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THE MENDU

Rice cultivation made easy with 'aerobic system'

The new system is less labour-intensive, requires less input and less seed

Agricultural scientists in the district have introduced and popularised 'aerobic system of rice cultivation' wherein a farmer can directly sow the seed like any other crop. The system is less labour-intensive, needs less input and less seed.

At a demonstration programme held at Reddypuram on Sunday, a local farmer's crop which was grown using the 'aerobic system' was shown to about 300 farmers who had arrived here from different parts of the district.

Explaining the method, District Agriculture Technology and Transfer Centre (DATT) director R. Uma Reddy said farmers need not raise nursery and wait to get maximum yield. Also, they need not plough the land. "Using the seed drill pulled either by tractor or bulls, farmers can easily sow the seed. Due to good spacing, paddy will not develop any disease and yield will be more compared to the traditional method of cultivation," he said.

A farmer, Biksham, from Govindaraopet mandal said he too adopted the method and came to share his experience. "As said by Mr. Uma Reddy, the method requires only 15 kg seed per acre as against 30 kg in the traditional method," he said. Usually, farmers raise nursery and transplant it after ploughing and watering fields. They also need labourers to transplant paddy which is expensive.

Another farmer Venkat Reddy from Kunur village in Zafargad mandal said he did not have any problem with the aerobic system of cultivation, but wanted power weeder to curb the growth of weed in the field.

Director (Extension) Raji Reddy urged the farmers to not opt for paddy crop in Rabi season, but go for green gram, jowar, maize and other crops. "If you opt for paddy, then adopt this method to save input cost and water," he said addressing the farmers.

Mr. Uma Reddy said the new method was very useful to the farmers.

Improve agricultural productivity, urges C. Rangarajan

Stressing the need to focus on agricultural growth, C. Rangarajan, former governor of Reserve Bank of India said, "In the days to come, India will have to ensure that its agriculture sector is doing well since even small shortfalls disrupt economic growth."

In order to improve agriculture, the country needs to improve productivity along with the marketing for agricultural produce, he said, delivering a lecture on 'The Indian Economy – Past, Present and Future' at the Annual Chennai Lecture Series organised by the Rotary Club of Chennai Carnatic on Sunday.

Another area that needed attention was the power sector, he added. "It is not only Tamil Nadu that has a power crunch. There are a number of States in a similar situation."

In contrast to China, India's electricity generation was growing at a slow rate. "China adds in one year what India adds to power generation in five years," he pointed out. The third major factor that the country needs to focus on was good governance. "In addition to good policies, good governance is also needed to ensure that the country experiences economic growth."

"Only if India grows at 8 to 9 per cent per year will the per capita GDP increase from \$1,600 to \$8,000 by the year 2025. It is only when we reach that level that we will rise from a low-income country to a mid-income country," he said.

RNAi-based pest management on anvil

'The technology can tackle pesticide resistance in beetles and bed bugs, and it will be made available to farmers in developed countries in the next three years'

"Though farmers have immensely benefited from using pesticides, insects with resistance to chemicals have remained a major bottleneck. In such a scenario, using genes with potential for pest control is an ideal option," said Dr. Subba Reddy Palli, Professor of Entomology at the University of Kentucky.

Interacting with scientists from Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS), Tirupati, here recently, Dr. Reddy maintained that Ribonucleic Acid Interference-based pest management technology, wherein the double-stranded RNA is coupled with nano-scale material, had proved effective in the delivery of genesilencing method to control pests. "This pest management technology can also tackle pesticide resistance in beetles and bed bugs, and it will be made available to farmers in developed countries in the next three years," he added.

RARS Associate Director of Research T. Giridhara Krishna termed the development as the need of the hour, as majority of farmers in developing countries used huge quantity of pesticides. "Indiscriminate use of pesticides has laced the produce with traces of chemicals.

Apart from integrated pest management (IPM) technologies, adapting such practices will improve the quality of crops and provide chemical-free products to people," he said.

RARS Associate Dean N.P. Eswar Reddy, scientists T. Muralikrishna, P.K.N.V. Prasad, A Ramakrishna Rao, P. Ramana and Vasanthi were present.

Farmers Empowerment Corporation to plug loopholes: AP officials

Has the increase in short-term crop loans between 2003 and 2012 led to a proportionate increase in agricultural productivity in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana?

Apparently not, contend officials, pointing out that despite crop loans running into thousands of crores under priority sector lending to farmers, there was hardly any capital infusion into the farm sector in real terms.

For instance, the short-term crop loans in 2003-04 that accounted for 15 per cent of GSDP in the combined State, rose to 36 per cent in 2011-12 and of this, the share of 'agricultural gold loans' had climbed up significantly. Yet, there was no proportionate increase in agricultural productivity.

Statistics released by the RBI itself and available in the public domain revealed that long-term loans declined from 37 per cent to 22 per cent between 2003-04 to 2011-12 while that of short-term crop loans increased from 63 per cent to 78 per cent, thanks to gold loans. The huge rise in the quantum of agricultural gold loans apparently was the factor for the RBI withdrawing gold loans under priority sector lending for 2014-15.

This anomaly was discussed during the recent meeting between RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan and the Andhra Pradesh Government. The sensitive subject of how crop loans extended to farmers each year were becoming mere book adjustments, also apparently figured at the meeting.

The announcements by Andhra Pradesh and Telangana governments on debt relief and crop loan waiver schemes made it imperative for officials to take a hard look at several lacunae that crept into crop loaning, sources said.

While inclusion of gold loans for crop purposes helped the banks to meet their priority sector lending target, it actually did not lead to capitalisation of the farm sector. Several such gold loans allegedly went into speculative investments in real estate and non-agricultural activities, they maintained.

The trend adversely hit needy and genuine farmers as the banks stopped lending after reaching the target. As a result, the poor had no option but to borrow from private money-lenders and ended up in huge debt traps.

