THE HINDU

New Sigappi paddy variety creating interest among growers

Cauvery delta region, considered to be the granary of Tamil Nadu, is prone to many natural calamities like uncertain monsoon rains, periodical floods etc.Under these circumstances, a new rice variety named “Sigappi” has been developed by researchers at Annamalai University to get better yields under submerged conditions. It is 150-154 days under irrigated condition and is ideally suited for samba (khariff) season in Tamil Nadu.

Better yield

“With the North East Monsoon affecting the livelihoods of small and medium farmers of Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur and Thanjavur districts, this semi dwarf, erect, and non–lodging variety gives higher productivity of 3.4 tonnes per hectare even if fields get submerged in water during monsoon for 10-12 days continuously,” says Dr.RM. Kathiresan, Professor, Department of Agronomy, Faculty of Agriculture, Annamalai University.Being similar to the traditional popular variety called Ponmani, released nearly a decade back, the Sigappi variety has white coloured short and bold grains, is best suited for making idli and dosa and fetches a good price.It is also found to be resistant to leaf folder, stem borer and moderately susceptible to green leaf hopper, brown spot, rice Tungro disease and rice blast, according to him.“The main reason for developing an alternative variety to Ponmani for Samba season was a long felt need among delta farmers.In these regions the choice among rice varieties with fine grains that suit the requirement for lunch purposes are comparatively more than the options for rice varieties that suit tiffin purposes (idly and dosa making) with bold grains and better dough making quality, and Sigappi variety suited well,” explains Dr. Kathiresan.

Market

A kg of this paddy is priced at Rs.20 to 23 and Rs.30 to 32 as rice today in local market. When sold for seed purpose, it fetches a price of Rs.35 to 40 per kg.Though most of the rice varieties generally withstand partial submergence for prolonged duration, complete submergence is intolerable for more than a day or two.It also gives a straw yield of six tonnes per hectare, on an average, and the straw remains unaffected even after ten days of complete submergence under water.The package of practices for cultivation is again similar to any long duration samba variety, with a seed rate of 30 kg / hectare, spacing. The rice was distributed free of cost to farmers in delta regions under different schemes implemented by the University. This has resulted in farmers exchanging the seeds among themselves thereby increasing the area under its cultivation.

Appreciation

The International Rice Research Institute recorded its appreciation to the University for the release of this new variety.It could also be a suitable variety for consideration under new seed subsidy scheme, if released by State Variety Release Committee. “Sigappi would certainly serve the best interest of Cauvery delta farmers as it protects their livelihood and economic interests at times of natural calamities,” says Dr. Kathiresan.Especially, in villages like Keelathirukallipalai of tsunami affected parangipettai block this variety has made a significant farm impact.Previously, local varieties grown there it did not produce better yield, after the tsunami so many switched over to this variety and they observed this variety to be better. From an acre the farmers have been able to harvest 2 tonnes under normal conditions. In case of flash floods they can get 1.2 to 1.5 tonnes of grain from an acre, whereas from other varieties, less than one tonne alone could be expected.In Thalaignayiru and Vattakudi villages of Vedaranyam in Nagapattinam district, the Sigappi variety is being tried under direct sowing conditions. It is also a perfect choice for integrated rice farming designs such as paddy, fish and poultry integration.

Seed distribution

For the ensuing season free seeds have been distributed to more than 100 farmers and nearly 150 farmers are cultivating it.It is also suitable for growing in other parts of the country which are prone to flooding during monsoon, according to Dr. Kathiresan.For more details contact Dr. RM. Kathiresan, Professor,Department of Agronomy, Faculty of Agriculture, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar – 608 002, email: rmkathiresan.agron@gmail.com, phone:04144 –239816, mobile:9655188233.

Nutrient deficiencies in mulberry

Mulberry crops demand heavy fertilizer inputs. Sixteen elements are required for mulberry growth. Three of the elements — carbon, hydrogen and oxygen — are provided by air and water.In the soil, plant roots absorb the remaining 13 elements nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P), potassium (K), calcium (Ca), sulphur (S), magnesium (Mg), manganese (Mn), zinc (Zn), boron (B), copper (Cu), iron (Fe), molybdenum (Mo), and chlorine (Cl).Nutrient deficiencies result in reduced shoot growth, leaf size, chlorosis/necrosis of leaf and retarded growth of terminal buds.

Symptoms

Some times these symptoms are usually the results of poorly drained soils, over or under irrigation, root diseases, plant pests, or other factors. In these cases, adding fertilizer does not correct the real problem and may contribute to new ones.Generally the diagnosis of nutrient deficiencies in mulberry is through visual symptoms, soil analysis and leaf analysis. Leaf analysis is a quantitative method for diagnosing nutrient deficiencies in mulberry and is considered reliable when compared to other two methods, as there is a strong correlation between the analysis and the actual nutrient status of the plant.A multi nutrient formulation has been developed called Poshan, which contains all the necessary nutrients in a balanced and readily available form for healthy growth of mulberry, and is recommended as foliar spray. One litre of Poshan diluted in 140 litres of water and sprayed for an acre of mulberry garden on 25th to 30th days after pruning can correct these nutrient deficiencies.

Advantages

Poshan provides nutrients for faster utilisation and recovery of deficiencies than the soil application of fertilizers. It corrects the physiological disorders caused due to deficiencies of both macro and micro nutrients and h elps to develop resistance against pest and diseases.(Dr. N. B. Chowdary is Scientist, Research Extension Centre Sub Unit, Central Silk Board, Giddalur -523 357, Prakasam District, A.P. email: recsugid@gmail.com, Mobile: 09449994014 & Dr. V. Sivaprasad is Director, Central Sericultural Research and Training Institute, Central Silk Board, Mysore- 570 008, Karnataka.)

Course on virological techniques in fish disease diagnosis

A short-course on advanced virological techniques in fish disease diagnosis was inaugurated by BaskaranManimaran, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Fisheries University (TNFU) at Fisheries College and Research Institute (FCRI) here on Wednesday.While addressing Dr. Manimaran said the Department of Fish Pathology and Health Management of FCRI has one of the very few well established fish virology laboratories in India and is capable of diagnosing viral disease problems in fish and shrimps.He said aquaculture was developing rapidly since fish is considered as healthy food. Viral diseases were certainly a threat to the aquaculture of both fish and shrimp. Hence, it was important in the aquaculture practice to diagnose and treat viral disease in fishes.The ICAR accorded due recognition to this fact and currently it has a separate subject on aquatic animal health for selecting scientists to the agricultural research service, the Vice-Chancellor added.G. Sugumar Dean (in-charge) of FCRI, who presided over, narrated the development of coastal aquaculture in Asia and highlighted the need for improving aquaculture practices in a sustainable manner with proper bio-security.Dr. Sugumaremphasised the need for protecting aquaculture from viral diseases, the highest debilitating factor in this sector.K. Riji John, Head, Department of Fish Pathology and Health Management, who welcomed, gave an overview of the 10-day course sponsored by ICAR, in which the participants would be trained in maintenance of fish cell culture, isolation of viruses, growing viruses in cell culture, calculating infective dose, molecular diagnosis and western blot analysis.G. Jeyaskaran, Director of Research, TNFU, and M. J. Prince Jeyaseelan, Professor, offered felicitation. M. Rosalind George, Director of the ICAR short-course, spoke. The programme was attended by participants from various universities and government institutes of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

