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THE HINDU

Cotton fetches good price in auction



Cotton auction at Konganapuram Co-operative Society in Salem. The day-long public auction of cotton at the Konganapuram Cooperative Marketing Society on Saturday registered a sales turnover of Rs. 11.12 lakh.

The cotton farmers of Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Tiruvannamalai and Erode had brought more than 1,000 bags of cotton for the regular auction at the society, which is a branch of Tiruchengode Agricultural Producers Cooperative Marketing Society.

A large number of traders participated in the auction and a 100 kg bag of Bt cotton variety fetched a price ranging between Rs. 3,869 and Rs. 4,510

Continuous rain in Erode brings joy to farmers as dry wells fill up

Cultivators in the district hope for bountiful harvests



Plentiful supply: Dry wells have filled up after continuous rain in Erode district, over the past few days.- PHOTO: M.GOVARTHAN

Several thousands of wells that were hitherto dry are now brimming, thanks to the continuous rain in Erode district.

The impact of the emphasis of the State Government for the last few years on recharging ground water with run-off water from the households has now gained visibility.

Alongside recharging ground water, the brimming wells owned by farmers in the otherwise dry parts of the district including Chennimalai and Perundurai has, more importantly, revived confidence of the agricultural community in profitability in crop cultivation.

After a stretch of four to five years, the district is poised to receive rainfall in excess of the usual average hovering around 600 m.m. This time around, the average could go up to 800 m.m., Agriculture Department officials say.

If not for this year's rain, the agricultural activities that have suffered a blow due to factors such as difficulties in securing loans and dwindling number of farm workers would have got mired in deeper crisis.

Now that, there is labour requirement on the farms, at least the existing workers could be retained, according to a farmer of Kavindapadi.

On its part, the Agriculture Department facilitated the digging of 1,000 farm ponds across the district to make the most of the rain water for recharge of aquifers.

A section of farmers in the district are desirous of Tamil Nadu taking the lead in adopting the technology followed in countries such as Israel and United States in pumping water from rainfall into the ground.

According to official sources, rainwater harvesting systems were installed in several hundreds of government and private buildings in the district over the years.

Considering that Erode district receives 600 m.m. rainfall per annum, a small family of four to five members could entirely depend on harvested rainwater to meet their entire requirements. The calculation is worked out based on the potential for 1,000 cubic feet of concrete flooring to divert 56,000 litres of rainwater into the ground through underground pipes, a senior Agriculture Department official explained.

Special Correspondent in Salem adds:

The downpour experienced by Salem city and its suburbs on Saturday evening has caused serious damage to the roads. Waterlogging has been reported in the pits dug for the execution of underground drainage works and this has been posing danger to the vehicle users, particularly two-wheeler riders.

Stagnation of rainwater in the area behind Kumarasapatti AR ground, Narayana Nagar and Kichipalayam is posing hardship to the people.

The residents of Narayana Nagar and Kurinji Nagar, protesting against the poor condition of the roads in their localities and urging for steps for draining the rain water, attempted to stage agitation on Sunday morning. Kichipalayam police pacified them, following which they dispersed peacefully.

Hike in procurement price long overdue, say milk producers

The increase in milk procurement rate, though on expected lines, was long overdue, according to farmers and cattle-rearers in Erode that ranks among the top few districts in milk production.

The current procurement rate of Rs. 24 per litre for toned milk was insufficient to cover the feed costs, according to the cattle-rearers. The cost of concentrate feed has gone up substantially over the last few years, but the proportional rise in procurement rate was much lower.

Milk producers in the district say they could now heave a sigh of relief over the Government's decision to hike the procurement rate with effect from November 1. The hike was on expected lines, and is necessary for sustenance of the dairy sector, according to a

representative of a milk producers union in Erode district where most of the farmers supply milk to Aavin.

There are over 700 milk producers' unions in Erode district that accounts for 3.69 lakh heads of cattle. According to a TNAU study, dairy development activities have grown at a faster rate in Western region of the State, deriving the utility of the Central Government's schemes such as Intensive Dairy Development Programme, Strengthening of Infrastructure for Quality and Clean Milk Production, and assistance to cooperatives and National Agriculture Development Programme.