AP officials explained to the RBI Governor that the State had opted for Farmers Empowerment Corporation to implement debt redemption scheme for farmers in phases as a solution to plug the loopholes in the system and ensure that crop loans reached genuine farmers by linking to Aadhaar card and land holding

Japan's 'sacred' rice farms rotting from inside



High techRice farmer Shuichi Yokota checking growth condition with a smartphone at his rice field in Ryugasaki.Photo: AFP

Shuichi Yokota may be the future of Japan's struggling rice industry.

The 38-year-old is about half the age of most growers and he relies on cutting-edge technology to cultivate vast paddy fields that eclipse the bulk of the country's rice plots.

And Yokota doesn't fear opening up to foreign competition – taboo in a place where rice is a sacred cow that is protected by subsidies and massive tariffs.

His farm in Ryugasaki, a community north of Tokyo, has ballooned more than five-fold in 15 years into an operation spanning 112 hectares (275 acres) -- almost 30 times bigger than the tiny commercial rice fields commonly found in the area.

"This is simply the consequence of retiring farmers asking me to cultivate their rice paddies for them," Yokota said.

While many of Japan's farmers get by with centuries-old farming methods, Yokota and his colleagues share workload information and data such as temperature and water levels -- monitored by sensors installed in each paddy -- on their smartphones.

Yokota may be an accidental giant among rice growers, but some are betting that people like him are the best hope for fixing an inefficient system, with wider calls for a shake up of Japan's cosseted agricultural sector. Prices have tumbled as Japan's rice consumption has halved in 50 years, and there are fears the sector is rotting from the inside despite -- or some say, because of -- decades-old protectionism.

Rice reverence

Whether it is a bed for a piece of raw fish, an essential component of almost every meal, or the key ingredient in making sake, rice is Japan's unparallelled staple food and enjoys a revered status. Hundreds of years ago it was a currency, a symbol of wealth and power, and a ritual offering that still forms a key part of the native Shinto religion, as well as tradition-bound Sumo wrestling.

"Nothing gets done here without rice," said Sachiko Goto, head of the Tokyo Sushi Academy, a chef-training school. That reverence has translated into strong protections for tiny plots tended by families who inherited land through generations -- resulting in a hefty premium in stores.

Tokyo has for decades stabilised prices by controlling supply and penalising over-production to protect farmers – a key voter base – from volatile world markets, This policy, known as "gentan" and referring to small-scale cultivation, effectively made rice farming a part-time job left to older relatives while younger family members worked in other sectors.

But, as with much of the greying nation, many farmers are now retiring - the average is about 66 years old – with few interested in replacing them. That has left some 400,000 hectares of farmland unused across the country, an area almost twice the size of Tokyo. "What needs to be done is encourage older farmers to retire and then gather small pieces of land into one big lot for someone capable like Yokota," said Masayoshi Honma, an economics professor at Tokyo University.AFP

Costs of ignoring hunger

One of the disappointments in the post-reform period in India has been the slow progress in the reduction of malnutrition, especially with reference to the underweight among children. In fact, the rate of change in the percentage of underweight children has been negligible in the period 1998-99 to 2005-06; the only two points of data in recent years on undernutrition from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-II and -III. In this phase, the proportion of underweight children in the age group 0-3 years declined only marginally from 47 per cent to 46 per cent.

The reduction in malnutrition among children has been very slow when compared to rapid economic growth in the post-reform period. International studies show that the rate of decline in child undernutrition tends to be around half the rate of growth of per capita GDP. As Angus Deaton and Jean Drèze have said in an article on nutrition, in India's case, per capita GDP of about 4.2 per cent during 1990 and 2005 was expected to reduce malnutrition by about 2.1 per cent per annum or 27 per cent during this period. Compared to this, the decline in malnutrition among children was only 10 per cent.

Economic growth and nutrition

However, the 2014 Global Hunger Index report of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) shows considerable improvement in India's hunger index and in the percentage of underweight children — from 24.2 in 2005 to 17.8 in 2014 — an increase of 6.4 points. Also, out of 76 countries, India's rank improved by around 8 points, from 63 to 55. While India is no longer in the category of "alarming" cases, its hunger status is still classified in the category of "serious". This improvement is attributable mainly to a reduction in the percentage of underweight children, from 43.5 per cent in 2005-06 (NFHS-III) to 30.7 per cent in 2013-14 (a

survey conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development with support from UNICEF). This shows a remarkable reduction of 13 percentage points in eight years during 2005-06 to 2013-14. However, the latest survey is a source of encouragement regarding the reduction in undernutrition. One has to wait for a year more for the findings of NFHS-IV.

IFPRI attributes the reduction report undernutrition to the expansion and improvement of several programmes that have targeted a mix of the direct and indirect causes of undernutrition. These and policies are: programmes an expansion Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS); the launch of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM); Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA); reforms in several States in the Public Distribution System (PDS) and targeted efforts at the State level like the Maharashtra nutrition mission. In addition, improvements in sanitation and drinking water might have also helped in enhancing nutrition.

The report should have also discussed the impact of economic growth on nutrition. It is known that India focusses on a twin-track policy of economic growth and direct universal and targeted programmes for a reduction in poverty and an improvement in social indicators. India had a high economic growth of 9 per cent per annum during 2005-06 to 2008-09, which helped in an increase in tax-GDP ratio and an allocation of higher expenditure to the social sector. Similarly, India also had a higher agriculture growth rate of 4 per cent per annum during the 11th Plan period (2007-12). This too must have helped in raising nutrition. At this point, one may ask a valid question: we had six per cent growth during the period 1992-93 to 2005-06 but why

was there no significant decline in malnutrition? It may be noted that there was a decline in malnutrition during 1992-93 to 1998-99 but there was stagnation in nutrition status during 1998-99 to 2005-06. During this phase as well, economic growth and agricultural growth were relatively low.

Goal of 'Zero Hunger'

As the IFPRI report suggests, the expansion and increase in the efficiency of the direct programmes have helped in reducing undernutrition during 2005-06 to 2013-14. However, it is fair to say that economic growth that includes high agricultural growth and direct programmes has been a responsible factor in the recent finding of a significant reduction in malnutrition. Post-2005, the development agenda at the global level has, among other things, been focussing on the elimination of hunger and malnutrition. The UN Secretary General recently announced meeting the challenge of 'Zero Hunger' — to be achieved by 2025. One of the elements in this challenge is to ensure zero stunted children in less than two years. If this is to be achieved at the global level, then progress in India is important.