'Villupuram has potential to produce 1 lakh tonnes of redgram '

Villupuram holds out immense prospects for cultivating red gram either as a separate crop or as an intercrop. Besides fetching additional income to the farmers the crop would bridge the widening supply-demand gap for red gram, according to Kennedy Jebakumar, Assistant Director (Agriculture).MrJebakumar told *The Hindu* that with this objective in mind the State government had launched the new red gram cultivation scheme. He stated that it could be an ideal intercrop in the sugarcane, groundnut, watermelon and vegetables farms and even in the casuarina groves.As of now the district had the potential to get an aggregate yield of 80,000 to one lakh tonnes of red gram a year. Such a quantity would be sufficient to meet the requirements of the entire State, besides fulfilling the needs of the Villupuram district.MrJebakumar further stated that though India stood first in terms of red gram production in the world its demand outstripped the supply level. Therefore, red gram was being imported, entailing huge outgo of foreign exchange.For those farmers who wish to raise the crop separately the government was giving away kit worth Rs 2,500 containing seeds and micronutrients.Arrangements were being made to get subsidy for those farmers who would be opting for drip irrigation system to feed the crop. MrJebakumar said that according to conservative estimate the crop would fetch an additional income of Rs 20,000 to Rs 25,000 per hectare to the farmers.Besides providing monetary benefits, the leaves shed by the plants would enrich the soil and act as good manure. The farmers interested in the crop could approach the office of the Joint Director of Agriculture to get the kit or saplings, MrJebakumar added.

Ensure sugarcane growers get their dues, Centre tells States

The Centre said on Wednesday that it had directed State governments to ensure that sugarcane farmers' dues were cleared at the earliest. The States could take whatever measures they deemed fit to encourage mill owners to remunerate cane growers. The move comes in the backdrop of a spate of suicides and threat from farmers to stop growing cane.Presenting the initiatives and achievements of the Ministry of Consumers Affairs, Food and Public Distribution in the first 100 days, Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said many meetings had been held with apex bodies of the sugar sector and representatives of major sugar-producing States.About 45 per cent of outstanding dues had been cleared, and the Centre had expedited the process of facilitating payment of arrears and disbursal of interest-free loan to the sugar sector. As on September 4, 2014, Rs. 5,511 crore of the sanctioned Rs. 6,094 crore had been disbursed. Government incentive for the export of raw sugar had been revised to Rs. 3,371 per tonne for August-September from Rs 3,300 for June-July. Also, the import duty on raw sugar was increased from 15 per cent to 25 per cent. "As a result, sugarcane arrears came down to

Rs. 7,760 crore from Rs. 14,095 crore as on May 31, 2014."To check the prices of essential food items, potato and onions would be declared essential items under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, the Minister said. States had been authorised to impose stock limits to check hoarding.Mr. Paswan said the floods in Jammu and Kashmir had resulted in the loss of nearly 8,000 tonnes of food grain. But there was enough stock in the State to meet the demand for the next two months. There would be no shortage of food in the State.

Farmers launch company

The WEFSA Farmer Producer Company floated by a group of farmers of various districts was formally inaugurated here on Wednesday.

Joint effort

The Perambalur Sub-Collector, Madhusudhan Reddy, opened the company in the presence of members of the firm and agriculture department officials.The company with headquarters in Perambalur has been floated by a group of 100 farmers with an investment of Rs. 10,000 each.The firm would help its members in obtaining farm inputs at a lesser cost and help them in selling their produce through the sales outlets that are proposed to be open soon.K.Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, and WEFSA Chief Executive Officer MahendraM.Manivaasan took part, a press release said.

Floods dampen hopes of farmers

Standing crops in hundreds of acres in Konaseema damaged

Villagers being ferried in boats as Muktheswaram causeway gets inundated due to floods in East Godavari district on Wednesday.— PHOTO: S. RAMBABU

The hopes of horticulture farmers from this greenish village on the banks of Godavari were dampened by floods. At a time when the crops are about to yield, the sudden rise in the Godavari has played the spoilsport.The farmers, who were in a cheerful mood till three days ago, are calculating their losses by standing in knee-deep water on Wednesday.Even as the flood is receding, the damage has already been done to the standing crops of banana, sweet orange, papaya, betel leaf and vegetables spread in hundreds of acres.A good number of farmers opted for papaya as an inter-crop with coconut by investing about Rs. 50,000 per acre. When the fruit was in ripening stage, entire gardens came under sheets of water. “Now, the yield is hopeless. We can’t count on any yield and the entire investment turned into mere waste,” said Kola Edukondalu, who cultivated papaya in two acres in Ainavilli Lanka.“You know the cost of seed? It is Rs. 7,000 per 100 grams and we bought it from Bangalore,” he says while calculating other investments such as labour, fertilizer and pesticide.The village is under a sheet of water and boats are being used for transportation. People residing in the low-lying areas are spending their second day in the relief camps.Sweet orange and betel were cultivated in huge extents in the vicinity and the two crops too were at the yielding stage.“It will take another two to three days for the floodwater to recede from the farms and fields. By that time, sweet orange attracts bugs and the betel leaf will be completely damaged,” says Salivahana, a farmer from Ainavilli Lanka.Vegetables sown in hundreds of acres in the abutting KotipalliBaga village are marooned and the farmers lost all the hopes of minimum returns.

Livestock Census: cattle population in Odisha declines

Odisha has witnessed a 5.59 per cent decline in the total cattle population, according to the 19th Livestock Census.Odisha constitutes 6.09 per cent of the total cattle population in the country and it has declined by 5.59 per cent during the inter-Census period from 2007 to 2012, the report says.According to the report, the indigenous cattle population has decreased by 2.7 per cent in addition to a 39 per cent decline in buffalo population during the same period.“While exotic and crossbred cattle decreased from 1.7 million to 1.3 million, showing a decrease of 23 per cent, there has been an increase of 19 per cent in the female cross-bred animals in the State,” report says.According to the latest census, the indigenous cattle decreased from 1.06 crore to 1.03 crore, with the number of female buffaloes falling from 5.89 lakh to 3.91 lakh, down by 33 per cent in the 2007 census.