In Erode district, private operators have also been playing a key role. A good number of milk producers get drawn to them since they offer Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 more per litre when compared to Aavin. From November, the private producers have been pushed into a predicament of recalibrating their procurement strategy.

Erode district accounts for a daily milk production of nearly 2.5 lakh litres of which 72,000 litres are consumed in Erode and Tirupur districts.

Every day, 1.17 lakh litres of milk is sent to Chennai for distribution, and the rest is utilised for making value-added products such as ghee, butter and milk powder.

Organic farming to be taken up extensively



The Agriculture Department plans to bring over 100 hectares of land in each of the 26 hoblis in Mysore district under organic farming.— file photo

The Agriculture Department has decided to lay emphasis on organic farming by encouraging farmers to take it up extensively. Sources in the department said that over 100 hectares of land in each of the 26 hoblis in the district would be brought under organic farming. The department has selected one village in each hobli and released Rs. 3.75 lakh as the first instalment.

Non-government organisations have been assigned the task of creating awareness among farmers on the importance of organic farming. Besides this, the department also plans to conduct awareness campaigns among farmers.

Over 2500 farmers will grow crops such as paddy, ragi, cereals and pulses under the initiative. They will be provided with manure, seeds, vermicompost and insecticides at subsidised rates. Besides this, they will be given financial assistance to set up compost units and bio-digester units that is needed to produce organic manure. Agriculture officers will inspect the fields and guide farmers.

The sources said extensive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides were not only affecting the quality of soil and water, but also harming those who consumed the products. Concerns over diminishing fertility of soil owing to constant use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides have been expressed by agricultural scientists and progressive farmers in the past, and this prompted the department to promote organic farming. Farmers in many places have been directed to use silt removed from tanks to improve fertility of the soil, the sources said.

KUFOS to host food and agricultural fest

Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies will organise the sixth edition of India International Food and Agri-Aqua Expo from October 30, said a press release here. The expo is being jointly organised by Foundation for Organic Agriculture and Rural Development and KUFOS in association with NABARD, Departments of Fisheries and Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, Marine Products Export Development Authority, Coconut Development Board, Directorate of Cashew and Arecanut, and Kerala Agricultural University.

Ensure quality of Neera is maintained, KAU tells govt

Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) has urged the government to ensure quality control in production of Neera. KAU Vice Chancellor P. Rajendran said Neera productions units had proliferated in the State, and most of them were using untested technologies,

He said that a technology developed by the KAU to arrest fermentation of coconut inflorescence sap had helped the State government form a Neera policy and encouraged farmers to reap more benefits from their farms.

KAU technology

The KAU handed over the technology to Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan on International Coconut Day, September 2, 2012. The government directed the KAU to propose a project for developing viable industrial models for Neera production. Based on the KAU's proposal, the government sanctioned three pilot plants at Neeleswaram, Thrissur and Thiruvananthapuram for initiating training in Neera production and bringing out a quality product. The Neelewarem plant started operation first. The Chief Minister released the KAU brand of Neera, Keramrutham, the first Neera-based product in the State, on November 6, 2013.

“Since then, Neera production units have proliferated in the State. Even private firms with no expertise claimed to have developed Neera production technology. Unless these technologies and products are tested and certified, it might affect the quality of Neera production in the State,” he said.

He stated that the KAU was evolving protocols for testing various Neera products. KAU Registrar P.V. Balachandran said Keramrutham was an excellent beverage having mild sweetness. It is enriched with minerals such as Potassium, Calcium, Iron, Phosphorous, Sodium, healthy protein and Vitamin C.

The State government has decided to rope in the services of public-sector Kerala State Coconut Development Corporation for production and marketing of Neera, he added.

Licences of fertilizer shops and pesticide shops suspended

The licences of 16 private fertilizer shops and 15 private pesticide shops in Vellore district were suspended following a surprise inspection carried out in seven blocks on Saturday.