Inspite of significant progress in the last eight years, a lot of work has to be done in order to reduce malnutrition in India. This also poses challenges at the global level because figures released by UNICEF show that in 2011, 55 million out of 102 million underweight children under five in the world — or 54 per cent of the global total — live in India. Similarly, 62 million out of 166 million stunted children of the world are from India (37 per cent).

In other words, one out of two underweight children and two out of five stunted children are in India. It is true that with recent progress, the absolute numbers of children with malnutrition will come down.

It is known that a reduction in malnutrition needs the strategy. application of multi-pronged The а determinants of malnutrition are agriculture, health, women's empowerment including maternal and child care practices, ensuring sanitation. enabling and drinkina activating social water. protection and nutrition education programmes apart economic growth, as mentioned earlier.

The evidence so far shows that malnutrition can be reduced by enhancing women's health, promoting gender equality and ensuring the empowerment of women including female education. Gender equality and the well-being of children go hand in hand. The rights of women and children are mutually reinforcing. Gender empowerment is relatively better in Africa. Although poverty and other numbers are higher in South Asia, Africa had a lesser percentage of children under nutrition than South Asia because of better women's status.

Agriculture and nutrition

Recently, there has been a lot of emphasis on the linkages between agriculture and nutrition, which can be improved by three entry points. The first of these is in ensuring inclusiveness and equity in agriculture that can be achieved by increasing agricultural productivity in rainfed and resource-poor areas. This in turn will help raise the productivity and income of small and marginal farmers. The bulk of the rural poor, as well as small and marginal farmers, live in such resource-poor areas, where undernutrition is largely prevalent.

The second is in policies to diversify diet in order to improve micronutrients and the third is in having agricultural policies to empower women. In all this, it must not be forgotten that climate change poses a major challenge to agriculture.

This year is the International Year of Family Farming; it needs to be noted that Dr. M.S. Swaminathan has often mentioned the importance of family farming in offering an effective and an economic solution to ensuring that has to nutritious person access Biofortication having is one way of access micronutrients. According to Prof. Swaminathan, we should also help promote naturally biofortified crops such as sweet potato, moringa (drumsticks), bread fruit and various berries which are rich in micronutrients such as iron, zinc, vitamin A and vitamin C.

The importance of sanitation and safe drinking water in reducing malnutrition is well known. Therefore, ensuring improvements in sanitation is urgently needed as it is a big predictor of malnutrition.

It is heartening to see that social protection programmes have helped in improving nutrition. Further, the strengthening of social protection programmes like ICDS, PDS, mid-day meal schemes and MGNREGA are needed to achieve nutrition security. Although delivery systems have improved in programmes like PDS, the leakages are still high.

A recent survey of women and child welfare does not give us the numbers at the State level. This must be noted as figures for 2005-06 show that the proportion of children who are underweight is high in States such as Madhya Pradesh (60.3 per cent), Jharkhand (59.2 per cent), Bihar (59 per cent), Chhattisgarh (52 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (47.3 per cent).

Therefore, there is a need to focus on these States. The consequences of undernutrition are well known. Stunting and undernutrition are the main contributing factors for child mortality, disability and disease. There are also the harmful effects of an inadequate intake of specific micronutrients essential for brain development and the nervous system. For example, iron deficiency is known to affect a child's performance in school. In short, "hidden hunger" has to be reduced.

In conclusion, it has to be recognised that ignoring hunger and malnutrition will have significant costs to any country's development. Nutrition improvement has both intrinsic and instrumental value. Some estimates indicate that there is a 2 to 3 per cent GDP loss due to low productivity. The returns to investments in food and quite high. Every dollar are spent interventions to reduce stunting is estimated to generate about \$20-\$30 in economic returns. The government should understand the intrinsic value to people and instrumental value of nutrition in terms of GDP gain and returns to investment. Countries like China. Brazil and Vietnam have been successful in reducing malnutrition. Evidence of recent success shows that India is also capable of reducing undernutrition. Therefore, some urgency needs to be shown by the government and others concerned in order to eliminate hunger and malnutrition particularly among children and women.

(S. Mahendra Dev is the director and vice-chancellor of the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research in Mumbai.) The reduction in malnutrition among children has been very slow when compared to rapid economic growth in the post-reform period.

Ignoring hunger and malnutrition will have significant costs to any country's development. Nutrition improvement has both intrinsic and instrumental value

Ageing Japan struggles with rice farming

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"This is simply the consequence of retiring farmers asking me to cultivate their rice paddies for them," he said.

"I am one of very few full-time farmers in this area, and the people who were retiring didn't have anyone in the family to continue growing rice. But they don't want to sell the land."

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Unused farmland

This policy, known as "gentan" and referring to small-scale cultivation, effectively made rice farming a part-time job left to older relatives while younger family members worked in other sectors.

But, as with much of the greying nation, many farmers are now retiring — the average is about 66 years old — with few interested in replacing them. That has left some 400,000 hectares of farmland unused across the country, an area almost twice the size of Tokyo.

"What needs to be done is encourage older farmers to retire and then gather small pieces of land into one big lot for someone capable like Yokota," said Masayoshi Honma, an economics professor at Tokyo University. — AFP

Officials asked to gear up for rainy season

Thanjavur Collectorate opens toll-free emergency number

With more rains being forecast for the days ahead in the region, Thanjavur District Collector N. Subbaiyan has directed the officials to be prepared to meet any emergent situation in the wake of continued rains.

He reminded the officials to act as per the Disaster Management Guide prepared and distributed to them already.

Public could pass on rain related information to the administration through the special cell established at the Collectorate via toll-free number 1077 while the fishermen could access the administration through toll-free number 1093 for passing on information on coastal area situation round-the-clock, the Collector has said.

