

# THE HINDU

## **Crop loan waiver: government speeds up delivery process**

The State government, it is reliably learnt, has speeded up the process of enabling banks to extend the crop loan waiver in a week or two by firming up series of resource mobilisation steps that include securitisation of surplus cash flows of A.P. Beverages Corporation Limited (ABCL). The other significant measures to be initiated soon are transfer of farmer's loans under non-performing assets segment to Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARC), issuance of subsidy certificates by the State government to farmers having the ability to pay off their loans and monetisation firstly, against future exports of red sanders and secondly, the current/future receivables from port royalties. Sources said the government's objective is aimed at offloading Rs.10,000 crore as early as possible and ensure that the farmers get the waiver benefit beginning with the poorest of them. It calculated that 40 per cent of such account holders had Rs. 85,000 as outstanding loan or below, 25 per cent between Rs. 85,000 and Rs. 1.25 lakh and another 25 per cent between Rs.1.25 lakh and Rs.1.50 lakh. At a crucial meeting of the committee constituted for studying resource mobilisation avenues with the Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu recently, these steps were believed to have come in for a thorough discussion. One of the options looked at the process of securitisation of surplus cash flows of APBCL was floating a special purpose vehicle (SPV), the idea being the government could draw funds from this entity and assign or escrow its future receivables. Under ARC each bank with the identified and approved farmer accounts and amounts will approach an ARC for selling the loans. The ARC in turn would issue Security Receipts (SRs) for the balance amount to the respective banker along with 15 per cent upfront payment to the banks.

*Banks may extend waiver in a week or two*

## **Vaccination alert sent to farmers through SMS**



Owners with their cattle wait for vaccination at Ramapuram in Dharmapuri district.—

Photo: Special Arrangement

The Animal Husbandry Department has so far sent SMS to 70 lakh farmers in the State on the ongoing vaccination drive to prevent foot and mouth disease. The message in Tamil was sent to the mobile numbers of the farmers procured from the database of the Agricultural Department. The response has been good as a large number of farmers have brought their cattle to the designated places for vaccination, officials of the department said. During the last vaccination drive, many owners refused to bring their cattle for vaccination, saying it might cause abortion. In some cases, the owners said vaccination might reduce milk yield. But, the authorities this time have made efforts to drive home the importance of the vaccination by distributing pamphlets and airing messages through local television channels. Till Sunday, 33.53 lakh heads of cattle had been vaccinated, accounting for 35.95 per cent of the cattle population in the State. The authorities aim to cover 93.28 lakh animals. On an average, 4.44 lakh heads of cattle are vaccinated a day. The drive has been taken up in four southern States simultaneously, officials said.

### **TNAU students to share rural work experience with staff**

The B.Sc. Agriculture students of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will share their rural work experience with staff on Tuesday at 3 p.m. at a function to be held at the RI building lobby, says a release.

### **High-yielding fodder seeds available at TNAU**

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has said that it has seeds of high-yielding fodder seeds for use by dairy farmers. In a release, it says that interested farmers could get the seeds of the African tall variety maize from the Department of Forage Crops at the university. For details dial 6611228.

### **Cashew worth Rs. 4 lakh gutted**

Raw cashew kernel stock worth Rs 4 lakh kept in a thatched shed at Manikkampattu near Panruti was destroyed in a fire that broke out on Sunday. The police sources said that Danapal (50), a cashew dealer, was having a cashew sorting unit in a thatched hut at Manikkampattu. The roof of the hut suddenly caught fire, reducing the cashew kernels to ashes. The Kadampuliyur police have booked a case.

### **Erode farmers asked to avoid uncertified seed sellers**

In the backdrop of agricultural activities picking up in the ayacut areas of Lower Bhavani Project, Kalingarayan and Thadapalli- Arakkankottai canals, the Department of Seed Certification has cautioned farmers against procuring seeds from uncertified sellers. Farmers have to insist on getting the receipts for the seeds they purchase from private sellers. Those found selling seeds without official certification will be prosecuted under Seed Control Order.

### **Minimum standards**

Seed varieties that meet minimum standards for germination, physical purity and genetic purity are permitted for sale, Assistant Director of Seed Certification, Erode, Annadurai, said. Sale of sub-standard seed will be banned, he said. Notified seed inspectors are required to inspect the selling points to verify the quality of seeds, and scrutinise sales records. They should take seed samples and send them to Seed Testing Laboratories for analysis. Legal actions will be initiated against defaulters based on analytical results. Farmers, however, say the monitoring mechanism needs to be strengthened to check malpractices by sellers. For instance, private sellers, by and large, do not comply with the requirement of affixing the labels with particulars on the seed containers. There is no way for farmers to know about the quality of new variety of seeds and they tend to believe the promises made by sellers about the quality of seeds, Thalapathy, representative of Thadapalli-Arakkankottai farmers association, said. The caution by the Seed Certification Department notwithstanding, there have been instances of sub-standard seeds reflecting in crops getting damaged due to excessive pest-attack and large weed growth, Mr. Thalapathy said. While the caution issued by the Seed Control Department appears to be reassuring, there has been no action taken report regarding the past cases wherein sub-standard seeds had been sold, he said.

### **Immersion of idols in LBP canal annoys farmers**

The Tamilzaga Vivasayigal Sangam has resolved not to let immersion of Lord Vinayaka idols in Lower Bhavani Project canal in future, and has plans to take legal recourse to prevent the authorities from causing damage to the canal. Attempts made by the Sangam to thwart immersion of statues did not fructify this year. The organisation has estimated that about 100 statues had been immersed at various points along the canal including Nambiyur, Thingalur, Perundurai and Arachalur, this year. The practice of immersing the statues in the canal has been in vogue for several years, according to Pollution Control

Board officials. Farmers do not dispute this point, but are aghast over the number of statues increasing manifold. The canal constructed 60 years ago is not strong enough to carry so many statues. Also, earlier the statues were not only fewer in number, they were also small in size. This year, six to seven feet statues were immersed. It takes at least a day for the statue to wither in water. Blockages caused by the statues getting stuck up beneath bridges would in all likelihood lead to breaches, C. Logusamy, District Organising Secretary of the Sangam said. Due to formation of excessive silt, the force of water is already low. For instance, the speed of water flow was just 410 cusecs, and does not augur well for mass movement of floating statues. Also the embankments have turned weak at several spots along the canal, Mr. Logusamy said. The State president of the Sangam K.C. Rathnasamy has conveyed to the State Government the disgust of the farmers over use of canals for immersion of the statues. The Sangam has plans to mobilise all other farmers, organisations to safeguard canals from use for idol immersion in future, sources said.

