertiliser plants till gas connectivity is established to these units.

The development comes at a time when [Madras Fertilizer Ltd](#)(MFL) and [Southern Petrochemicals Industries Corporation](#)(Spic) have shut operations at their [urea plants](#) as the Centre had decided to stop subsidies.

Both the plants have a combined capacity of one million tonnes per annum. Spic plant is located at Tuticorin while MFIL has its plant at Manali, near here.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, Tamil Nadu chief minister O Panneerselvam said the closure of these plants would adversely affect the livelihood of hundreds of workers.

The chief minister said while the two plants had made necessary investments for gas conversion, the non-availability of gas and associated infrastructure makes it difficult for them to use gas as the feedstock.

He also said there would be an annual revenue loss of Rs 220 crore in the form of VAT, which is being paid by Spic and MFL. The cost differential between gas and naphtha would be negligible if oil marketing companies supply gas at the rate of export parity price instead of levying the import parity prices coupled with their margin.

He further said the move to import one million tonnes of urea additionally this year would not reduce subsidies.

In order to overcome any shortfall, the department of fertilisers had allotted mostly imported urea to Tamil Nadu for this season.

On the impact of the closure these plants, industry experts said it would not have an immediate impact considering that most of the state is facing drought conditions and 70 per cent of agriculture activities were over and kharif season was also over by September.

Besides, if the demand goes up, urea could always be imported, which is cheaper than that from the domestic market, they said. Industry sources said, while the maximum retail price for the farmer was around Rs 5,500 per tonne, the subsidy was around Rs 3,800 per tonne. They added that the cost of imported urea was \$250-350 (around Rs 20,000) a tonne.

In 2013-14, of the around Rs 2,700 crore revenues for MFL, government's subsidy was Rs 2,300 crore, noted company officials of the urea units. Earlier, the government had issued a direction to convert the existing facility to gas from naphtha before June 30, 2014, failing which the subsidy may be withdrawn. The deadline was extended up to September 30, 2014

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Food security: India toughens stand at WTO

New Delhi, October 12:

India has decided to strike a harder bargain on food security at the World Trade Organisation than it did in July. It wants restrictive conditions attached to the use of the peace clause dropped.

New Delhi, which had wanted the 'peace clause' offering protection against retaliatory action for breaching farm subsidy caps extended indefinitely in return for support to the trade facilitation pact, is now seeking more.

"We want the peace clause to be worded in a way that we can actually use it," a Government official told *BusinessLine*.

In its present form, the peace clause requires mandatory submission of various documents related to a country's procurement programme before it can be used. Not only the Centre, but States too have to submit data for five years giving details on the food security programme and all related numbers. "This may be impossible to provide, as many States do not maintain all this data," the official said.

Information has to to be supplied on agencies running the programmes, crops covered, provisions relating to purchase of stock, determination of administered price, accumulation of stock, release of stock, determination of release prices, and the eligibility to receive procured stocks.

Moreover, the peace clause notes that protection against legal action for breaching subsidy limits will be given only if the stocks procured under such programmes do not distort trade or adversely affect the food security of other members.

“If a developing country has to prove to the WTO that the procurement subsidies are non-trade distorting, then why do we need the peace clause at all? We might as well fight cases at the WTO,” the official added.

In July, India had blocked an agreement on trade facilitation — a pact to smoothen flow of goods across by upgrading the Customs infrastructure — as it wanted its concerns on food security addressed first. It was decided at the Bali Ministerial meet of the WTO last December that a protocol on trade facilitation would be signed by July 31 2014.

Countries such as the US and Australia have now accused India of breaching the trust.

But New Delhi is unwilling to relent and wants an amendment to the Agriculture Agreement of the WTO so that price support for public procurement and food aid in developing countries — to benefit low-income farmers or those who lack resources — is considered a ‘Green Box’, or non-trade distorting, item and allowed without limits. Alternatively, it wants a change in the reference price year for calculating the subsidies.

At the Bali WTO Ministerial, India was offered the ‘peace clause’ so that no action is taken against its subsidies till a solution to its problem of subsidy calculation is found. However, New Delhi later realised that the offer was only for four years, till the next Ministerial meeting in 2017.

“Although the US has now approached us in Geneva (WTO headquarters) to tell us that they are willing to extend the peace clause indefinitely, our Ambassador to the WTO has told them that we are not ready to accept that yet,” the official said.

India was offered the peace clause by which no action would be taken against its subsidies till a solution to its problem of subsidy calculation was found.