According to a release from R. Jayasundar, Joint Director of Agriculture, the inspection was carried out under the leadership of G. Vijayakumar, Deputy Director of Agriculture (central schemes) by seven teams comprising 23 officers. The licences of were cancelled under the Fertilizer Control Order 1985 and the Pesticides Act 1968 following detection of violation of rules such as failure to display price list, failure to maintain stock and bill books, sale at prices in excess of the government-fixed rate, purchase of fertilizers and pesticides from unapproved firms, sale of unaccounted and date-expired stocks and sale without licence.

During the inspection, 44.670 tonnes of fertilizers worth Rs.4.72 lakhs and 472 litres and 4572 kg of pesticides worth Rs.3.14 lakhs were seized from 13 shops for violations such as sale without licences and without renewal of licence, and sale of stocks purchased from unapproved firms.

The Joint Director of Agriculture appealed to the concerned persons to inform the Assistant Director (Quality Control) G. Somu (9443104780) if they came across hoarding of urea or other fertilizers, or sale of fertilizers and pesticides at prices above the government-fixed rate.

avin milk price hike tastes sour for consumers

Consumers have expressed displeasure over State government's announcement hiking the price of Aavin milk by Rs.10 a litre from November 1.

"The sudden increase will definitely burn a hole in the pockets of middle class people like us. It could have been implemented in a phased manner," said A. Rajeswari of Oomachikulam on Sunday.

She also rued that vendors would also increase delivery charges. According to P. Preethi of S.S. Colony, the difference in price between Aavin and other brands will be bridged with the hike. "Other brands are sold at around Rs.45 a litre. Now Aavin milk will be sold at Rs.34 per litre. Consumers might opt for other brands," she said.

Vendors are hopeful that the hike in procurement cost will help meet the demand for milk.

P. Murugan, a shopkeeper on Kamarajar Salai, who sells various brands including Aavin, said Aavin products were high on demand among consumers, but their supply was inadequate. "With the government coming forward to pay more for procurement, we can expect supply of surplus milk products and we will be able to meet the demand," he added.

Reforms needed

A retired official of the Tamil Nadu Co-operative Milk Producers' Federation said there was an urgent need to reform policies in the federation.

"The goal of Aavin is to uplift poor dairy farmers and provide quality milk at cheaper price for consumers. While the hike in procurement cost is a welcome measure, the federation should continue to sell products at a subsidised price and without commercial motives," he said.

Procurement of milk per day by Aavin was about 20 lakh litres a day, while it was 27 lakh litres until a few years ago. In Madurai, the procurement had been nearly 2.8 lakh litres, but it went down to 1.45 litres in the recent years, he said.

“The demand in the district is close to 2.5 lakh litres a day, but we are unable to meet the demand because the procurement fell. With the announcement of price hike, more consumers are sure to go for other brands,” the retired official stated.

Therefore, a high-level committee should be constituted to analyse the policies and make suitable changes, he added.

Woes pour down on vegetable farmers

Crops in Marayur, Kanthallur destroyed



A cabbage farm destroyed in heavy rain at Kanthallur in Idukki district in Kerala.

Heavy rain in the past three weeks has dealt a blow to vegetable farmers of Marayur and Kanthallur. Crops on hundreds of acres, especially cabbage and potato, had been destroyed, sources said. The climatic conditions in both the villages had been unfavourable in the past two years. There was a drought during the first sowing season this year and a cloudburst in first week of June. Now, rain has hit 200 acres of cabbage, carrot, and potato farms where planting was done two months ago, sources said.

Harikrishnan, a farmer, said tuber crops were severely affected. Water-logging would do further damage in the form of crop decay. This would cause the spread of fungal and other diseases, especially leaf blight, he said.

The two villages were in a rain shadow area and farmers adopted the 'shift cultivation' pattern each season. After a round of potato cultivation, the next crop would be beans, farmers said.

Manikandan, of Kanthallur, said farmers who cultivated crops which were sensitive to climatic changes suffered the most. Beans crop had also been damaged. The main problem faced by farmers was the lack of advance information on weather conditions, he said.

Farmers often cultivated these crops in waterlogged areas without considering the effect of rain, which peaked during this time of the year, he added. Marayur grama panchayat president Usha Henry told *The Hindu* on Sunday that a final estimate of the damage could be taken only after the rain subsided.

Jaggery production too had been affected. Good rainfall would help tide over water shortage and prevent a drought-like situation, she said.