*The canal constructed 60 years ago is not strong enough to carry so many statues, say farmers*

### **Do away with turn system of water release: farmers**

Farmers in tail-end areas have urged the government to do away with the turn system of releasing water for irrigation so that they could undertake agriculture operation in full swing like their counterparts in the head portion of the delta region. For the last few years, due to monsoon failure and lack of adequate water in the Mettur dam, farmers had to skip kuruvai. However, in the current year, due to comfortable storage and conducive atmosphere, the farmers have started agriculture operation for samba season with happiness. The government has also released water from Mettur dam on August 10 considering the comfortable storage position in the dam. The water from the dam has started reaching the tail-end areas. However, dry soil condition and lack of dredging have hindered the flow of water to tail-end areas such as Mayiladuthurai, Chembanarkovil, Tarangampadi, Thiruvencadu, and Mangaimadam. Agriculture operations could not go in full swing due to the lack of adequate water owing to the implementation of turn system, said V. Subramanian, district secretary, All India Kisan Sabha. The State president of the Federation of Tamil Nadu Co-operative and Public Sector Sugar Mills, S. Yoganathan, said that due to the influx of seawater, farmers in Poomphuhar, Perunthottam, Mangaimadam and other coastal villages had to depend entirely on Cauvery water. However, only a meagre quantum of water has reached the rivers. Hence, the farmers in tail-end areas could not undertake agriculture operation. PWD sources said that turn

system had to be implemented to streamline water distribution as samba cultivation is under way simultaneously in the entire delta region.

### **Seeds distributed**

The Department of Agriculture has distributed 194 metric tonnes of paddy seeds to the farmers in the district, said a release issued by Collector (in charge) A. Udhayakumar. In addition to this, the Agriculture Department is taking steps to stock 10 metric tonnes of seeds in the PACS.

### **Check dams turn out to be a boon for Perambalur farmers**



A total of 50 check dams constructed at different places in the district have come in handy for harvesting rainwater, and the recent summer showers have come as a boon to farmers. The water level in a number of wells in the vicinity of the check dams have also gone up following the construction of these dams by the Agricultural Engineering Department at an estimate of Rs.1.96 crore in the district. The largest beneficiary of the recent summer showers are the farmers in Alathur block where four check dams had been constructed across the Nandhiyar. An official study conducted by the department during the post-rain period revealed that storm water stored in channel running to a length of 1,300 metre has contributed to the recharging of water table in 50 wells. "Water level in eight wells located close to Nandhiyar had registered an increase of about eight feet each," an official source said. The check dams have saved the farmers from incurring additional expenditure for deepening existing wells or digging up additional borewells. One of the farmers, M.Selvam of Padalur, whose field was located about 200 feet away from the check dam across Nandhiyar, pointed out that though he had drilled additional borewells in the past, the sources had failed. But, because of the check dam, his irrigation

well has shown considerable increase in water level. Farmers of the belt largely rely on well irrigation as there are no rivers in the area. R. Durairaj, another farmer of Ootathur, who cultivates onion and groundnut, said thanks to the check dams, farming, for him, was not a gamble any more.

*The biggest beneficiary of the recent showers is the farmers in Alathur block where four check dams have been built*

### **Poultry farmers seek more funds to run farms**

Tamil Nadu Poultry Farmers' Association has demanded additional loans from banks for continuously running the existing farms that are facing severe financial crisis. Speaking to reporters, its president R. Nallathambi said that poultry sector is the alternative sector in the district as over 1,000 farms generate 4.50 crore eggs every day. All the owners have obtained bank loans and are running the business. But due to various reasons, the sector suffered huge financial loss in 2012 and 2013. "The situation has worsened in the past six months," he added. Mr. Nallathambi said that the cost of producing an egg stood at Rs. 3.30 while the wholesale price is Rs. 2.90, as fixed by National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC). "Poultry owners incur a loss of 40 paise per egg and the owner stands to lose Rs. 60 lakh in the past six months for one lakh chickens," he added. The situation is deteriorating and only by infusing more funds, could the existing farms be run, he said. The association president wanted banks to provide additional loans and also wanted exemption period up to one year for repayment of existing loans. The association also wanted banks not to provide loans for one year to people who want to start new farms. Members said that the average price of egg in 2004 was Rs. 1.35 while it was 2.98 in the current year. But the production cost has increased three-fold even as demand has fallen, they added.

*Association says poultry farms are facing financial crunch*

## **‘Adopt mechanisation in farming practices’**



Cutting edge:Collector N. Subbaiyan inspecting farm waste crusher at Eechankottai near Thanjavur.

Agriculturists should make the most of the farm mechanisation equipment being provided under various schemes including the National Agriculture Development Programme. The seed drill equipment used for direct sowing of paddy seeds, eliminates the process of transplanting nurseries, said N. Subbaiyan, District Collector. The Collector who inspected various fields in Eechankottai and Sozhapuram villages near Orathanadu on Sunday where subsidy-based farm machinery had been set up, said that the seed drill would also economise use of water. He ascertained the uses of mechanical shredder which easily crushes coconut branches and other hard bio-waste materials into smaller particles of bio manure. Arokiasamy, a coconut farmer, a beneficiary, said that he got the equipment at a cost Rs. 90,000 including a subsidy of Rs.45,000 and used it for cutting the plantains and tree branches which were otherwise wasted. Later, the Collector inspected the functioning of the solar energy operated pump at Sozhapuram village set up at a cost of Rs. 3.99 lakh, including subsidy. A. Arockiasamy, Executive Engineer, Agricultural Engineering Department said that the pump could be used for irrigating four acres of paddy fields.