Mr. Subbaiyan has instructed the Department of Health and Public Welfare as the Department of Animal Husbandry to keep adequate stocks of vital medicines in case of emergency or outbreak of communicable diseases

He directed the Department of Fisheries to pass on ground information to the fisher folk and ensure their safety.

The district recorded 490 mm rainfall in the 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Sunday with Neivasal Thenpathy registering 52.40 mm followed by Kurungulam where 50 mm was registered.

Vallam recorded 45.5, even as Ayyampettai 38, Lower Anicut 31, Kumbakonam 28, Vettikkadu 22.8, Madukkur 22.4, Tiruvidaimarudur 21.8, Manjalaru 20.8, Tiruvaiyaru 20.2, Adhirampattinam 19.7, Thanjavur 17.5 and Peravurani registered 14 mm rainfall during the period.

PUDUKOTTAI: Parts of the district experienced moderate to sharp showers on Sunday. For the past 24 hours ended at 8 a.m. on Sunday, Meemisal recorded a maximum of 34.6 mm of rain, followed by Udayalipatti 32, Viralimalai 29.8, Tirumayam and Kattumavadi 24 each, Iluppur and Arimalam 20 each, Adhnakottai and Keeranur 10 mm each.

TIRUVARUR: The district administration has asked the officials to act fast in preventing rain-induced floods and respond to the distress calls wherever required.

The sky remained cloudy and overcast conditions prevailed all through the day that was peppered with intermittent sharp showers in most places in the two districts.

Tiruvarur Collector M. Mathivanan inspected some areas prone to floods in Tiruvarur, Nannilam, Muthupettai, and Tiruthuraipoondi areas of the district to take stock of the situation and to direct the field staff in ensuring safety of life and property. Mr. Mathivanan inspected the draining of rain-induced flood water through Vettar at Kanganlanchery near here and directed the Public Works Department officials to prevent damage to agricultural fields. He wanted the officials to ensure safety of the river banks.

The Collector then visited Nannilam bus stand and directed the town panchayat officials to quickly drain the stagnant rainwater in the bus stand area so that people could move about freely. He visited Kadakakudi, Adhambar, and Achuthamangalam areas and urged the officials to prevent rainwater from flooding farm lands in those regions.

Heavy rain

Tiruvarur Revenue Divisional Officer Muthu Meenakshi accompanied the Collector. Elsewhere, it rained heavily across Tiruvarur district overnight that registered 271.30 mm rainfall in the 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Sunday.

The chief amounts of rainfall (in mm) recorded in major centres in the district during the corresponding period included Tiruvarur town 45.6, Pandavaiyaru Head 41, Tiruthuraipoondi 40.60, Nannilam 34.2, Kodavasl 24.8, Muthupettai 24, Mannargudi 23, Valangaiman 19.10, and Nidamangalam 19 mm.

The tail end area in Nagapattinam district of delta region witnessed heavy rain for the fifth day on Sunday. Karaikal Collector E.Vallavan has declared holiday on Monday for government and private schools due to heavy rains which affected the normal life.

The farmers in Karaikal are happy as they could go ahead with the transplantation work in the last-mile area as now they are in need of water to save the transplanted crops and sprouted seeds.

The rainfall recorded in various centres in Nagapattinam district is as follows: The rainfall recorded in Mayiladuthurai was 44 mm, 89.70 mm in Nagapattinam, 92 mm in Sirkali, 26.40 mm in Vedarnayam, 20 mm in Tharangampadi, 68.60 mm in Thalaignayar, 51 mm each in Manalmedu and Kollidam.

The average rainfall recorded in the district is 65.03 mm.

Official machinery in all the districts told to be ready for crisis management

The tail end area in Nagapattinam district witnessed heavy rain

Farming operations gather momentum in Perambalur

Rain expected to perk up the sector

Agricultural operations have picked up in Perambalur and Ariyalur districts with widespread rain because of northeast monsoon. "This rain is useful to crops raised in the two districts," said agriculture department officials.

V. Alagirisamy, Joint Director of Agriculture, Perambalur district, said that cotton and maize cultivation was over in 70 per cent of the area. Cotton had been raised on 36,000 hectares of land. The crop was expected on an additional 1,000 hectares of land. Maize had been raised on 21,000 hectares of land.

Another 20,000 hectares would be covered. Onion has been raised on 7,000 hectares. Sowing of onion bulbs was on in full swing. "The rain is most beneficial to crops," he said.

A.R. Gunasekaran, Joint Director of Agriculture, Ariyalur district, said that maize had been raised on 9,700 hectares of land, cotton on 11,500 hectares of land, sugarcane on 9,000 hectares of land, and paddy on 7,100 hectares of land. Rainfall recorded in Ariyalur district till 8 a.m. on Sunday: Jayamkondam recorded the maximum of 27 mm of rain followed by Senthurai which recorded 24 mm, Thirumanur 7.2 mm, and Ariyalur 7 mm.

Rainfall recorded in Perambalur district: Perambalur 12 mm, Padalur 12 mm, Veppanthattai and Thazhuthalai six mm each, and Chettikulam two mm, and Veppanthattai six mm.

Raja Chidambaram, State Secretary, Thamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam, said that present rain was beneficial to rain-fed crops such as cotton and maize. If it intensifies, it will help recharge of groundwater.

Farmers have raised vegetables such as pumpkin and ash gourd. The rain will help vegetables also.

The wet spell is expected to help sowing of onion bulbs which is in full swing

Farmers have raised vegetables such as pumpkin and ash gourd

Monsoon brings copious flow into tanks

Ramnad gets average rainfall of 40.39 mm, Sivaganga 31 mm in 24 hours

Intermittent rain – heavy at nights after the onset of Northeast monsoon – has brought copious inflow into farm ponds and ooranies (waterbodies) in Ramanathapuram district and tanks in Sivaganga district, even as farm activities gained momentum.

After the monsoon set in on Saturday, rain lashed several parts of Ramanathapuram, and in the 24 hours ending at 8 a.m. on Sunday, the district received an average rainfall of 40.39 mm, bringing cheers to the farmers and good inflows into about 2,500 farm ponds and ooranies, which took care of irrigation and drinking needs of a large number of people.