Similarly, the total bovine population (cattle and buffalo) has declined by 8.5 per cent standing at 1.2 crore in 2012 against 1.35 crore in 2007. The goat and sheep population, too, registered a negative growth of 8.61 per cent and 13.04 per cent respectively in the previous census.“The population of poultry bird accounts for 2.73 per cent of the country’s population and it has marginally declined by 3.4 per cent and swine population has also declined by 54.17 per cent over the last census, 2007,” the report says.For the first time, the livestock census has information about stray cattle and stray dogs. It is observed that 11.3 lakh stray cattle are available out of which, 98 per cent are in rural areas. Nearly 20 per cent of the stray dogs numbering about 1.8 lakh are available in urban areas.The number of cattle, buffalo, sheep and goat per thousand households in rural areas is 1152, 71, 158 and 648, respectively, as against 241, 19, 20, 115 in urban areas. This reveals that livestock farming is mostly rural based.

<u>Dry villages near earshot distance of Vaigai dam</u>

A big tank remains dry owing to decrepit supply channel

Though Kovilpattipanchayat is just 200 metres away from Vaigai dam, with 50 feet of water, farmers and local people have been struggling to get water for drinking and irrigation for more than three decades.Spread across over 356 acres, Sakkilichi Amman tank with authorisedayacuts of 486 acres of wetlands, remain dry owing to the dilapidated condition of 23-km-long VaigaiDuraisamypuram main supply channel. The tank’s surplus weir is 130 metre away from Vaigai dam. Moreover, the tank is above the dam.Created by Chola kings, Sakkilichi Amman tank at Kovilapatti, one of the biggest tanks in the integrated Madurai district, Nallidaicherry tank at Balasamudram, Marigundu tank and KodangiNaickar tank in KovilpattiRengasamudram, Thirumalapuram, Marikundu and Thekkampattipanchayats had been irrigating 960 acres of wetlands and recharging 636 wells.Of these, 320 wells are defunct and the others dry. One third of the population in these panchayats have migrated to urban areas, says K.V. Perumal, treasurer of NagalaruOdai Water Sharing Committee at Kovilpatti.NagalaruOdai, originating at Sri Velappar Temple on Varushandu hills and VirumanoothuOdai, originating from Sitharpatti in Kandamanur, feed these tanks.Both the streams are connected to the tanks by VaigaiDuraisamypuram channel dug in February 1983. Now, it remains clogged with debris and garbage. All the 11 siphon tunnels of the channel across roads are also clogged. Even a heavy rain will not improve flow in the channel, says S. Murugan of Athankaraipatti.“In 1983, Vaigairiver was in spate and many villages were marooned, but there was no water at these panchayats. The then Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran inspected the inundated areas. We gave a petition to him on the persistent drought in the region. He ordered a survey which was done in two months and funds were sanctioned immediately. The channel was created. But, it does not serve the purpose,” says Mr. Perumal.In 1990, the government declared Andipatti as a gray area and stopped sinking of borewells. The situation turned worse when the government created a percolation pond near the head-point of the stream. After that flow in the channel was almost nil.After decades-old struggle, Rs.2.98 crore was sanctioned last year for rehabilitation of the channel.The work commenced. But the tanks will not receive water even after rehabilitation because the sanctioned fund is insufficient to de-silt clogged siphon tunnels, allege farmers. The Public Works Department plans to construct a big siphon tunnel to increase the flow.Farmers cannot desilt old tunnels on their own because it is 30-metre long. They urge for de-silting tunnels while rehabilitating the channel to enable them to fill the tanks and rehabilitate wetlands.

hindustantimes.com

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Sep 11

Max Min

34° | 25°

Rain: 0
Humidity: 70
Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:57
Sunset: 06:15
Barometer: 1005

TomTomorrow's Forecast

Sunny

Friday, Sep 12

Max Min

34° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday **Sep 13**	Sunday **Sep 14**	Monday **Sep 15**	Tuesday **Sep 16**	Wednesday **Sep 17**
34° | 26°	36° | 26°	35° | 26°	34° | 27°	36° | 27°
Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy	Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 05:57
Humidity: 70 Sunset: 06:13
Wind: normal Barometer: 1009

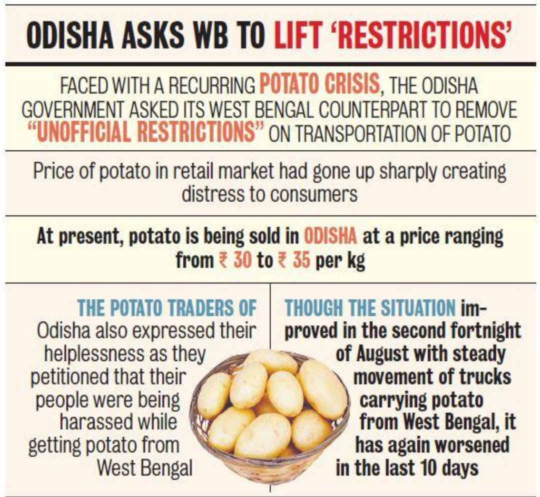
THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Vegetable Seed Distribution Delayed in TS

Despite private seed companies' willingness to provide hybrid vegetable seeds, the Telangana State Seeds Development Corporation (SSDC) is yet to invite tenders for distribution of subsidised seeds to farmers. Three months after the beginning of the season, the government finally took the first step towards initiating the process of seed distribution. But it is going to take another month to begin the actual distribution at the district level. The government began supplying subsidised seeds to make sure the stable production of vegetables in the state.According the GO issued by united Andhra Pradesh government and which is still in force, a committee was supposed to be formed for the empanelling vegetable companies and fixing the prices in June. But it was delayed by three months as the Telangana government had to issue a separate GO for forming the committee. While Andhra Pradesh is implementing the same GO, the Telangana government decided to issue a new one.The committee, which consists of the commissioner of horticulture, representatives of State Seeds Development Corporation and the faculty of horticulture university will soon invite tenders from private seed companies and fix the prices for all varieties of vegetables. After the prices are fixed, the seeds will be dispatched to the district offices of SSDC for distribution to farmers. But so far no meeting has been held by the committee.Around 60 companies had taken part in the distribution programme last year, said Latha, horticulture officer.The government is planning to provide around Rs 3,000 worth of seeds per every hectare of farming land. More than 20 varieties of seeds will be kept available for farmers. But tomato, onion and potato have more demand, she said.The horticulture department is planning to start distribution at the district level by the end of this month. SSDC is the the nodal agency for seed distribution in the state. But now it is coordinating with the horticulture and agriculture departments due to lack of staff.

Potato Crisis Hits Odisha Yet Again, Prices of Tuber Going up Sharply

Faced with acute shortage of potato, the State Government on Wednesday requested its West Bengal counterpart to remove the unofficial restriction on supply of potato to Odisha.