***‘Seed drill would help in optimal utilisation of water for irrigation’***

## **NRCB to release high-yielding banana variety tolerant to diseases**

The National Research Centre for Banana (NRCB) will release a new ‘monthan’ variety of banana. The cooking banana ‘saba’, which had its origin in the Philippines, is well suited for marginal lands. It is a high-yielding variety tolerant to diseases, particularly leaf spot disease and wilt, said M.M. Mustafa, Director, NRCB. Addressing the newly-recruited Agriculture Research Science (ARS) scientists, banana growers, and other

officials at a seminar-cum-interaction at the NRCB premises at Podhavur near here recently, Dr.Mustaffa said that the new variety, with duration of 12 to 13 months, required minimum rain and could survive prolonged dry spell with intermittent irrigation.Each plant could a yield a bunch weighing between 26 and 38 kg with 13 to 16 hands. Each hand would have 12 to 20 fingers.He appealed to banana growers to apply bio-fertilizers for improving their productivity and for ensuring plant protection.He said that bio-fertilizers would strengthen soil fertility and enhance banana production. This was the 100th batch of ARS scientists who, as part of 21-day-long training, explored the opportunities and challenges faced by the farmers of central region.The training concluded with a rural seminar where they discussed their experience with scientists and agriculture officers.

### **Appeal to farmers**

R.Selvarajan, principal scientist, called upon farmers to adopt nutrient management strategies to avoid pests and diseases in banana.M.Asokan, programme coordinator, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Sirugamani, stressed the importance of applying pesticide judiciously and encouraged farmers to go in for ADT-49, a disease-resistant paddy variety compared to the much sought-after varieties such as BPT-5204.Ravi, Subject Matter Specialist, KVK, explained the techniques to minimise pest attack using bio inputs. Paulraj, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Andhanallur, elaborated on State government's schemes Venkat Kumar, principal scientist, National Academy of Agriculture Research Management, motivated farmers to set up farmer producer companies. Marimuthu, a progressive farmer from Thuraiyur, explained the importance of farmer producer companies for achieving success.

### **Training for horticultural farmers**

A day-long training on cultivation of tube-flower will be imparted to horticultural farmers at Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Vamban near here on Wednesday. In a press release issued here on Monday, Interested persons can contact Krishi Vigyan Kendra by dialling 04322-290321, 97873 56981 or 96774-85513.

### **350 scientists to deliberate on improving tomato, chilli variet**

About 350 agricultural scientists, including plant breeders, geneticists and entomologists, from across the globe will meet in Bangalore to deliberate on research efforts needed for increasing yield level and reducing losses of tomato and chilli crop.The scientists will



participate in a two-day Asia Solanaceous Crops Round Table (ASRT) – 2014 from Tuesday. The focus will be on reducing incidents of diseases and pests in the two crops across the globe. There is much need for a congregation of scientists as conservative estimates put the losses of the two crops at Rs. 400 crore a year in India alone.

### **First of its kind**

The round table is being jointly organised by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Asia and Pacific Seed Association, Bangkok, Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Bangalore, and the Society for Promotion of Horticulture. It will be the first of its kind effort and will aim at building a public-private-partnership in scientific research. The round table attempts to build a forum of scientists from both the public and private institutes to work on a public-private partnership model to help farmers. While the public institutes will set the stage for fundamental research, the private institutes will take them forward to farmers by fine-tuning them, said T. Manjunatha, director of Institute of Horticultural Research. The round table will identify the issues to be taken up for research and the institutes that will handle them. While the deliberations would be held at the round table, an action plan would follow soon, he said. Noted scientist Surinder K. Tikoo, who is also chairman of the technical committee of the round table, said focus would be on bridging the differences in yield levels of the crops. Pointing out that the average yield of tomato in India was only 20 tonnes a hectare while innovative farmers were getting 75 tonnes a hectare, Mr. Tikoo said there was a dire need to increase the average yield.

### **Help to farmers**

Chairman of the organising committee N. Anand said the focus on tomatoes and chillies would go a long way in helping small and marginal farmers in India as they account for nearly 80 per cent of those cultivating these crops.

Scientists from nine countries, including US, China, Holland, Israel, Thailand and European countries, will participate in the round table which is being followed with hope by those associated with the two crops.

### **BJP protests delay in assessing crop loss**

Members of the district unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), headed by former minister M.P. Renukacharya, took out a procession and staged a dharna outside the Assistant Commissioner's office here on Monday protesting the negligent attitude of officers concerned in conducting survey of properties and crop that were damaged owing

to incessant rainfall in the last two months. The agitators took out a procession from Gandhi Circle which passed through main streets of the city including P B Road and culminated outside assistant commissioner's office. They alleged that standing crop across the district had been spoiled owing to incessant rainfall in the district from last few weeks. Since the district had been suffering from drought from the last two years, the farmers had no money to carry out agriculture activities. There was a verbal clash between the police and Mr. Renukacharya when the latter attempted to lock the Assistant Commissioner's office. The agitators alleged that the crop like maize, ground nut, cotton and vegetables in more than 20,000 hectares land in the district was completely destroyed and if the authorities failed to release compensation, farmers would start committing suicide, he added.

### **Training in sheep and goat rearing**

A one-day training in sheep and goat rearing will be held at the Government Veterinary College here on September 12. The focus of the training will be on selection of breeds, scientific method of constructing sheds and feeding system. Those interested in undergoing the training could register their names by September 11 with K.C. Veeranna, Extension Wing, Government Veterinary College, Shimoga. For details, call on 08182 651002 or 9448557668.