Dip in marigold price worries farmers



The steep fall in the price of marigold flowers has proved a matter of grave concern for the farmers of a cluster of villages surrounding Hosur town in Krishnagiri district.

The flowers which were selling between Rs. 250 to Rs. 300 per kg during the Dasara holidays are now being purchased at a paltry rate ranging between Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 per kg.

More than 2,000 acres are usually brought under the marigold flower cultivation in Rayakottai, Hosur, Shoolagiri, Thenkanikottai and the surrounding villages during the season.

Flower season

The flower season commences in the month of April and the flowers are harvested in September.

The flowers are sent to various districts in Tamil Nadu and also to the neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka from the Rayakottai market. A large number of flower traders from southern states visit Rayakottai market for making direct purchase of the marigold.

The farmers got good price for the marigold flowers during the Ayudha puja season. However, their joy was short lived as the price of these flowers nose-dived all of sudden after the puja holidays, for reasons not known.



According to Anand, a farmer of Maruthandapalli village, as they were not many takers for the marigold during the Deepavali festival season, the traders are reluctant to procure the same. This is one of the reasons for the steep fall in the price.

The price of one kg of marigold which stood between Rs. 5 – Rs. 7 on Friday, further crashed to Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 on Saturday. “

The steep fall in the price is something unprecedented. By marketing the stock, we will not be getting even the wages paid to the workers involved in harvesting the flowers. Hence, we have decided not to engage the workers, instead allow the cattle to graze the same, so that at least we can save the wages”, Mr. Anand lamented. He urged the State Government to come to the rescue of the marigold farmers, by providing subsidy and compensation.

Woman farmer leads the way

Taking note of the practices being followed by Krishnaveni, many have started cultivating multiple crops

<p>HOW THE SWITCH TO NPM HAS HELPED</p>		<p>KRISHNAVENI, A FARMER FROM THE VILLAGE, CLAIMS SHE IS ABLE TO SAVE RS. 9,000 BY MAKING FERTILIZER IN HER OWN FARM</p>	
<p>Vegetables like tomato, bhindi, Hibiscus cannabinus (gongara), broad beans (chikkuda), coriander (kothimeera) and red gram (landi) are being cultivated</p>	<p>At least 30 farmers in the village have been growing vegetables by earning an additional income of Rs. 600 to Rs. 1,500 per week depending on the demand for vegetables</p>	<p>Vegetables are being sold at Sangareddy, Sadashivapet and Patancheru markets by farmers</p>	
<p> My annual income has increased by Rs. 20,000, which I am spending on the education of my children, SAYS L BHUJANGAM</p>	<p>Officials from NPM wing of DRDA are encouraging more farmers to follow this practice</p>	<p><i>Krishnaveni explaining her farming methods at Kambalapally village in Medak. —PHOTO:MOHD ARIF</i></p>	

B. Krishnaveni is in her early 50s. She is a resourceful farmer who never lets her two-acre land go vacant. Besides practising 'Srivari' cultivation, she also grows vegetables. Not only that, she has stopped using 'masala' (fertilizers) since the past few years and adopted the non-pesticide management (NPM) practice.

"We came to know about NPM few years back but it has changed our lives for the better. About 160 farmers out of 350 are practising NPM. For me, it means not spending an additional Rs. 10,000 per year, which I needed to buy 'masala' in the past. Now we are able prepare the required fertilizer and pesticide in our own farm at a cost of Rs. 1,000," said Ms. Krishnaveni.

Taking note of the practices being followed by Ms. Krishnaveni, many in the village have started cultivating multiple crops. At least 30 farmers in the village have been growing vegetables by earning an additional income of Rs. 800 to Rs. 1,500 per week depending on the demand for vegetables in the market.

"We are also cultivating vegetables like tomato, bhindi, Hibiscus cannabinus (gongura), broad beans (chikkudu), coriander (kothimeera) and red gram (kandi) in addition to the main crop of turmeric. My annual income has increased by Rs. 20,000, which I am spending on the education of my children," says I. Bhujangam. Gangaram Yadaiah, another farmer and a follower of best practices, has been cultivating vegetables though his farm does not have irrigation facility.