The district collectors have been asked to store whatever stock is available in their areas and fix the price of potato after taking into consideration the stock situation.Chief Secretary G C Pati spoke to his West Bengal counterpart and requested him to facilitate regular supply of potato in the larger interest of consumers. Pati has also written a letter to West Bengal Chief Secretary in this connection.Stating that the State is experiencing acute shortage of potato in the market causing severe hardship to the consumers, Pati said the scarcity is arising because of unofficial restriction by the West Bengal Government on movement of potato trucks to Odisha for the past one month.The daily potato requirement of Odisha is about 2,500-3,000 tonnes, most of which is sourced from West Bengal during this time of the year."As against normal requirement, we are getting only about 25 per cent in the last 7-8 days. As a result, the price of potato in the retail market has gone up sharply creating distress for consumers," Pati said.The potato traders of Odisha have been complaining that they are being harassed while getting potato from West Bengal, the letter said.The situation had improved in the second fortnight of August with steady movement of truck carrying potato from West Bengal. But it has again worsened in the last 10 days, he said.Minister of State for Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Sanjay Dasburma reviewed the situation at a meeting and asked the department to sell the tuber through public distribution system outlets and Maitree shops.Prices of potato have skyrocketed once again with the vegetable selling at Rs 35 per kg in the retail markets across the State.The City received only 13 truckloads of potato on Wednesday. Though the wholesale price of potato at Aiginiamandi was fixed at Rs 2,400 per quintal, the retailers are selling the vegetable at a premium due to heavy demand.

Potato Price Shoots Up Again

After a brief lull, potato prices have shot up again in the Steel City and elsewhere in Sundargarh district, largely due to artificial shortage.Price of onion also remains on the higher side.To add to people's woes, there is no respite from the price rise in near future. The district has to wait for three to four months till the locally grown 42,000 quintals of potato and 3,000 quintals of onion are harvested.Sources in the retail market said prices of two varieties of potatoes ranged from Rs 30 to Rs 32, while onion was being sold at Rs 24 per kg on Wednesday. Some unscrupulous retailers are also selling potato at Rs 33 per kg.Potato is procured from West Bengal as Uttar Pradesh supplies less quantity due to higher transportation cost.Amid restriction in West Bengal towards dispatch of potato to Odisha, several agents are managing to sneak in potato-laden trucks through various check gates till Birmitrapur. At Birmitrapur, the agents are sending the trucks to those destinations where they are offered higher prices.Sources in the Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare (FSCW) department said on Wednesday that 900 quintals of potato arrived through Birmitrapur check gate, while the city received 480 quintals a day before. Till Wednesday noon, the stock was 1,100 quintals against the daily need of 600 to 700 quintals of potato.Wholesale price of Jyoti variety of round potato ranged between Rs 2,500 and Rs 2,600 per quintal, while per quintal of K22 variety of long potato was priced at Rs 2,700 to Rs 2,800. Retailers are allowed to make a maximum profit of Rs 2 per kg.Apparently, the FSCW department is ailing with manpower shortage to effectively regulate price manipulation. Employees of Regulated Market Committee (RMC) stationed at Birmitrapur check gate are allegedly not recording the exact amount of incoming stocks.Deputy Director of Horticulture (DDH), BasudevSahu, said as of now, potato seeds are being distributed to farmers. While in the first phase distribution of 275 quintals of potato seeds is underway, another 3,925 quintals of seed would be distributed till October. "From December, farmers can harvest 42,000 quintals of potato. Similarly, two quintals of onion seeds have been supplied in the first phase and distribution of rest 18 quintals would continue till October. From December, the district would be able to get 3,000 quintals of onion," Sahu added.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Sheet rubber plunges to Rs. 120/kg

Physical rubber prices finished weak on Wednesday. Sheet rubber declined to Rs. 120 (123) and Rs. 121 (124) per kg respectively, according to traders and the Rubber Board. The grade slipped to Rs. 118 (121), according to dealers. The September futures closed at Rs. 117 (117.33), October at Rs. 116.88 (116.72), November at Rs. 117.15 (116.88), December at Rs. 117.28 (117.40) and January at Rs. 119.58 (121.40) per kg on National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE). RSS 3 (spot) declined Rs. 100.86 (102.82) per kg at Bangkok. The September futures dropped to ¥ 177.5 (Rs. 101.51) from ¥ 181.00 per kg during the day session but then recovered partially to ¥ 177.8 (Rs. 101.68) in the night session on Tokyo Commodity Exchange .Spot rubber rates (Rs. / kg) were: RSS-4: 120 (123), RSS-5: 115 (117), ungraded: 99 (103), ISNR 20: 102 (103) and Latex (60% drc): 87 (88).

An RIB solution to make pests non-resistant to Bt gene

Nagpur-based Central Institute for Cotton Research will soon write to the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) to allow sale of refuge in bag (RIB) cottonseeds that will have Bt (Bacillus thuringiensis) variety along with non-Bt.A process such as RIB will ensure that pests present on a farm growing genetically modified crop like cotton and corn do not develop resistance to the Bt gene that destroys them.“We have conducted tests of RIB seeds for the last three years and the results are promising. We are now preparing the data on the results. Once we prepare them, we will write to GEAC,” said KR Kranthi, director of the research institute. While the Bt variety will make up 95 per cent of the RIB cottonseeds, the non-Bt one will comprise the rest.While cultivating genetically-modified crops, it is mandatory for farmers to grow refuge or a non-GM trait of the same crop in five per cent of the area. In India, while selling Bt cottonseeds, seed companies provide the non-Bt refuge seeds along with them in a separate packet.The objective of the RIB concept is to make growers comply with norms for growing genetically modified crop and, in turn, make the process simpler.Growing a refuge crop in the field of a Bt crop is based on the law of genetics. If a pest develops resistance to the Bt gene, then the non-Bt plant grown on the same farm will help tackle the problem. The principle is simple: the pest from the Bt plant will mate with a similar one from the non-Bt plant and develop a progeny that will not be resistant to the Bt gene. "Since farmers are oblivious to the dangers of growing just Bt cotton, they throw away the non-Bt seeds. Some farmers do it to get returns from the Bt variety as it will fetch them more money," said an official with a seed firm.DuPont Pioneer came out with such a concept for Bt corn first, while Monsanto has developed a similar concept for Bt cotton. "US companies have been developing the RIB concept for a number of years now. In India, we proposed it to the CICR and are awaiting further details from them," said a Monsanto spokesperson. "During a meeting among stakeholders of Bt cotton, Monsanto floated the idea. We at the CICR told them that we would also like to test the RIB process," said Kranthi."We think there is no other choice left for farmers. This is because the current practice of issuing the non-Bt seeds for refuge crop is not working. Seed companies should ensure that 95 per cent of the seeds in the bag will essentially be Bt," he said.