### **Uncertainty over Kuttanad package irks farmers**

The farmers in the Kuttanad region are gearing up to agitate against the uncertainty surrounding the implementation of the Kuttanad package. The latest issue had cropped up following questions regarding package implementation by Kodikunnil Suresh, MP, at the Lok Sabha. Responding to a query, Sanjeev Kumar Balyan, Minister of State (MoS) for Agriculture and Food Processing Industries, said that the period of implementation has ended in July 2012. However, to whether it had come to the notice of the Central government that the irrigation works in Kuttanad had slow progress, the MoS replied in the negative. The Centre had approved the package for the development of Kuttanad Wetland Ecosystem in July 24, 2008 at a cost of Rs. 1,840.75 crore. The State government has repeatedly come under severe criticism for the alleged failure in ensuring the timely implementation of projects included in the package. According to Kuttanad Vikasana Samithy executive director Thomas Peelianickal, the State government has done nothing on its part to clear the confusion and apprehensions created through the answers furnished by the MoS, nearly two months ago. According to him, the package had been sanctioned for a period of five years and is supposed to conclude in July

2013. “As per the statement made by Mr. Balyan, the package has ended a year short of its planned schedule. In addition, the State government has failed to make any effort to ensure the extension of the package. Amidst such uncertainties, the State government is set to launch certain projects, included in the Kuttanad package, within a few weeks,” he said. Fr. Peelianickal added that the developments had created widespread concerns over the future of the Kuttanad package, which was considered a blessing for the region as well as the agriculture sector. Considering that the projects required the involvement of 12 government department, he proposed entrusting an Additional Chief Secretary with the responsibility of coordinating the efforts.

### **Fisheries meet on Sept. 14**

The Kerala Fisheries Coordination Committee, representing stakeholders in the fisheries industry in the State, will meet at Ernakulam Rest House on September 14 to work out a course of action against the recent expert committee recommendations on deep sea fishing in the country. The coordination committee will chalk out a plan of action against the expert committee report, including sending a delegation to New Delhi to ensure that the voice of the fisheries industry is heard. The expert committee, headed by B. Meenakumari, Deputy Director General (Fisheries) at Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), submitted its report on August 20. A national level convention of fisheries industry here last week had passed a resolution seeking the constitution of a new committee to recommend a national marine fisheries policy. The resolution was piloted by Fisheries Industries Federation of India. A member of the State Fisheries Coordination Committee, Joseph Xavier Kalappurackal, said there was a move among the stakeholders to float an “interest group” for the sustainable development and utilisation of fisheries resources. He said the fisheries industry was in a state of disarray now and its sustainability had to be addressed immediately. Creating awareness about the long-term sustainability of fisheries, especially marine fisheries, topped the agenda of the proposed interest group, which had also been promised help from the fisheries science community, he said. He said there was increasing exploitation of the fishermen community by middlemen. Even the trade unions in the fisheries sector appeared not concerned with the long-term sustainability of the sector, he alleged.

## **Aqua farmers told to adopt ornamental fish culture**

R.W. Alexander Jesudasan, an expert in aquaculture from the Department of Zoology, Madras Christian College, on Monday called upon the aqua farmers to diversify into the culturing of fish species in the light of researches favouring the use of biological larvicide for control of mosquito. Speaking at a seminar on “Recent trends in aquaculture for sustainable environment” at St. Theresa’s College for Women on Monday, he urged the growers to cash in on the trend of rising demand for ornamental fish trade. “Ornamental fish keeping is one of the most popular hobbies in the world today. The growing interest in aquarium fishes has resulted in a steady increase in aquarium fish trade in the US followed by Japan and Europe,” he pointed out.

### **Good scope**

He called upon aqua farmers for diversification from traditional fish farming to ornamental fish production to catch up with the increasing demand for the latter.

## **Officials on alert as Godavari flood water level rises**

With the water level increasing steadily at Sir Arthur Cotton Barrage at Dowleswaram, the East Godavari district administration was on high alert on Monday and issued the second warning. The water level of the Godavari at Bhadrachalam was 55 feet in the evening, whereas the same was 13.75 feet at Dowleswaram. The discharge from the barrage was 12.8 lakh cusecs. Besides setting up a round-the-clock control room in the Collectorate here, the administration geared up to evacuate the residents from the low-lying areas. Floodwater entered Veeravaram Lanka and Toyyeru villages of Devipatnam mandal and officials began evacuation process. Urging the residents the low-lying areas to cooperate with officials, Collector Neetu Prasad said evacuation was to minimise the loss. She said according to the inputs from the Meteorological Department, the monsoon was active and there was possibility of rain. She asked officials of the coastal mandals to alert the fishermen on the climatic condition and prevent them from venturing into the sea for fishing. She wanted the Revenue Divisional Officers concerned to monitor the situation round-the-clock and take necessary steps to provide help to the needy. People from flood-affected areas could avail services of the control room by dialling the toll-free number 1800-425-3077, she said. Separate control rooms were arranged at Rajahmundry and Amalapuram RDO offices. Special Correspondent from Hyderabad adds: Chief Secretary I.Y.R. Krishna Rao reviewed the flood situation with the Collectors of East and

West Godavari Districts and instructed them to send senior officials to the flood-affected areas and to take immediate relief measures.

### **PACS told to return insurance premium taken from farmers**

The farmers, who were forced to pay premium for insurance at the Yeldurthi Primary Agriculture Cooperative Society (PACS), may soon receive the amount which they paid. The Commissioner for Cooperation and Registrar of Cooperative Societies wrote a letter to the Managing Director of the Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank (APCOB) in the first week of last month referring to the irregularities that took place in the functioning of Yeldurthi PACS, including collection of insurance premium amounts from members forcibly. "Regarding insurance business, the Additional Registrar/ Chief Auditor has observed in the report that the District Cooperative Central Bank Ltd., Sangareddy, deviating the instructions of RBI and APCOB entered an agreement with Max New York Life Insurance Company and issued circulars restricting insurance tie-up with only one company and deducted the insurance premium from members forcibly while disbursing the loan amounts without their consent. Further, no arrangements were made by the APCOB/ District Cooperative Central Bank for renewal of premium," the Commissioner said in the letter.

### **Water level at Mettur**

The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 103.56 feet on Monday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 15,365 cusecs and the discharge, 20,003 cusecs.