Against the normal rainfall of 182 mm for October, the district had already received 178 mm of rainfall since October 1, official sources said. As the soil remained saturated after a couple of spells of rain during the first week of October, the intermittent rains since Thursday helped farm ponds and waterbodies fill up fast.

Most of the farm ponds, dug by District Watershed Development Agency (DWDA) and Agriculture Engineering Department, across the district had received copious inflow, the sources said.

Farmers had taken up paddy cultivation in about 1.3 lakh hectares of rainfed areas and broadcast of seeds had already been completed in 95,000 hectares, they added. Besides, farmers had also geared up for cultivation of millets and pulses.

Sivaganga

Sivaganga district received 141 mm of rainfall since October 1. In the 24 hours till 8 a.m. on Sunday, the district received an average rainfall of 31 mm, the highest in the month, with Ilayankudi recording 59 mm, followed by Tirupattur and Manamadurai with 40 mm, official sources said.

The rains filled tanks in Kallal, Sakkottai, Tirupattur and Singampunari.

Farmers had taken up paddy cultivation in about 80,000 hectares with half of them in rainfed areas. District Agriculture Department had encouraged farmers in rainfed areas to go for short-term paddy crops so that they could harvest by the end of January next, official sources said.

In the irrigated areas, the department was popularising the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) technique for water conservation and yield maximisation, the sources said.

Besides, farmers had taken up red gram cultivation in 600 hectares and millets, especially maize, in 1,200 hectares, they added.

'Agriculture policies are pro-corporate'

State working president of Jana Sangram Parishat Raghavendra Kushtagi said the agricultural policies of the country has always been "pro-capitalist". He was addressing a media conference at the Reporters' Guild here on Friday. "All the policies of the governments, including agricultural ones, have always been designed to serve big capitalists. The very purpose of the Green Revolution was to make the Indian farming community, customers of big agro-companies," he said.

He said that the anti-farmer agriculture policies of the successive governments, both at the Centre and State, over the last few decades had driven the farmers out of the agriculture sector in a big way. "In most of the cases, the farmers have given up agriculture and shifted to other sectors to earn a livelihood. The survivors of the anti-farmer policies are, in one way or the other, being pushed to the turn to the noose," he said. Over 4.37 million hectares of agricultural land has, he added, been transformed into non-agricultural land, in the last one decade.

Seminar

Mr. Kushtagi announced that a seminar on agroforestry would be held at Pandit Siddarama Jambaladinni Auditorium in Raichur on Monday. It is a step towards popularising the agricultural system of agroforestry, a people-centric and natural method of farming, among our farmers, he said.

Deregulation of diesel prices will affect agriculture: Kharge

Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha M. Mallikarjun Kharge has said the deregulation of the prices of diesel and the steep increase in the prices of natural gas, would have a deterrent impact on agriculture production, the public transport system and fuel inflationary tendencies.

Talking to presspersons in Gulbarga on Sunday, Mr. Kharge said the deregulation of diesel prices would have a long-term impact on the farming community, which depended on diesel for irrigating their crops. The government should have retained the control diesel prices, he said. This decision would only help the private players in the petroleum industry, he said.

He said that 24 per cent increase in the prices of natural gas would have a disastrous impact on the farming community as the prices of the fertilisers would shoot up. The area under agriculture production in the country was coming down drastically and the decision of the BJP government to increase the prices of natural gas would hasten this process. "This would have a serious impact on agriculture production," he said.

Thazhakara farming a success

Panchayat takes uncultivated land on lease for farming



Women preparing the ground for farming at Thazhakara grama panchayat in Mavelikara taluk.

Any visitor to Thazhakara grama panchayat in Mavelikara taluk is bound to be welcomed by vast expanses of paddy fields. The local body has scripted a success story by reviving paddy cultivation and vegetable farming on a land that remained barren for around three decades.

The panchayat achieved the turnaround by identifying uncultivated land and convincing private landowners to provide such properties on lease for farming. 'Krishikoottams' (or farming collectives) were constituted by roping in unemployed women. Having no prior farming experience, these women were imparted training by the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA). Each collective, consisting of not more than 20 women, were allotted plots that ranged from one acre to two hectares (approximately five acres). The initial investment for commencing farming had been arranged through interest-free loans obtained from two service cooperative banks in the region on submission of project reports, said agricultural officer Abhilash Karimulackal of the Thazhakara Krishi Bhavan.

He said that every worker had been registered under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), thereby ensuring daily wages for their efforts.

The number of 'Krishikoottams' had gone up to 33 over the period of three years.

More importantly, the acreage under cultivation had grown from around 50 hectares to 677.30 hectares within a few years. The average production from the paddy fields was about 5.5 tonnes per hectare, Mr. Karimulackal said. In addition, 162 hectares were brought under vegetable cultivation led by two other farming groups. According to Ratnamma, a local resident who has been involved in vegetable cultivation, the mode of farming is entirely organic.

Several varieties of vegetables, including bitter gourd, snake gourd, cowpea, amaranth, 'nendran' plantain, colacacia, dioscorea, elephant yam, tapioca, and other tuber crops are grown in the plantations. The farmers generally received handsome returns by selling their produce at an outlet of the Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Kerala (VFPCK) and other local markets at Thazhakara, she said.

Thazkakara grama panchayat president Koshy M. Koshy pointed out that the success of the initiative could be attributed to the convergence of various schemes that had limited scope when implemented separately. "Besides the MGNREGS, the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), State Horticulture Mission and the People's Plan of the panchayat have all been utilised for the benefit of the project," he said.

The project has motivated neighbouring panchayats, including Bharanikavu, Palamel, Chennithala, Thekk ekara, and Chunakkara.

Focus on water conservation technologies

A State-level student workshop on "Applications of Water Resources in Civil Engineering" (AWRCE-2014) was conducted by the Department of Civil Engineering, Vasavi College of Engineering.