He earns Rs. 22,000 for four months and pays Rs. 6,000 to the farmer who supplies water to irrigate his farm. Majority of the farmers in the village are small holding owners and many of them prefer not to opt for commercial crops. "Under polyculture, we are assured of some income even if some crop gets dried up or is lost. We use the additional income to educate our children in private schools," said G. Beamma, another farmer of the village.

Power to the people



Much of the public debate about rural electricity has focused on how cross-subsidies and free power have led to inefficient water usage

This July, I spoke with a farmer in Angul district, Odisha. During the kharif season, most of his 45-acre farm is devoted to paddy, but during the rabi season, he grows a variety of pulses, oilseeds and vegetables. He is currently president of the village watershed committee, working to implement an impressive programme to halt soil erosion and water runoff. He pointed out newly constructed contour and farm bunds that would recharge groundwater and increase soil moisture, thereby increasing farm output.

As we walked through the fields that are part of the watershed programme, we came across an array of metal rods intended for a new electricity tower. While some homes in the nearly two-dozen hamlets that constitute the village have electricity, there is no power in the fields for agriculture.

He had no explanation for why there was no “zameen ki bijli”, but he was very aware that electrified irrigation pumps could transform farm production, particularly during the rabi season from October to March. Diesel-powered pumps are poor alternatives.

Much of the public debate about rural electricity has focused on how cross-subsidies and free power have led to inefficient water usage, bankrupt distribution utilities and environmental damage. These negative effects of energy overuse need to be addressed, particularly in parts of the country with acutely depleted aquifers, like Punjab.

Often omitted in the debate, however, are the rural expanses that have the opposite problem: not cheap power but a complete lack of it. Inattention to rural electrification in some regions has meant that many farmers continue to have limited access to electricity for either household use or irrigation. In much of southern and western India, more than 90 per cent of households use electricity to light their homes, while fewer than 50 per cent do so in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha. Similarly, while there are 91.1 electrified tubewells per village in Maharashtra and 93.9 in Punjab, there are six in Bihar, 3.1 in West Bengal and only 1.6 in Odisha.

There are a number of technological and managerial experiments underway in the rural electricity sector. Thanks to steady price reductions of photovoltaic technologies, new micro grids are emerging throughout northern India. But since sunlight, their energy source, is variable, they require substantial investment in battery storage. So, their cost continues to be high. On average, the unit cost of energy from such micro grids is far higher than the cost of grid power. Renewable sources are a growing component of energy supply and vital for reducing fossil fuel dependence, but their costs need to be shared fairly.

Elsewhere, innovations in distribution management aim to reduce the high administrative costs of rural electricity provision by leasing out parcels of territory

INDIAN CITIES

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Rain: 0

Humidity: 89

Wind: normal

Tomorrow's Forecast

Monday, Oct 27

Max 30°
Min 24°
Cloudy

Sunrise: 06:01

Sunset: 05:44

Barometer: 1013

Tuesday, Oct 28

Max 30°
Min 24°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday
Oct 29



30° | 24°

Cloudy

Thursday
Oct 30



30° | 24°

Partly Cloudy

Friday
Oct 31



31° | 24°

Partly Cloudy

Saturday
Nov 1



30° | 24°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday
Nov 2

31° | 24°

Partly Cloudy

DECCAN Chronicle

Rains bring cheer to farmers



Rainfall in Nizamabad could be useful for cotton and sugarcane crops

NIZAMABAD: The much awaited rains brought some cheer to the farmers in Nizamabad district as several parts of the district received mild rainfall on Sunday. The district has almost witnessed a dry spell in the past two months. It is believed that the rain could be useful for cotton and sugarcane crops. Though the power consumption, domestic sector in particular, decreased significantly due to prevailing cool weather, the Telangana state Transco officials continued the scheduled power cuts to both domestic and agriculture sectors.

“Power supply was snapped on Sunday too,” said Md Ayub, a shop owner in Nizamabad. Nizamabad district headquarters, Kamareddy, Armoor, Bodhan and Banswada received mild

rainfall. The farmers are now busy with the agricultural works as they were worried due to continuous dry spell in the past two months. The farmers hope that rain could benefit commercial crops like cotton, sugarcane and vegetables in the district.