Chennai - INDIA

## Today's Weather



Cloudy

**Tuesday, Sep 9**

Max Min

33° | 25°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:57

Humidity: 89

Sunset: 06:18

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1006

## Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

**Wednesday, Sep 10**

Max Min

32° | 25°

## Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday

**Sep 11**



33° | 25°

Partly Cloudy

Friday

**Sep 12**



34° | 25°

Cloudy

Saturday

**Sep 13**



33° | 26°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday

**Sep 14**



34° | 25°

Partly Cloudy

Monday

**Sep 15**



35° | 26°

Sunny

Airport Weather

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 06:01

Humidity: 100 Sunset: 06:36

Wind: normal Barometer: 1005



THE  NEW  
**INDIAN EXPRESS**

**Election Commission Nod for Input Subsidy to Farmers**

With the Election Commission exempting the disbursement of input subsidy from the purview of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) - now in force in the district in view of the forthcoming bye-elections for the Medak LS seat - the farmers have heaved a sigh of relief. Accordingly, the government has decided to remit the input subsidy amounts in the farmers' bank accounts soon. The government decision to grant the input subsidy to the farmers was challenged before the Election Commission by the opposition parties in view of the prevailing MCC. But the EC accepted the government's contention that the decision on the input subsidy payment was announced much before the bypoll notification. The government is set to directly deposit a total of Rs 66.36 cr in the accounts of 1,45,876 farmers. The farmers in the Narsapur Assembly segment are set to get the highest amount of Rs 22.11 cr or input subsidy.

**Cardamom Farming Made Eco-friendly Thru Innovation**

Contamination of water bodies due to excessive use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers in the High Range areas has been constantly causing stress for cardamom farmer and farmer scientist Reji Njallani. This made him develop a method which would prevent the flow of hazardous chemicals into rivers and other water bodies. After years of research, he has found a solution to the problem by developing what he calls the Njallani Ring Planting Method (NRPM). The NRPM is the method of cardamom farming using a ferrocement tank. The tank, having a diameter of 4 ft, a height of 3 ft and two inches thickness of the wall, costs about `1,800, Reji told 'Express'. The tank is filled with a mixture of 10 cubic feet (CFT) of coconut pith, five CFT of dry cow dung, five CFT of dry leaves and 15 CFT of soil. The sapling is planted half feet deep in the tank, he said. Four hundred such rings can be placed in one acre of land. The method provides multiple benefits, including soil protection, plant care and manpower management. Conventional method makes cardamom plucking laborious as the worker has to bend to reap the crop. On the other hand, the new method helps the worker pluck cardamom without bending. With this method, the production of cardamom increases by an additional 15 to 20 kg per day. Normally, it is eight to 10 kg per worker. The method helps reduce expenses as frequent tilling and forking are not required due to the use of the mixture. Less manure is required as organic materials are used in the system. The system helps the growth of a farmer-friendly organism in the plant which keeps away harmful pests. Usually,

pesticides and fertilisers are used non-uniformly, causing contamination of water bodies, including wells and rivers. The NRPM method uses minimum pesticides and fertilisers and the ring enclosure prevents flow of the pesticides to water bodies.

### **Meeting on Disease-Resistant Crops**

The Asian Solanaceous Round Table meeting will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday at Lalit Ashok Hotel. Dr Manjunath Rao, convener of the organising committee and director of Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), said, “The meeting will bring together scientists working on crop improvement research in solanaceous vegetables like tomato, pepper and eggplants”. This meet focuses on disease and pest resistance in tomato and pepper as both crops are ranked at the top in terms of acreage and commercial value at the seed and farm output level not only in Asia but globally, he explained. According to Rao, tomatoes and peppers are grown on over 1.7 million hectares each with China and India are the top two in acreage in Asia. Japan and Korea are ranked at the top in commercial seed value, Rao said. “Both crops face biotic and abiotic stresses that reduce yield per unit by 50-100 per cent depending on the extent of disease or pest attacking the crop at a given time. There are multiple disease-resistant hybrids that have made it possible to extend the sowing window in each season,” Rao said. The biggest threat to growers in South Asia and South-east Asia is the tospovirus disease, he added. The Round Table meeting is jointly organised by the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR-New Delhi), the Asia and Pacific Seed Association (Bangkok), IIHR (Bangalore) and the Society for Promotion of Horticulture (Bangalore), Rao said.

### **Cage Fish Farming a Huge Success**

Around 2 tonnes of seabass (Kalanchi) and over 170 kg of pearl spot (Karimeen), all cultured in cages, were harvested from the fish farms at Kakkamadanthuruth and Thiruthur in the Puthenvelikkara Panchayat. The cage culture was initiated as part of the ‘Samagra Matsyagramam’ project under the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS), with the support of the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), and the Kerala State Fisheries Department. The project has turned out to be a huge success, with the fish farmers hauling in a big catch of seabass and pearl spot from eight cages installed in the backwaters. “Such a big yield of seabass, with an average weight of 1.6 kg, is a rare achievement in cage culture,” said KUFOS officials. KUFOS vice-chancellor B Madhusoodana Kurup, who inaugurated the harvest, said that the success of the project had proved that the freshwater and brackish water bodies in the State are highly suitable for fish farming. “The success of the project has encouraged the KUFOS to launch more fish farming projects, and to extend farming to the other areas. The university has introduced an eco-friendly farming method to achieve sustainability of the fisheries. The



project also focuses on enriching the indigenous fish stocks that are facing the threat of extinction,” he said. The project, which aims at empowering fish farmers in the panchayat, has been receiving good response from the farming community. The KUFOS had initiated the project with focus on freshwater and brackish water fish culture, ornamental fish culture, cage culture and integrated farming, utilising the resources of public and private ponds, and the backwaters. Daisy C Kappen, associate professor at KUFOS, is the principal investigator of the project.

### **Vegetable Development Scheme to be Launched**

Vegetable cultivation in Wayanad will get a big boost as the Agriculture Department is all set to launch ‘Vegetable Development Scheme’ in the district under Wayanad package. The scheme will be implemented at a cost of Rs 329.25 lakh. The Principal Agriculture Officer, Wayanad, had reported that claims worth Rs 11,20,180 of Kalpetta and Mananthavady blocks could not be encashed during the last three years since the bills were not honoured by the Treasuries concerned owing to treasury restrictions. Hence the Director of Agriculture had submitted a proposal for settling seven claims connected with the construction of poly houses, open precision farming, capacity building programme and farmer’s training under vegetable development component of Wayanad package pertaining to Kalpetta and Mananthavady blocks for Rs 11,20,180. The government had given administrative sanction to the scheme in the last week of August.