Call for policy shift in agriculture sector

Kochi, October 12:

Ramesh Chand, Deputy Director General (Agricultural Education), ICAR, has emphasised the need for shifting the focus of agriculture policy from price to development.

Delivering the keynote address at a seminar on ‘Agriculture Market – Setting New Development Agenda,’ he said the gap between farm harvest prices and those paid by end-users has been widening, benefitting middlemen rather than farmers. This has been an important reason for the slow growth or stagnation in farm income.

He pointed out that the time has come to look at agriculture differently, considering the changes in agri-food demand and production. However, agricultural markets are not developing and moving forward to keep pace with the changes in demand, production and commercialisation of activities.

“We should not merely take produce from producers to end-users but should promote the welfare of producers and consumers. Today, agriculture has become a highly commercial activity requiring reasonable price realisation for producers to sustain themselves,” he said.

He said important factors affecting the market included changes in the marketing trends, the role of the Centre and State governments in fixing the minimum support price, and opportunities in agri-market in the changed economic scenario.

The seminar was jointly organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) and Centre for Public Policy Research (CPPR) supported by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard).

N Ramesh, General Manager, Nabard, pointed out that the Centre is implementing various schemes through Nabard to encourage entrepreneurships in agriculture.

The session also highlighted modern concepts in agriculture and the success stories of entrepreneurs and corporates who have excelled in agriculture sector. It also analysed the challenges ahead to motivate more people to venture into agriculture as an alternative source of investment.

Single law, exit policy can boost MSME growth: CII-KPMG

CII-KPMG study suggests zero tax for the first five years

New Delhi, October 12:

A single comprehensive MSME law, including labour law, Factories Act, Land Acquisition Act, 25 per cent land allocation in all industrial corridors, and an exit policy (on the lines of Chapter 11 in the US) are among the initiatives suggested by the industry to create 'new wave' Indian medium, small and micro enterprises (MSMEs).

“There is an opportunity to consider a gradual transition plan for MSMEs over the next decade to be in line with global MSME in developing nations,” says a report by CII-KPMG released in the two-day CII Global MSME Summit here.

Action agenda

Outlining an 'action agenda' for the Government to reach the goals of Make in India, Skilling India and Digital India, the report also suggested a technology upgradation fund for the plastic processing sector and separate consideration for agriculture and food processing business, especially start-ups.

The sector, which sees lack of credit availability, market access and delayed payments as key challenges, will also do well with certain financial incentives, says the report.

It, therefore, suggested direct and indirect tax benefits by way of zero tax for the first five years (micro enterprises), 10 per cent slab for 10 years (small enterprises) and 15 per cent tax slab for 15 years (medium enterprises).

An effective policy to deal with delayed payments to MSMEs by large companies on a timely basis and a national procurement policy for public and private enterprises for specified areas is also required, says the CII-KPMG report. The report reiterated a long-standing demand by industry — a change in the definition of MSME.

“We must appreciate that each sector has its own unique capital requirement and standard revenue and growth rates. “Hence, in today’s complex business environment, turnover and number of employees are becoming more relevant matrices for consideration of coverage,” it said.

Nabard launches dairy development project in Madurai

MADURAI, OCTOBER 12:

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) launched the 'Integrated Dairy Development Project in Sindhupatti Watershed under its Umbrella Programme on Natural resources Management (UPNRM) in Madurai District, recently.

UPNRM is a special window operated by Nabard with micro finance and grant components aimed at giving fillip to eco-friendly income generation activities, especially in Nabard's Watershed project areas.

R Amalorpavanathan, Deputy Managing Director, Nabard, launching the programme at Udayanpatti village in Chellampatti Block in the district, said that in a scenario where monsoon is playing truant, farmers need to look to multiple sources of income with a basket of diversified activities.

He exhorted the farmers to scale up to the next level with the help of integrated dairy-related activities envisaged under one umbrella and bestow attention on the precious water bodies without waiting for the government machinery to take up conservation works.

He also referred to some of the projects already under implementation in Madurai under UPNRM such as Sustainable livelihood for Broom stick makers in Kallikudi block, improving the livelihood of Thatch makers in Sekkipatti and Eco friendly agriculture in Sirumalai Hills.

The integrated dairy development project will be implemented in 7 Watershed villages covering 156 beneficiaries through a Project Facilitating Agency, Association for Rural Development, Madurai, through whom Nabard shall finance ₹ 82 lakh.