The workshop focused on the issues related to depleting water resources, conservation of water and the need for the importance of water resources by society and it highlighted the need to bring awareness on importance of water resources among the Civil Engineering students.

The speakers from esteemed organisations like Walamtari, AP Genco and NRSC shared their views through presentations. The sequence of operations and computations in distribution of water to irrigation from dams to agricultural fields was interactively presented by G. Surender of WALAMTARI. There were sessions on hydropower projects and applications of remote sensing technologies in Water Resource projects presented by G. Adiseshu of AP Genco, and M. Shanker of NRSC, ISRO.

A poster presentation contest was organised.

Delayed rains land Nalgonda's cotton farmers in grave crisis

Cotton farmers in the district are heading towards a crisis as deficient and untimely rains have hit the crop's production. The largest cultivated crop in the district, farmers have cultivated cotton in about 3 lakh hectares, as against the 3.35 lakh hectares last year due to a delayed monsoon. Farmers were forced to sow the seeds twice, and on some occasions thrice, as they did not sprout due to lack of rains, ultimately increasing the farmer's investment on the crop.

While the plant would normally grow to a height of three to five feet

in height, this year the cotton crop grew only one to two feet high. And while there would be a yield of 50-100 flowers from each plant, but the flowering was restricted to just below 20 this year. The cotton crop began withering last week as many parts of the district witnessed no rains for the last 20 days.

A cotton farmer, P. Saidulu of Rammannapet, told *The Hindu* that they had each harvested about 10 quintals of cotton last year, but this year the figure was a quintal so far, which was not even sufficient to pay labourer's wages.

Adding to the woes of farmers, the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has no purchasing centres in Nalgonda, while the farmer is being looted by middle-men offering meagre prices for the produce. As against an MSP of over Rs.4,000 a quintal, the farmer is being offered just below Rs.3,500. "We had all waited for few showers under the influence of Cyclone Hud-hud, but we were left disappointed as it veered towards Chhattisgarh," said B. Salaiah of Kattangur, another famer.

The Agriculture Department was expecting 3.50 lakh metric tonnes this year, but have had to revise their estimations as cotton production was set to go down in a big way. Only four of 59 mandals have received normal rainfall during the season.

Against a normal rainfall of 642 mm as on Sunday, the district has witnessed just 333 mm of rain, causing 48.1 per cent deficiency. Farmers and their representative organisations have appealed to government to declare all 59 mandals as drought-hit and announce input subsidies to save the distressed farmers. They are now hoping for some rains that can save the crop and help them recover at least their investment.

Farmers have appealed to the govt. to declare all 59 mandals growing cotton, the largest cultivated crop in the district, as drought-hit

Alappuzha gears up for punja season

Paddy cultivation has been planned in over 28,918 hectares during the *punja* season across the district. Cultivation will be undertaken in 633 paddy polders and there will be a requirement for 2,892 metric tonnes of seeds for the purpose.

Convening a meeting to assess the preparations for the upcoming season, District Collector N. Padmakumar said the demand for seeds has been met by procuring the required quantity from the Kerala State Seed Development Authority, National Seed Corporation and the Karnataka State Seed Corporation. Along with the popular paddy varieties of Uma and Jyothi, efforts will be made to promote the relatively new varieties such as Pratyasha.

During the meeting, leaders of various 'padasekhara samithis' (paddy clusters) raised complaints about the monopoly of middlemen over the provision of obtaining services of combine harvesters provided by the government. Although agreements were signed by the office-bearers of clusters and the Kerala Agro Industries Corporation Ltd. (KAIC), middlemen were alleged to be instrumental in allotting the harvesters and deciding the availability of the machinery on the basis of the payment they received.

Responding to the complaints, Mr. Padmakumar said directives to counter such practices had been issued to KAIC in the past. Strict measures will be initiated to tackle the problem during the current season, he said.

The Collector ordered the officials of the Irrigation Department and the respective local bodies to ensure the construction of bunds to prevent saline water intrusion, wherever necessary, at the earliest. He was provided assurance that tenders have been invited for the purpose and that such works would be completed by December 15.

Principal Agricultural Officer R. Geethamani informed the meeting that Rs. 11,500 per hectare from the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana scheme and Rs. 30,000 per hectare from the 13{+t}{+h}Finance Commission had been sanctioned for promoting cultivation in barren lands.

The meeting also noted that there have been agricultural losses worth Rs. 45.46 crore in the district during the southwest monsoon. The district-level crisis management committee has approved the recommendation of works worth Rs. 191.05 lakh in 94 paddy polders that have suffered bund breaches. The report will soon be submitted to the State-level committee.

'Wet weather to continue till tomorrow'

Wet weather is expected to continue at least till Tuesday in the city, which has been experiencing rains since Saturday.

The city recorded 6.4 mm rainfall on Saturday and a few spells of rain on Sunday.

C. Govindaraju, who is in charge of the Weather Monitoring Cell at the Organic Farm Research Centre of University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) at Nagenahalli, attributed the rains to the arrival of the north-east monsoon. "Wet weather with drizzle and moderate rain will continue at least till Tuesday," he told *The Hindu*.

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Centre in Bangalore said that the south-west monsoon had withdrawn from the remaining parts of Karnataka on October 18. "Simultaneously, the north-east monsoon has commenced over Tamil Nadu, Kerala and adjoining areas of south Andhra Pradesh and south-interior Karnataka," the Meteorological Centre said.

The Met Centre has also predicted heavy rain over Chamarajanagar, Mysore, Mandya and Kodagu districts of south-interior Karnataka, besides Dakshina Kannada in coastal Karnataka. The Met Centre has predicted 17 mm of rainfall in Mysore on Monday and 15 mm I on Tuesday.

The rain is expected to help revive standing crops in rain-fed areas of six out of the seven taluks in the district, which had been damaged by a dry spell during June and July this year. The prediction of rain, however, is likely to delay road repair work by the Mysore City Corporation.

Rain lashes Mandya

M.T. Shiva Kumar reports from Mandya:

The downpour that lashed the city on Sunday flooded a stretch of the Bangalore-Mysore highway causing inconvenience to motorists.