### **High Court to UP: ensure payment of cane dues by October 31**

The Allahabad High Court has directed the Uttar Pradesh Government to ensure all arrears owed by sugar mills to farmers are paid off by October 31. The sugar mills owe dues of more than Rs. 5,500 crore. The court has not only asked them to pay up the dues but also its interest. The court at an earlier hearing had allowed sugar mills to sell 15 per cent of the sugar in open market to generate money. Cane growers have been on a war path against the Samajwadi Party (SP) Government in the State for not pressurising the sugar mills for clearing their dues. The sugar mill owners have, however, been saying that the policies of the Government were not beneficial and they were incurring major losses. The SP government had a few weeks back cracked the whip on some sugar mills and had got FIRs slapped on management of many sugar mills. This, however, did not act as a deterrent and the impasse continued. The HC issued these directives while hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by the Bharatiya Kisan Mazdoor Sangh.

## **White stem borer menace worries coffee growers**

Coffee planters are concerned over rising incidences of white stem borer menace in Arabica coffee. In his presentation on Coffee at the Commodity Outlook session, held on the eve of the 121st UPASI Annual Conference, Jawaid Akhtar, Chairman, Coffee Board, said that the incidence of White Stem Borer (WSB) is peculiar to India. It flares up due to erratic rainfall and increased temperature. He said that nearly 50 per cent of Arabica coffee area in Karnataka recorded high incidence of WSB this year.

## **Drought**

“About 35 lakh coffee plants have been affected and uprooted, because of the drought conditions for the second consecutive year. If rains are not sufficient, we may be forced to remove one lakh plants affected by WSB,” the Board Chairman said. To tackle the WSB menace, the Board has initiated a research in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. “We have submitted an action plan to the Ministry on catch and kill, gap filling, community nurseries, mission mode programme and supply of pheromone traps. There has been major emphasis on management of WSB since 2011,” he said highlighting the Board’s initiatives.

## **Exporters’ buying adds flavour to cardamom**



Cardamom prices ruled nearly steady last week at the auctions. Aggressive export buying kept the market stable even as there buying support was lacking from upcountry traders. Exporters bought an estimated 80 tonnes last week. Whatever exportable grade material arrived was picked up by them whereas, there was not much buying interest from north Indian states. The trade attributed this phenomenon to the presence of inferior variety material imported from Guatemala in to main upcountry consuming centres. Market sources told *Business Line* that Guatemala does not consume even a single kg of cardamom internally and therefore, they have to dispose of the inferior grade

which they sell off at throwaway prices.” They said that the availability of such material in the country has slowed down upcountry demand, of late. The second round of picking has commenced and arrivals also have picked up. However, due to a “hartal” on Tuesday and holiday on Sunday on account of Onam, total arrivals declined. The individual auction average slipped to between Rs. 740 and Rs. 800 a kg. Supply of 8mm bold is yet to pick up and its short supply kept the prices at Rs. 1,100. During the current season that began last month, arrivals are 1,503 tonnes against 2,245 tonnes as on September 6 during the last season. Sales were 1,465 tonnes against 2,241 tonnes. The weighted average price as on September 6 stood at around Rs. 815 (Rs. 615). Prices of graded varieties (Rs. /kg): AGEB 915-935; AGB 780-790; AGS 650-670 and AGS -1: 620-640.

### **Impose safeguard duty on natural rubber: UPASI**



The United Planters' Association of Southern India has appealed for imposing safeguard duty on natural rubber to protect the domestic industry from plunging prices. The association's appeal follows the steep decline in natural rubber prices from Rs. 243/kg in April 2011 to Rs. 143.50 in May 2014 and further down to Rs. 130 in August. Stating that the survival of rubber growers is at stake and appealing for immediate intervention to protect the domestic industry, UPASI sought imposition of a safeguard duty on natural rubber imports. The association contended that the main reason for the decline in domestic price is due to increased imports. Destination-wise imports indicate that the shipments from Indonesia and Vietnam increased 37 per cent to 3.60 lakh tonnes in 2013-14 from 2.63 lakh tonnes in 2012-13. Early import trends during the current fiscal further confirm that it is continuing at a much faster pace suggesting a possibility of another record rubber imports prospects. The magnitude of imports in absolute and relative terms substantiates the need for imposing a safeguard duty to address uncontrolled imports, UPASI sources said. The association has also sought a detail scrutiny on the norms followed in fixing the import quantum under advance licensing scheme or Duty Exemption Entitlement Certificate fixed on the basis of standard input-output norms

### **Create buffer zones to boost fishing: panel**

The expert committee to review deep sea fishing policy has mooted creation of off-shore buffer zones to augment resources in the near shore waters as well as in off-shore areas. According to the panel, there is no scope of expansion of fishing efforts in this buffer zone as waters up to 200 metres depth are optimally exploited and some species are over exploited. This buffer zone could be utilised to diversify existing fishing fleet for targeting resources such as squids and reduce pressure on near shore waters in the future, the expert committee constituted by the Centre for Comprehensive Review of Deep Sea Fishing Policy and Guidelines said. Keeping in view the development in exploitation of the resources in waters beyond 12 nautical miles, the committee headed by B Meenakumari, Deputy Director General (Fisheries) ICAR suggested the urgent need for enacting a comprehensive legislation for the regulation of Indian fishing fleets in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). However, the committee was of the view that waters beyond 500 m depth are not optimally exploited and there is considerable scope of expansion in this zone especially for tuna and tuna-like species. It is estimated that the tuna and tuna-like resources in the Indian EEZ are valued at Rs. 3,000 crore. Since there is no Indian fleet to harvest this resource, migratory stock of these species are being caught by fleets of the neighbouring nations such as Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia. This situation, according to the committee, necessitates strong regional cooperation and sustainable exploitation of the resources including conservation of species/stocks. Given the shortage of expertise to exploit waters beyond 500 m in the country, it is recommended for technology transfer through acquisition of foreign fishing vessels or joint ventures/leasing etc till the domestic capacity is fully developed.

### **Bengal tea estates to reap benefits of alternative uses of land**

West Bengal plans to allow alternative use of land – for tourism, horticulture, medicinal plant cultivation, and hydro-electricity generation – by tea estates. The State makes up nearly 25 per cent of the country's tea production. In a draft notification issued last month, the State Government proposed to amend the Schedule F of the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Rules 1954, and the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act, 1953, to incorporate the provisions for alternate use of land leased out to organised tea sector.