Volume at Coonoor tea auction drops

The falling trend witnessed for the last few weeks in the Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction continues for Sale No: 37 to be held on Thursday and Friday. A volume of 13.39 lakh kg has been catalogued – as much as 1.71 lakh kg less than the offer of last week. Of this, 9.11 lakh kg belong to the leaf grades and 4.24 lakh kg belong to the dust grades. As much as 12.46 lakh kg belong to CTC variety and only 93,000 kg to orthodox variety. In the leaf counter, only 43,000 kg belong to orthodox while 8.68 lakh kg to CTC.PS SUNDAR

Pepper rules steady

Pepper prices remained steady as the markets continued to be sluggish on Wednesday. Arrivals and demand were thin. According to north Indian importers, duty-free imports could amount to 2,500 tonnes under Indo-Sri Lankan Free Trade Agreement. Floods in the north Indian states have slowed down demand.The markets were expected to become activated after the ongoing festivals next week.On the spot, three tonnes of pepper were traded on Wednesday. Spot prices remained unchanged at Rs.68,700 (ungarbled) and Rs. 71,700 (garbled) a quintal. Export prices declined to $12,050 a tonne (c&f) for Europe and $12,300 a for the US following weakening of the rupee against the dollar.

Cotton body sees output topping 400 lakh bales

The Cotton Association of India expects the output in season 2014-15 starting next month to top 400 lakh bales (170 kg each) at 403 lakh bales, a new record. This will be possible with the recent revival of monsoon easing fears of lower yield.This apart, the acreage under cotton cultivation is 123.71 lakh hectares now and is likely to touch 127 lakh hectares against 117 lakh hectares recorded last year, said the Association quoting the Directorate of Cotton Development data.The free and stable cotton policy maintained by the Government during the last few years has encouraged the market forces to play a role to the advantage of the entire cotton value chain, said the Association. Cotton farmers also had an opportunity to realise remunerative prices for their produce. This has encouraged the farmers to bring in the largest ever acreage under cotton during the 2014-15 crop year, it said.

Surplus

In its August estimates, the Association has estimated total cotton supply at 468.50 lakh bales and domestic consumption of 300 lakh bales, leaving a surplus of 168.50 lakh bales for exports.

Wet regime seen migrating to eastern parts

East Gujarat and Konkan-Goa witnessed vigorous to active monsoon conditions during the 24 hours ending Wednesday morning.The well-marked low-pressure area has weakened twice over to be a rudimentary upper air cyclonic circulation over west Madhya Pradesh and east Rajasthan by the evening.

Dry Westerlies

International models also suggest that a push of dry westerly winds from the north-west would drive the cyclonic circulation towards the plains of the east. Accompanying rains will also migrate in this manner towards east India and adjoining east-central India.Still, a few weather-generating systems are present over central and adjoining west India capable of sustaining showers in the neighbourhood and across parts of the northwest.Latest indications suggest that these rains may reach up to Punjab, but not quite Jammu and Kashmir, which is reeling under the worst rain-triggered catastrophe witnessed in well over a century.A scenario for a fresh wave of rainfall originating from the Bengal, off the Odisha coast, is also building with a preparatory cyclonic circulation showing up in the Bay of Bengal on Wednesday.An outlook by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts suggested that this could grow into a low-pressure area under the influence of a pulse landing from the South China Sea.But on Wednesday, it pointed to simultaneous development in both the South China Sea and adjoining west Pacific which could take the momentum away from the Bay.Still, the European Centre persisted with the outlook for sufficient conditions off the coast to sustain rains into east-central and adjoining east India.

Strong monsoon

Meanwhile, an Indian Met Department outlook suggested that the monsoon will continue to be strong over east Gujarat, Konkan-Goa, Surashtra and Kutch for the next couple of days.East Rajasthan in northwest India and Odisha in east-central India will be the two other regions where moderate to heavy rainfall will be recorded during this phase.

An extended prediction said rain or thundershowers would break out over west and north Gujarat; east Rajasthan; Madhya Pradesh; Uttar Pradesh; coastal Karnataka; and the rest of east and northeast India.The overall rain deficit for the country as a whole stays at 11 per cent. Northwest India and northeast India are still left with deficits of 21 per cent and 14 per cent respectively.Central India at five per cent and South Peninsula at four per cent have returned a much better position.

<u>How to make delivery in commodity futures foolproof</u>

A third party audit should be done periodically to ensure stock quality and quantity

Risk coverage Insurance for all the WSPs should be standardised and can be endorsed in favour of exchanges. mihalec/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The Forward Markets Commission (FMC) must be complimented for circulating the draft norms on “Strengthening of warehousing facilities in commodity futures market” in the public domain. This initiative can achieve a lot more than just transparency. If executed well, it would drive trading traffic back to commodity exchanges, which are currently bearing the brunt of the lack of confidence on the part of market participants.

Fixing responsibility

In spite of earlier directives from the FMC, exchanges had said that the onus of quality and quantity of commodities lay entirely with the concerned warehouse service provider (WSP). The current draft norms (dated August 26, 2014) and an earlier circular (dated August 30, 2013) put to rest all confusion on this issue by explicitly clarifying that commodity exchanges are primarily responsible for delivery settlement of future contracts and that WSPs act only as agents of the exchange.The norms of net worth for WSPs have also been prescribed. However, more than net worth, it is essential that the exchange delivery activity of a WSP (which is an independent business unit) be ringfenced from other activities.Over the years with fading cash-carry margins, exchange deposits and exchange warehousing margins have shrunk. Therefore, WSPs need other sources of revenue. So, it will be naïve of us to say that the WSP should not engage in any activity other than exchange delivery. Yet it is essential that the liability of other activities of the WSP's not have spill over into exchange delivery, which may seriously jeopardise the price discovery mechanism.

Covering risks

Currently, exchanges are taking cash deposits and bank guarantees (as security) from WSPs to insulate the "incident effect" of any bad delivery liability. However, on a freeze frame basis, Collateral Under Management (CUM) to bank guarantee (BG) ratio is often insufficient. There should be a standardisation of norms in this regard so that at no point should exchange deliverable goods in warehouses remain uncovered and discretionary. This can also bring in adequate variable coverage ratio into play as hundred percent coverage will be commercially unviable.The insurance policy for all the exchange WSPs should be standardised, which in turn can be endorsed in favour of the exchanges. In case of any event of fire and other perils, the bridge pay-out to the members can be made from the Investor Protection Fund till the time the final settlement is made by the insurance companies. Currently, exchanges disclose their stock and space availability, which may turn out to be a serious systemic lacuna. In the case of NSEL, we had already seen a fatal gap in this with the exchange's stock positions.