Speaking to this newspaper, assistant director of agriculture Md. Wajid Hussain said that the mild rainfall would protect the residual moisture content in the soil, which is benefit for Bengal gram, saffola flower crops in the ensuing rabi season. "Non command areas like Bichkunda, Madnoor, Jukkal will benefit with the mild rainfall" he said.

On other hand, the farmers are worrying about the forecast of heavy rain for next 24 hours in Nizamabad district. They brought the paddy, maize to the purchasing centres set up by IKP and other government agencies. If rain is heavy, the farmers would incur heavy losses in the district. To protect the agriculture produce from rain, they have already shifted bidding halls in agriculture market yard in Nizamabad.

Rising temperatures threaten farm output



0.7°C rise in temperature recorded over the last century in India. This is lethal for the rice crop

Hyderabad: Temperatures will go up and the productivity of farmlands will come down in future. This could lead to a food crisis, warned the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) fifth assessment report.

With increasing temperatures IPCC has also cautioned that in the rice bowls of South India heat stress on the rice crop is already approaching critical levels. The report warned that the winter yield of some crops will go down drastically in the Hyderabad region and in the Gangetic plains.

The IPCC also warned of the anomalies in the SW monsoon that has already been confirmed. Scientists have already recorded a temperature rise of around 0.7 degrees Celsius in the country over the last century.

This jump could prove lethal for rice as the rise is limited to a few months. In South India, the rice crop is said to be vulnerable in April and August. This could mean lower yields.

The report also said that the winter yield of sorghum in the Hyderabad region would drop. Yields are expected to go down by up to 7 per cent by 2020, 11 per cent by 2050 and 32 per cent by 2080.

The wheat output in north India also could fall. The report said that 39 per cent of the forests in India could change in coming decades.

Experts from all disciplines have already voiced concerns about the changes in southwest monsoon patterns. The IPCC report has strengthened this concern and said that heavy rainfall events during southwest monsoon are increasing at the expense of light rain.

Coffee consumption rising in Tamil Nadu



Coffee consumption has been increasing by 2.8 per cent since the last five years, as against 2.4 per cent in the previous five-year period

Chennai: For purists, kaapi frothy boiled milk mixed with decoction - is the quintessential hallmark of tradition and this steaming aromatic beverage is the first energy drink that sets the day in motion. For coffee lovers, there's nothing like coffee that satiates the palate when sipped after tiffin or taken to distress. The saga of coffee consumption continues to increase in the southern states, particularly Tamil Nadu. Coffee consumption in the country has grown to about 90 grams per capita per year from 60-70 grams about 12 years ago.

Annually, coffee consumption has been increasing by 2.8 per cent since the last five years, as against 2.4 per cent in the previous five-year period. However, the average consumption is 4-5 kg per capita, per annum in most developed countries. Finland, for instance, has the highest per capita consumption of 12 kg per annum. Compared to some of the developed countries, coffee consumption in India has been low as the predominant consumers are from the south.

Tea is drunk in the northern parts of the country. On an average, 3.04 lakh MT of coffee is produced in south India, with Karnataka contributing to the bulk of coffee production (2.11 lakh MT). About 70 per cent of the domestic production is exported.

Aiming to bring more acreage and consumers under coffee, the Coffee Board of India has identified new areas in West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh for coffee plantations in the coming years. In the traditional areas of Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, the board is focusing on increasing productivity through replanting of old trees.

The increasing popularity of coffee chains like Cafe Coffee Day, Barista Lavazza and Costa Coffee, in particular, among the younger generation, has made coffee drinking more fashionable, although value-added products and instant coffee is on the rise with other categories of consumers.

India is the seventh largest coffee producer in India and the third largest in Asia and during 2013-14 fiscal, the country's coffee exports stood at 3,13,025 metric tonnes, generating a revenue of US \$ 793.22 million. Indian coffee is exported to over 45 countries and about 50 per cent of the exports in 2013-14 was to Europe.

Italy is the largest market importing over 25 per cent from India, followed by Germany, Belgium, Turkey and the Russian Federations. So, the next time you try cappuccino or latte, think of Indian coffee beans.