The draft notification is in line with the industry's demand for allowing the sector to help maximise revenue opportunities, without changing the basic character of a tea estate, says Manojit Dasgupta, Secretary-General, Indian Tea Association. "ITA may request the

government to also incorporate a provision for allowing tea estates in pursuing dairy activities,” he said. Dasgupta says the proposed amendments ensured that the State would have adequate handle on the plantation sector to prevent a complete diversion of land in non-tea activities. It ensured that the estates (running well over 1,000 acres) cannot use more than five acres of land for tourism. The civil construction has to be limited in 1.5 acres in the plains (where estates are large in size) and only one acre in the Darjeeling hills. There is no particular restriction on land-use for horticulture or medicinal plants. But the provisions make sure that tea has to be mainstay of business and, any such alternative use has to be approved by the district administration. The district government would allow such use only if the land is unsuitable for producing tea and the move is not detrimental to the interest of the labours.

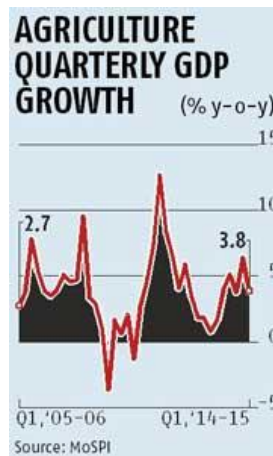
# Business Standard

## Farm growth: Govt, experts differ on impact of uneven rains



The slow start to the southwest monsoon this year and its impact on the yield of kharif crops have led to fear that farm sector growth for the remaining three quarters of 2014-15 might fall to one-two per cent from a robust 3.8 per cent for the quarter ended June. This could make the government's 2014-15 gross domestic product (GDP) growth target of 5.7-5.8 per cent difficult to achieve. This is because though the agriculture sector's share in overall GDP is less than 15 per cent, it has a cascading impact on other sectors, say economists. However, senior officials from the finance and agriculture ministries feel the concern is unfounded, as kharif acreage has improved considerably through the past few weeks. Also, the late resurgence in rains will help in the sowing of rabi crops, and this might offset

some of the losses recorded for kharif crops. “This year, kharif sowing is only 3.3 per cent less than last year. So, a below-normal monsoon won’t have much of an impact on growth in the coming quarters,” said a senior finance ministry official.



However, economists and experts disagree. MadanSabnavis, chief economist at CARE Ratings, says a revival of the southwest monsoon isn’t enough for a good harvest. As of now, the area under coarse cereals, oilseeds, pulses and sugarcane is less than last year; also, the final yields of these commodities are expected to be lower. “In my assessment, the impact might not be substantial in the second quarter of 2014-15, as the full extent of a low harvest will not be felt, but things might turn bad from the third quarter,” Sabnavis said, adding except rice, all the other four crops mentioned earlier might see a significant drop in output. Latest data from the agriculture ministry show till September 5, the total area under kharif crops stood at 3.4 million hectares, less than last year. The situation is the worst in the case of coarse cereals and oilseeds — the acreage is 1.75 million and 1.55 million hectares less than last year, respectively. With the southwest monsoon at its final stage (it starts withdrawing from September), there is little chance of a significant improvement. Rains are crucial for India’s agriculture sector, as about 45 per cent of the arable land doesn’t have proper irrigation facilities. This year, rains started on a weak note; in June, the deficit was 43 per cent, triggering fears of a widespread drought. Since mid-July, rains have revived in most parts of the country, narrowing the deficit to 13 per cent as of September 5. About 70 per cent of the total rainfall received by India is accounted for by the months of June to September. National Statistical Commission Chairman Pronab Sen said in the second quarter, the effect of a shortfall in the monsoon would be clear. “There will be a fairly sharp drop. I expect it to be under one per cent in the second quarter,” he had said in a recent interview with Business Standard.

“Not much should be read into the first-quarter numbers, as these are based on crop-production data for 2013-14, a year of a record monsoon. The real impact of uneven rains will be felt from the second quarter,” said Ramesh Chand, director of the National Centre for Applied Economics and Policy Research. The finance ministry official quoted earlier said, “The sub-normal monsoon has already affected crops in the harvest season. The rains in late August will help rabi crop output, and this will be reflected in next year’s GDP growth.” A fall in growth in the agriculture segment might affect rural incomes and, in turn, demand, which might hit manufacturing. This will make the task of meeting the GDP growth target of 5.8 per cent difficult. While Economic Survey 2013-14 pegged economic growth this financial year at 5.4-5.9 per cent, with the lower range likely, the finance ministry later exuded optimism growth would be 5.8 per cent. On the retail inflation front, officials are optimistic of meeting the Reserve Bank of India’s target of eight per cent by January 2015 but not the six per cent target set for January 2016. “Between now and January 2016, there will be another monsoon. If that, too, is bad, it will be difficult to tame inflation and keep it below six per cent,” the finance ministry official said, adding he thought in 2016, retail inflation would be six-seven per cent. Sabnavis of CARE Ratings, however, said by January 2015, retail inflation might be 7-7.5 per cent, though price pressures might remain. India’s GDP grew 5.7 per cent in the quarter ended June this year, the most in about two years. While wholesale inflation declined to a five-month low of 5.19 per cent in July, against 5.43 per cent in June and 5.84 per cent in July last year, retail inflation rose to 7.96 per cent in July from 7.46 per cent the previous month.

### **Adverse weather conditions drag down tea prices**

Even as production declined 4.5 per cent to 381 million kg during the first six months of 2014, tea prices remained subdued. Between January and June 2014, prices across varieties have dipped 3.6 per cent to Rs 124.20 a kg from Rs 128.83 a kg in the corresponding period last year. In south India, too, prices of all teas dropped a sharp 15.7 per cent to Rs 85.74 a kg from Rs 101.76 a kg during the same period a year ago. However, north Indian markets reported a marginal gain of Rs 1.43 to Rs 144 a kg. “Normally, prices decline due to oversupply and less demand. However, this year, demand is robust and the production is also lower due to adverse weather conditions that prevailed in most of the tea-growing regions,” said R Sanjith, head (commodities) at United Planters’ Association of Southern India (Upasi). The price drop in the context of lower supply both in the domestic and global markets suggest a weakness in market fundamentals. This, according to Sanjith, does not augur well for this industry.