Independent inspections

Therefore, a regulator-owned software should be made mandatory whereby all exchanges and WSPs should enter their stock and space availability at each location. There should be third party independent audits to periodically check stock both in terms of quality and quantity. The existing cross audits by WSPs at each other's service location is not full proof and it can lead to messier situations.In most jurisdictions, decisions regarding implementation of these measures are left to the discretion of the exchange, without the need for any prior approval, implicit or express, from the regulatory authority. This is dangerous and the loophole can be exploited. On the other hand, allowing member/clients to do their own inspections will lead to the collapse of the delivery system and unnecessary disputes and litigation. Therefore, these stock audits should be conducted by reputed and independent inspection agencies appointed by the regulator.Last but not the least, virtually all of the harmful opacity can be ended with a common clearing house (incorporated outside the individual exchange's domain) and by making physical stock management more transparent. This will ensure system, process and audit integrity in the exchange delivery and settlement space.The writer is a commodity commentator.

Sugar extends fall on low demand, ample supply

Continuing its losing streak for the third straight day, sugarprices fell by another 0.95 per cent to Rs 2,915 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators trimmed positions, tracking low demand against ample supplies in the spot market.
At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, sugar for delivery in September traded Rs 28, or 0.95 per cent lower to Rs 2,915 per quintal with an open interest of 6,150 lots.The October contract lost Rs 27, or 0.92 per cent to Rs 2,910 per quintal in 5,260 lots.Market analysts said apart from subdued demand from bulk consumers, higher supplies in the spot markets from millers, mainly kept pressure on the sweetener prices at futures trade.

Guargum sheds 1.7% on profit booking

Guargum prices dropped by Rs.280 to Rs.16,000 per quintal in futures trading today after speculators locked-in gains at higher levels.At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange counter, guargum for delivery in December shed Rs.280, or 1.72 per cent to Rs.16,000 per quintal, with an open interest of 16,020 lots.Also, most-active delivery in October month lost Rs.250, or 1.53 per cent to Rs.16,110 per quintal, in an open interest of 16,110 lots.Analysts said off-loading of positions by speculators at prevailing levels and increased supplies against slackened demand in the spot markets, mainly led to the fall in guargum prices at futures trade here.

Cardamom down 0.5% on low demand

Extending losses for the third day, cardamom prices fell further by Rs 0.49% to Rs 958 per kg in futures trading today as speculators indulged in reducing positions due to subdued demand in the spot market.Besides, adequate stocks position in the physical market on increased arrivals from producing belts also put pressure on cardamom prices. At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in September traded lower by Rs 4.70, or 0.49% to Rs 958 per kg in business turnover of 13 lots.Similarly, the spice for delivery in October shed Rs 1.10, or 0.12% to Rs 941.50 per kg in 73 lots.Market analysts said besides subdued demand, adequate stocks position on increased arrivals in the spot markets from producing regions mainly kept pressure on cardamom prices for the third day at futures trade.

First farmers' market out of APMC coming up in Delhi

The country’s first wholesale centre (mandi) for trading in fruit and vegetables outside the jurisdiction of an Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) is coming up at Alipur in north Delhi.The aim is to begin operations by the end of November.The city government had earlier notified the removal of fruit and vegetables from the list of APMC products. This allows legal trade in these outside an APMC, under the law. This first such mandi, termed a ‘kisanmandi’, is being set up by the Small Farmers’ Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC), a body under the Union ministry of agriculture.“We have chosen NCDEX Spot, a spot exchange set up by the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange, as a service partner which will help in backward and forward linkages,” said Pravesh Sharma, managing director of SFAC. “Under this project, we will bring consumers and farmers together. Trading will be based on samples and SFAC will ensure quality and quantity to bulk consumers, while guaranteeing payment to farmers.”For retail consumers, fruit and vegetables from here would be sold through mobile vans.A few months earlier, SFAC had invited bids in this regard. Six companies participated. These included NCDEX Spot, Basix and Reuters Market Light. NCDEX Spot’s chief executive, Rajesh Sinha, said: “We are tying up with farmers groups and also contacting bulk buyers like food processors, hotels and retail chains.”With sale from here, the mark-up for retail consumers from what the farmer gets is expected to halve. Farmers, said Sinha, would also be able to send commodities directly from their farm or warehouse to a consumer's site. The growers would also be able to get 15-20 per cent more, he said, since middlemen would be absent.Maharashtra, Bihar, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh are other places where such mandis are possible — they either do not have APMCs or have delisted fruit and vegetables from their APMC law.

Global coffee prices set to soar as supply declines

Coffee prices are set to rise further, as the crop year 2014-15 stares at a supply deficit in the global market. Prices, ruling at 190-200 cents per lb (pound), are poised to move up to 220-230 cents per lb by December.“Drought in Brazil at the beginning of the crop year will result in global supply deficit and concerns over its crop will trigger price rise,” JawaidAkhtar, chairman, Coffee Board, told Business Standard.Global coffee production remained flat at 145.2 million bags (each bag 60 kg) in 2013-14 as in previous year (145.3 million) bags. Consumption, however, surpassed supply to 145.8 million bags.As the world’s largest coffee producer, Brazil harvested 44.57 million bags in 2014, a decline of 9.3 per cent from 49.15 million bags in 2013.“Brazil has been going through unseasonal weather patterns this year. After drought in the initial months, which affected the crop, prolonged hot and dry months may further damage the crop in 2015. As a result, crop output will be lower at 42-43 million bags next year,” said Nishant R Gurjer, coffee exporter and former chairman, Karnataka Planters’ Association.Production in Indonesia, the third largest producer, is also estimated to decline 14 per cent to 10 million bags in 2014 from 11.67 million bags in 2013, Akhtar said.Production in Colombia, which is recovering after massive replantation, will increase 25 per cent to 12 million bags this year from eight million bags, with prospects of good crop in future. Vietnam, which leads in growing Robusta beans, however, is set to harvest a record crop next year.Though the Coffee Board has projected a bumper crop for 2014-15 at 344,500 tonnes, planters estimate about 20 per cent lower crop in India, the sixth largest producer, due to widespread attack of White Stem Borer, followed by heavy and continuous rain between July and September.Planters estimate production to be in the range of 290,000 tonnes to 300,000 tonnes, almost same as the last year. “Brazilian production risks continue to support the outlook for the International Coffee Exchange Arabica coffee futures, and some volatility is expected during the key flowering period of September-October,” Rabobank said in its latest report. Indian exporters, however, are unlikely to benefit from the price rally, as no stock is left with them. Harvest commences in November for 2014-15 crop year and export season begins in December-January.Monthly average of the ICO (International Coffee Organisation) composite indicator for August settled at 163.08 cents per lb, up 6.93 per cent from July price. Daily price increased to 169.95 cents on August 29 from 157.82 on August 8.ICE Arabica futures are expected to average 185 cents this quarter (July-September) and edge a little lower from current level to 195 cents per lb, the Rabobank said.ICE Arabica coffee futures, however, fell on Tuesday due to Brazilian uncertainty. The ICE benchmark December Arabica coffee contract closed 1.85 cents down or one per cent at 192 cents a pound.Prices of other milds, which consists of Indian Arabica, moved in the range of 205-225 cents per pound in August. Overall, dry weather in Brazil has lifted prices by 70 per cent this year.