Rainwater accumulated on either side of the unscientifically-laid speed bumps between B.G. Dasegowda circle and KSRTC bus stand for a long time, causing traffic jams. Rainfall lashed for two hours, starting from 2 p.m., flooding the highway.

The flooding on the highway was attributed to the City Municipal Corporation (CMC) not clearing silt gathered in the drain, and speed bumps laid near Mahaveer theatre being removed.

"We do not have a mechanism to clear water from roads," N.M. Shashikumar, CMC Commissioner, told *The Hindu*.

Admitting that water clogging on the highway was a constant problem due to speed bumps, Mr. Shashikumar said residents were against removing speed bumps from the highway.

He promised to inspect the place to find a solution.

Rain continues in southern districts

Kattar river catchment receives 10.2 cm rainfall; Flow up in Tirparappu falls

Rain lashed Kanyakumari district for the third day on Sunday. The continuous downpour has affected festival shopping in the main bazaars of Nagercoil and other towns in the district.

However, people got respite in the morning, as the rain stopped for a few hours.

Increase in water flow in Kattar river resulted in swelling of Tirparappu falls, as the catchment areas of the river recorded 10.2 cm rainfall till 8.30 a.m. on Sunday.

Hilly areas recorded heavy rainfall, as a result of which Kuzhithuraiyaru, Paraliar and Pazhayar rivers flooded. The check dams built on these rivers were overflowing.

The inflow into Pechiparai dam increased to 1,019 cusecs on Saturday night, and the water level rose to 34.4 feet. The level in Perunchani dam was 64.10 feet.

The water level in various reservoirs such as Poigai, Chitrar I, Chitrar II and Mambalathuraiaru dam also increased considerably. Incessant rain affected work in rubber plantations and brick kilns.

The rainfall recorded at various places in the district is (in mm): Pechiparai – 42.2, Perunchani – 41.2, Chitrar I – 43.6, Chitrar II – 49.2, Poigai – 28.7, Mambalathuraiyar – 32, Nagercoil – 32.2, Boothapandi – 28.7, Kannimar – 25.6, Mayiladi – 75.2, Kottaram – 878.4, Eraniel – 31, Anaikidangu – 34, Colachel – 38.4, Kurunthancode – 71.6, Adayamadai – 54.2, Kozhiporvilai – 72, Mullanginavilai – 37 and Puthanthurai – 40.8 mm.

Tuticorin

Rain continued to lash various parts of Tuticorin district since Saturday evening. Joint Director of Agriculture N.K. Dhakshinamoorthy told *The Hindu* that prospects were bright for the farmers following the onset of Northeast monsoon. "The average amount of rainfall in October is 150.7 mm and so far 129 mm has been recorded." he said.

Anticipating rains, about 50 per cent sowing of various crops had already been done. Mostly pulses such as black gram and green gram and millets were sown by farmers of rainfed blocks.

P. Murugesan, general secretary, Southern Dryland Farmers' Association, said there was a considerable decrease in maize cultivation now since it required late rains.

Tirunelveli

Tirunelveli district also received a good amount of rainfall. It rained heavily for over three hours in several parts of Tirunelveli. Joint Director of Agriculture, Tirunelveli, C. Chandrasekaran, said premonsoon sowing was done 20 days ago by rainfed crop farmers in the district.

Schools to remain closed

Schools in Tirunelveli district will remain closed on Monday and Tuesday following heavy rains. Collector M. Karunakaran on Sunday ordered the closure.

State to switch fully to organic farming by 2016: Mohanan

Kochi to host global agricultural meet next month

Kerala anticipates a full switch over to organic agriculture by 2016 and micro-level campaigns, starting from panchayat level, are being launched to achieve the target, said Minister for Agriculture K. P. Mohanan here on Sunday.

He was speaking at a press conference where he announced a global agricultural meet, which will be inaugurated here by Union Minister for Agriculture Radha Mohan Singh on November 6. The global agricultural meet will be held along with BIOFACH India 2014.

Mr. Mohanan expressed confidence that target of a fully organic farming State was achievable with grassroots effort. Panchayats and Assembly constituencies which achieve the goals of total organic farming by August next year would be rewarded.

The Minister claimed that the State's agriculture sector had put up a remarkable show over the past few years, breaking away from negative to more than five per cent annual growth during the last financial year.

A senior official of the Department of Agriculture said that crops like banana and pineapple had helped the State achieve the growth rate. He said that there had been 25 to 30 per cent increase in acreage under pineapple and banana. Vegetables was another area where the State had achieved considerable growth rate. Mr. Mohanan claimed that Kerala was now producing approximately 50 per cent of its vegetable requirements.

Tea turns bitter for Wayanad farmers



Farmers say the produce is not remunerative as the production cost has doubled in recent times. The photo shows workers at a tea plantation at Chulliyode, Wayanad.

A sharp decline in the price of green tea leaves, shortage of workers, and dearth of tea processing factories in the public sector have hit small-scale tea growers in Wayanad district.

The spot price of green leaves on Saturday was Rs.8 a kg against Rs.13 a kg during the corresponding period last year.

"We are forced to sell our produce at a throw away price to agents from Tamil Nadu owing to the dearth in tea processing factories here," K. Hassan, a small-scale farmer at Karadippara, said.

The prevailing price in the market for the produce was not remunerative as the production cost had doubled now, he said. The shortage of workers and the increasing inputs were also a cause for concern.

A farmer should get at least Rs.18 a kg to survive, Mr. Hassan said.

According to available data with the Wayanad Small-Scale Tea Growers Association (WSSTGA), as many as 12,000 small tea growers depend on the tea industry for their livelihood.

Many of them have a land holding of 50 cents to five acres.

Close to 1,10,000 kg of green tea leaves were produced everyday, but the seven tea factories functioning in the private sector in the district could procure only 22,000 kg a day, K.C. Krishanadas, secretary, WSSTGA, said.

The remaining quantity was being procured by the agents from Nilgiri in Tamil Nadu at a low price, he said.