Incidentally, prices declined in other major producing countries such as Kenya (18.1 per cent), Bangladesh (38.4 per cent), and Indonesia (18.4 per cent). However, Sri Lanka recorded an increase of 9.7 per cent in tea prices.

### Decline in production

Adverse weather conditions that prevailed in most of the tea-growing regions of Assam, North Bengal and parts of South India during the summer months has impacted tea production in the first half of 2014. The crop was lower by 17.8 million kg during the January-June 2014 period to touch 381 million kg, a decline of 4.5 per cent year-on-year.

<b>TEA SCENARIO</b>			
Production in million kg			
Year	North India	South India	Total
2011-12	865.59	229.87	1,095.46
2012-13	893.38	241.69	1,135.07
2013-14	965.07	243.71	1,208.78
2013-14 (Apr-Jul)	384.37	86.46	470.83
2014-15 (Apr-Jul)E	355.60	95.99	451.59

E = Estimated Source: Tea Board India

“Erratic weather, scanty rains and high temperatures were common in most of the growing regions during the first half of this year, which affected production,” Sanjith told Business Standard on the sidelines of 121st annual conference of Upasi, atop Blue Mountains on Monday. North India has shown a decline of 22.3 million kg, while south India has shown an increase of 4.5 million kg during the first six months of this year. During the second half of the calendar year 2014, the crop in south India is expected to be marginally higher on account of showers received during June and July. However, for full-year 2014, south India's production is anticipated to be more or less the same as last year's, because the shortage of rainfall has resulted in tea gardens not able to follow the standard agricultural practices, which would have a telling impact on 2014 crop outlook, Sanjith noted. “Climate change issues such as longer dry period and peak flow of monsoon are not at all conducive for crop intake, which the tea sector has to address in the years ahead so that this agro-industry remains sustainable,” he said. Domestic tea production in 2013 increased 6.6 per cent to 1.20 billion kg compared to 1.12 billion kg in the previous year. Since 2011, the Tea Board has included both organised and unorganised grower, especially in north India, who were not reporting their production



numbers.

## THE ECONOMIC TIMES

### **Widespread rains across country narrow deficit to 11 per cent**

Widespread heavy rain has narrowed India's monsoon deficit to 11 per cent from 17 per cent a week ago. Above-normal rainfall is expected to cover the western region including Gujarat, Maharashtra and parts of Rajasthan over the next few days, followed by the monsoon's gradual weakening. Meteorologists said the withdrawal of the monsoon, which should normally begin by September 1 from west Rajasthan, is delayed for now. "There are no signs of monsoon withdrawal from west Rajasthan till September 15," said Shailesh Nayak, secretary, ministry of earth sciences. He said rain will continue along the west and east coast for the next few days. Monday's rainfall was 50 per cent above average with the southwest monsoon vigorous over central India. He said rain will continue along the west and east coast for the next few days. Monday's rainfall was 50 per cent above average with the southwest monsoon vigorous over central India. The India Meteorological Department has forecast heavy rainfall over central and west India in the next 24 hours. As per the weather forecast for the next seven days till September 15, rainfall activity would continue across the country. GP Sharma, vice-president of meteorology at private weather forecaster Skymet Weather Services, said that due to a well marked low pressure area over the Madhya Pradesh region, rains will continue for the next three-four days, after which the intensity will wane. "Since last four-five days there have been no rains in west Rajasthan, but we cannot say withdrawal has begun as rains in neighbouring region continue. By the weekend we expect withdrawal to commence," he said. The prevalence of dry weather for five continuous days, a drop in moisture content and the setting in of anti-cyclonic circulation over western Rajasthan in the low troposphere (a height of 1.5 km) are the conditions considered before announcing the withdrawal of the monsoon. So far, the rainfall deficit has ranged between 3 per cent and 14 per cent in the southern, eastern and central parts of the country, while in the north and northwest the shortfall was 20 per cent. In Haryana and west Uttar Pradesh, the seasonal deficit was maximum at 54 per cent, followed by 48 per cent in Punjab. The Marathwada region had a seasonal deficit of 34 per cent and Telangana, 31 per cent. Data from the met department showed that 69 per cent of the country with 24 out of 36 subdivisions has received excess and normal rainfall this season. Monday's rainfall in

west Madhya Pradesh was 851 per cent above average while in Vidarbha it was 850 per cent, followed by Madhya Maharashtra at 304 per cent and Marathwada at 263 per cent. The four-month monsoon season which runs June to September, brings 70 per cent of the country's annual rainfall. Over the past few years, the withdrawal has commenced in mid-September. Last year, the monsoon started withdrawing from Rajasthan from September 9 and from Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat by September 19. In the past eight years, it has lingered on in northern India until as late as September 29 (in 2008). India receives an average 890 mm rainfall during the June-September period that is pivotal for the country's rural economy. Monsoon rain is vital for India as 55 per cent of the arable land depends entirely on rain for irrigation. While agriculture accounts for only about 15 per cent of the economy, the monsoon has a wider impact because it affects millions of people in villages, and weak rainfall can raise food prices.

### **Grain stocks as on September 1 way above targets: Government**

The country's wheat stocks at government warehouses on September 1 were 35.5 million tonnes, more than double the official target for the quarter ending this month, government sources said on Tuesday. Milled rice inventory for the same period was 17.3 million tonnes against a target of 9.8 million tonnes. Bumper harvests since 2007 have led to huge stockpiles of rice and wheat with government agencies. These stocks have also helped cushion the blow of a weak start of the four-month annual monsoon rains this June. To get rid of some of the surplus stocks, the government has allowed private traders to export wheat and non-basmati rice. Besides, it had shipped out nearly 7 million tonnes of wheat from its warehouses in the recent past. On August 1, stocks of wheat were at 38.2 million tonnes, while those of rice were 19.3 million tonnes. The government buys grains from farmers for programmes that try to ensure cheaper food for the poor and to meet emergencies. Since 2009, the government has also been keeping an additional 3 million tonnes of wheat and 2 million tonnes of rice as strategic reserves in addition to the monthly stocks.