Rubber prices at multi-year low

Rubber planters see a crisis-like situation looming, with international rubber prices falling in the Bangkok market to a seven-year low of Rs 100 a kg. This has resulted in a sharp rise in imports by Indian rubber consuming industries such as the tyre industry. In the face of a heavy inflow of imported rubber, domestic prices, too, fell to a five-year low of Rs 124 a kg for the benchmark variety, RSS-4, on Wednesday.While tyre companies smile at the price drop, planters have written to the Rubber Board and the commerce ministry for a ‘safeguard duty’ on imports. At present, the import tax is 20 per cent.This is for the first time since 2007 that the international market drops to Rs 100 levels. In September last year, the average price in Bangkok was Rs 160 a kg.

On Wednesday, the Standard Malaysian Rubber quoted at only Rs 92. The Malaysian rubber market extended its losses, tracking the weak performance on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM) and Shanghai Futures Exchange, amid further decline in crude oil prices. All the contracts at TOCOM on Wednesday moved lower in a range of 0.6-1.5 per cent. The market has been persistently lower for the past couple of weeks. Shares of tyre companies Ceat, Apollo Tyres, JK Tyres and MRF Tyres here surged significantly in the past six moths. The tyre index, compiled by BS Research, comprising the share price of tyre companies, has seen a surge of 77.5 per cent from March following the steep fall in natural rubber prices, which will have a positive impact on the companies' profitability.

Experts say the price advantage will erode the impact due to cost escalation in the past and will help bring more investment into the sector.According to the Rubber Board, local prices have seen the sharpest fall in five years, hitting Rs 124 a kg. Rubber prices are down 25 per cent from the average of Rs 169 a kg in January. A slowdown in demand from China, the world's biggest consumer of rubber, along with over supply in markets such as Thailand, has sent international rubber prices spiralling down in the past year.Another reason is that demand has not matched the surge in supply over the past three years. This has pushed down rubber prices, with rubber futures plunging 28 per cent this year to the lowest level in five years. Also, the fall in crude oil prices to below $100 a barrel is a big positive for tyre makers, as 30 per cent of the raw material cost comes from crude derivatives, while 50 per cent comes from natural rubberImpose safeguard duty' The United Planters' Association of Southern India has demanded that a safeguard duty on natural rubber be imposed to protect the domestic plantations from the vagaries of prices.The Association's appeal follows the steep decline in average monthly prices from Rs 245 a kg in April 2011 to Rs 143 in May 2014, and further down to Rs 130 in August.

According to the planters’ body, the main reason for the decline in domestic prices is rising imports.Destination-wise imports indicate the shipments from Indonesia and Vietnam increased 37 per cent to 360,000 tonnes in 2013-14 from 263,000 tonnes in 2012-13.Early import trends during the current financial year further confirm it is continuing at a much faster pace, suggesting the possibility of another record rubber imports. According to Rubber Board’s data, during the April-July 2014 period, 133,789 tonnes of natural rubber were brought into the country. Experts feel the total import would cross 400,000 tonnes this financial year. During 2013-14, India had imported 325,190 tonnes compared with 217,364 tonnes in 2012-13.The Association has also sought a detailed scrutiny on the norms followed in fixing the import quantum under the advance licensing scheme or the Duty Exemption Entitlement Certificate scheme.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Ram Vilas Paswan says Centre trying to resolve Uttar Pradesh sugar row

Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said the Centre is trying to resolve a stalemate between the Uttar Pradesh government and the state's sugar producers, with the new canecrushing season less than a month away. He said the government can consider more steps, including extending the loan tenures of mills, if the sugar producers can give an assurance on paying arrears to cane farmers. Sugar mills in the state, the country's second largest sugar producer, owe Rs 4,560 crore to farmers for purchasing cane in 2013-14. Mills blame high state fixed price of cane for their inability to pay, and have been asking the government to link cane and sugar prices, as is the case in top producer Maharashtra and Karnataka. "The Centre got both the state government and sugar mill owners to sit and discuss the issue on August 14. We even put pressure on mills. It is now the state government who should take strict action to ensure farmers are given the money," Paswan said at an event to mark the 100 days of the new Union government. He said the arrears to sugarcane farmers in the country have nearly halved to Rs 7,760 crore from 14,000 crore in January. Still, it is a grave situation, particularly for farmers, he said. "If they stop growing sugarcane, then we might face a problem in 2016." Paswan said the government has tried its best to help the local industry, raising sugar import duty to 25 per cent from 15 per cent, facilitating interest-free loans, offering incentives for exports and increasing the compulsory ethanol blending in petrol to 10 per cent from 5 per cent. "Sugar mills should give a guarantee and a fixed date by when they will give money to farmers and we can think of extending their loans," he said. On August 22, the UP government had announced a rebate of Rs 6 per quintal to millers provided they clear their entire arrears towards farmers by September 30. Private mills had refused to take the offer. Mill owners and industry bodies Indian Sugar Mills association and National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories didn't respond to ET's queries on the matter.

Ram Vilas Paswan promises to keep prices under check

The government will keep prices of essential items such as rice, wheat, sugar and pulses under check even if their output is impacted by poor monsoon, Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said today. "There will not be any problem in supply of essential food items, especially rice, wheat, sugar and pulses even if rainfall is less. There is no question of price rise in these items," Paswan told reporters when asked about the impact on inflation due to deficient rain. Terming the price rise in some vegetables like onion and tomato as "seasonal", he said prices of onion, tomato and potato are stable and supply of these items are expected to improve from November onwards. He said there will abundant supply of the vegetables. Paswan ruled out any hike in import duty of edible oil. Consumer Affairs Secretary KeshavDesiraju said measures to check prices of onion are being taken based on the inputs from the Agriculture Ministry that has estimated a drop in early kharif onion crop due to 15-20 per cent deficit in rain. Highlighting measures taken to check measures in the first 100 days of the government, Paswan said that potato and onion were brought under the ambit of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and states were authorised to impose stock limits on them to check hoarding. Telangana and West Bengal have already imposed stock limits, he said. The state governments were also advised to amend the APMC Act to deregulate sale of fruits and vegetables. The Delhi government has amended the act and a farmers market is also being set up. To check prices of wheat and rice, Paswan said that the government has released 10 million tonnes of wheat in the open market and 50 lakh tonnes of rice via PDS. On progress made in implementation of the Food Security Act, Paswan said some states are facing problems and have sought up to one more year to put in place the system. As of now, 11 states have implemented and no more state has come forward to implement the law after the Centre gave three-months extension on July 4 to roll out the scheme, he said. Asked about ministry's view on allowing FDI in multibrand retail, Desiraju said: "The consumer affairs ministry has always been interested in what is the interest of consumers. It is likely if FDI results in wider choice, better quality and more products available, it is something that we will support." "However, this is all government decision on which Department of Consumer Affairs does not have any single point of view," he added.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