The average production from an acre is 500 kg a month and a farmer would get an income of Rs.4,000 from it. But, he had to spend Rs.3,500 as plucking charge and around Rs.1,500 for fertilizer and pesticides, Mr. Krishnadas said.

Saving handloom industry from ill-effects of Bt cotton

Tula reviving chain of traditional cotton production, distribution

For several years now, organic farmers' associations in Tamil

Nadu have been worried that Bt cotton had systematically

destroyed traditional cotton seeds and farming practices.

Dependence on chemicals for manure, bleaching and dyeing and power loom for weaving, along with the introduction of Bt cotton, has not only destroyed the livelihoods of an entire segment of rural population but has also taken a toll on the quality of the crop, they said.

Their concerns were answered, to some extent, by Tula, a non-profit organisation, which has started reviving not only the traditional cotton crop but also the entire chain of production and distribution

Tula was launched in Tamil Nadu, but success eluded it, says its founder V.R. Ananthoo. "We tried to grow cotton in Madurai. But, as cotton is grown only in a few areas in the Madurai and Perambalur belt, and farmers moved to maize as the weather was not cooperative. We moved to Karnataka three years ago. We are trying to revive not just the fabric but the livelihood in the cotton chain, including that of weavers, spinners and tailors," he says.

Radhika Ram Mohan, who is associated with the project, says around 35 artisans at Melkote in Karnataka are involved in the work. Organic cotton is grown by farmers in northern Karnataka, and the produce is brought to Melkote in Mandya district for processing, spinning and weaving. As spinning and weaving is done manually, craftsmen earn something. But, more importantly, it helps to maintain a tradition, she says.

Tula has also tied up with tribal groups at Sittlingi in Dharmapuri to create Lambadi embroidery. The products will also be available at Organic Farmers' Market at Kasturba Nagar, Adyar. For further details, contact Ms. Mohan on 9884409566.

KVASU plans speedy implementation of evet connect

The Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU) has devised a plan for speedy implementation of e-vet connect, a project for extending 24x7 veterinary services to farmers.

A workshop held at the university recently discussed formulation of an effective delivery model.

The workshop also discussed management of veterinary hospitals,

diagnostic centres, artificial insemination cell and advisory call centre; disease information system; knowledge management; and fodder research management.

Those who took part in the workshop included Registrar Joseph Mathew; Director of Academics and Research K. Devadas; Director Entrepreneurship T. P. Sethumadhavan; and Dean College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Mannuthy Sisiliamma George, C. Devanand and John Martin.

Officials with Keltron also took part.



Coimbatore, India

Todays temperature

24°C

H28°

L21°

°F

Today's weather forecast

6 AM21°C

9 AM 25°C

12 PM28°C

3 PM28°C

6 PM27°C

9 PM24°C

12 AM22°C

Max

28°C

Min

21°C

Cloudy Moderate Rain

Min Temp: 21° C

Wind speed 20 KMPH

Wind direction NE

Wind direction 63

Rainfall quantity 30mm

Rainfall probabilities 80%

Max RH: 94

Min RH: 69

Checcanicle

Farmers ended life for various reasons: Agriculture Minister

NIZAMABAD: Minister for agriculture Pocharam Srinivas said that farmers were committing suicide for various reasons and not just over crop loss. It is not just loss incurred due to drought-conditions that is forcing farmers take the extreme step, he said. The minister promised that the government would take all necessary steps to help the kin of the farmers who had ended their life.

Speaking to newsmen here on Saturday, the minister said the TRS government was taking all measures for the welfare of the farming community. The government had released funds for crop loan waiver scheme only to rescue farmers who had suffered crop loss, he said, adding that the remaining amount would be released soon.

Earlier, he inaugurated a tribal welfare hostel building at Namdevwada in Nizamabad which was constructed at a cost of Rs 1 crore released under tribal-sub-plan. Zilla parishad chairman Dafedar Raju, Urban MLA B. Ganesh Gupta, Mayor Akula Sujatha and other leaders accompanied the minister.

Rain cheers farmers

Thanjavur: Normal life was thrown out of gear in different parts of the Cauvery delta districts following heavy, intermittent rain which lashed various parts of the region on Sunday. Farmers were happy but Deepavali sales in important towns in the delta districts were affected as people did not venture out.

Four persons, including two women and a 4-year-old girl, were injured and hospitalised when a house and a wall, at two different places, collapsed in the rain near Kumbakonam on Sunday early morning.

Ganesan (33), a mason of Karuppur, near Pandanallur, was sleeping in his thatched roof house with his family when the wall caved in at 3.30 am. In the mishap, Ganesan, his wife Kavitha and their 4-year-old daughter Suseendra were injured. They were admitted to the government hospital in Kumbakonam. Later, they were shifted to the Thanjavur medical college hospital for further treatment. Similarly, Lalitha (50) of Pavanancheri, near Kumbakonam, was injured when the wall of her neighbour's house collapsed in the early hours of Sunday. She was admitted to the government hospital in Kumbakonam.

Thanjavur district received 490.20 mm rainfall in the last 24 hours ended at 8.30 am on Sunday. The major amount of rainfall recorded in major centres in Thanjavur district included Kurungulam-50 mm, Vallam-45 mm, Ayyampettai-38, Kumbakonam-28 mm and Thanjavur-17.50 mm.With the northeast monsoon gaining vigour, the district administration has directed officials of various government departments and agencies to be alert to flood prevention and relief activities if required, collector, Dr N. Subbaiyan said.

A flood control room has been set up at the collectorate in Thanjavur. People can contact the control room by dialling toll free No. 1077 and inform damage caused by the rain in their areas. The control room will function round-the-clock, said the collector.In Thanjavur district, the sky remained overcast and dark clouds hung over the towns on Sunday even as intermittent showers sent people scurrying for cover.

Several parts of Nagapattinam district received heavy rain for the fourth consecutive day on Sunday. Tirupoondi recorded the maximum rainfall of 142 mm during the 24-hour period ended at 8.30 am on Sunday.