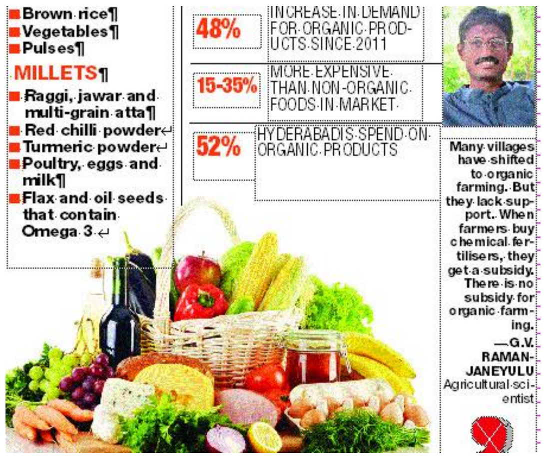
Exotic flower plants making for city homes

Gone are the days when crotons were the obvious choice for interior decoration in city houses. With new varieties of palm and a few exotic flowers available in the market, Patnaites are increasingly taking to the new arrivals at the nurseries for adorning their home sweet homes.Florists in the state capital vouch for the various types of palms - areca, cycas, alex, red, golden, Chinese and phoenix palm which, they say, last longer than flowering plants or crotons. "Be it home or office, city people love to plant palm in decorative pots and get a feel of nature around them," Pramod Kumar Yadav, one of the sellers near Gandhi Maidan said, adding, "A few exotic flowers bought from Kolkata such as Chinese 'rangan', Chinese hibiscus (orhul) and Chinese 'astar' are also popular among Patnaites."Patnaites feel crotons have been decorating homes for a long while and it was time they made for other plants. "I've kept three areca palm plants in my drawing room for about six months and it is thriving. So, I thought why not buy a few more for some change. I'm also looking at the bonsai varieties of some plants," said Kadamkuan resident Abhinav Singh, who was at a nursery checking out plants.Most of the plants are brought from Kolkata as the state doesn't fulfil the needs of the local nurseries, says florist Anwar, who goes by a single name. He added, "Songs of India, Christmas tree, lucky bamboo shoots and palm trees are quite popular among people. From next month, the evergreen flowers 'Guldaudi' (chrysanthemum), dahlia, rose and marigold, will once again have takers with the start of blooming season." The plants start at Rs40 apiece while the saplings start at Rs200 a piece.For those who don't want to spend much time tending to the plants, a variety of artificial flowers as good as the real one are also available in the city shops. "Colourful artificial plants these days look just the same as real ones with the plus of no maintenance. Customers can simply wash it and it will be shining again," a florist at MauryaLok said, adding, "The artificial plants which are popular among people are priced between Rs100 and Rs250 but the more one ups their range the more beautiful flowers or plants they can buy."

DECCAN Chronicle

Hyderabad takes to organic foods

The demand for organic food products has been rising steadily in the city, with a 48 per cent increase since 2011. In fact, the city is in strong competition with Bengaluru, which was once much ahead of Hyderabad.Many residents of the twin cities are steadily making the shift to organic food. Today, there are 32 new mini stores selling organic produce in the city. Moreover, weekly and monthly organic bazaars are organised and there is also the option of home delivery of organic products. As per records, 20 families in Hyderabad have taken up organic farming on land taken on lease in the city. Home gardening has also witnessed growth. In a city survey, around 90 per cent of the retailers cited health and environment consciousness as the main reasons for the brisk sale of organic products. “Organic farming has been one of the fastest growing industries in the last year, thanks to the higher disposable inco-mes, rising health consciousness and increased demand for organic food. Parents are very concerned about the health of their children and willing to spend more to ensure that they get better and safer food," said SanthoshBanpur, the co-owner of Hyderabad Goes Green store. He added that though the organic products are 15-35 per cent more expensive than non-organic food items, consumers are not deterred.Among the various types of products, vegetables are most sought-after, followed by fruits, pulses, food grains and milk. Items like fruit juices and tea are also popular. Sejal Parikh, an organic food buyer, said, "With increased awareness, even the common grocery stores and supermarkets have a counter allotted to organic foods.



Organic products now cost 15 to 35 per cent more than other products as supply is not being distributed uniformly. Storage cost too is high and certification for growing these products, per acre costs Rs 50,000. Farmers are now demanding government support for a resource system.According to experts, there are currently two major reasons why organic products are expensive. The distribution of production is not uniform. For instance, for 10 products, suppliers need to approach 10 different farmers and there is no wholesale supply chain. Every product needs to be bought from the farmer. Also, the products being seasonal, stores need to purchase stocks during a particular season and then store them for the entire year. These products cannot be stored in regular warehouses. "Most of the premium markets earn on processed and beauty products and less on vegetables and grains. Any store, which sells main staple items, does not get decent revenues. That is why a few organic shops in the city increase the sale price by 30 per cent to get higher margins. The store establishments are another major reason for organic products being expensive," experts added. Meanwhile, the production and the supply chain of organic products are a cause for concern in the state. Most of the organic produce is grown in Warangal, Medak, Nalgonda and Khammam districts. The entire village of Enebavi in Warangal grows organic food, but the state has not set up an effective supply chain.

Also, there is no government body that keeps a check on the organic products being sold. While the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation looks after the licence issues, Legal Metrology department checks the weights. A few certified agencies by the government look only into the process of production, and not the end product. There is no authority that checks the quality of the products. Dr G.V. Ramanjaneyulu (agricultural scientist), and the executive director of the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, said, “There are many villages in TS and AP that have shifted to organic farming. But they lack support. When farmers buy chemical fertilisers, they get a subsidy. There is no subsidy for organic farming. Similarly, most research work is done for chemical agriculture; none of the support systems are extended to organic farming. Right from infrastructure (warehouses) to investment, organic farmers need every help.” “Organic products cannot be stored in regular warehouses. There are no mandis for organic produce. If the supply chain is bettered, only then the production can be increased. Even quality bio-mask is needed as most of the urban compost comprises of heavy metals. The government should come up with better compost process at village level,” the scientist adds. Organic products are those which have been cultivated by natural methods without any chemical catalyst. The crop has to suit the local soil and production is done using local available resources.