

THE HINDU

Innovative woman farmer shows the way

Garimella Mythili Subrahmanyam, a woman from a traditional Brahmin family, is making strides in the field of farming by using innovation to the fullest. Ms. Mythili, a native of Kotivari Agrharam in Amabjipet mandal of East Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh, completed her graduation and entered farming as a result of adverse circumstances. She has also completed her diploma in computer education.

Having cultivated coconut in about 2 acres of land in the village, Ms. Mythili started thinking of out-of-box ways to improve yield and revenue. As a first step, she bought a cow which met the requirement of her family for milk and curd, thereby reducing cost.

As the cow used to give only two litres of milk per day, she replaced it with another that gave better yield. At present, she has four cows and three calves.

While increasing the number of cattle, she simultaneously focused on go-bar bio-gas plant, which has reduced the cost of purchasing cooking gas. She was also instrumental in encouraging more than 80 farmers to install bio-gas plants in their backyards. "I was presented an award for using cow urine to produce bio-gas. We made an arrangement in our backyard whereby the cow urine directly flows into a tank," she told *The Hindu*.

Ms. Mythili has also received the International Society of Extension Education Award in the past.

She was here at International Crops Research Institute for Semi Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) to receive an award from Director General William Dar

for her innovative practices in farming.

Ms. Mythili is cultivating four varieties of grass in her coconut farm, a rare practice. She also supplies grass seeds to farmers who approach her and explains how they can cultivate it in the fields.

“I love cows as they serve humanity better than many animals. We can continue farming depending on cows rather than on pesticides and fertilizers,” she says.

Farmers demand immediate release of water

Left parties and their farmers' wings staged a districtwide demonstration in various centres across Tiruvarur on Monday demanding water to meet requirements in even tailend areas. There should not be turn system in water release, they demanded. No arrests were made.

Foodgrain godowns to come up at seven places in Pudukottai district

Modern storage godowns are built at seven places in the district to ensure proper storage of essential commodities and their prompt distribution among fair price shops.

The work, nearing completion, were taken up with an outlay of Rs. 17.60 crore under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development and are being executed at Aranthangi, Gandarvakottai, Alangudi, Manamelkudi, Iluppur, and Vellanur.

The storage capacity of these godowns would be 22,000 tonnes. While the godowns at Aranthangi and Gandarvakottai could store 5,000 tonnes of grains each, the other four godowns would stock 3,000 tonnes of commodities each. According to officials of Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies

Corporation, the design of the godowns not only ensured proper storage of commodities but avoided wastage.

Rat guard slabs would be set up to prevent loss because of rodent menace. Second, ventilation had been provided in such a manner that the air entering the godown would be let out through the galvanised roofs.

Stagnation of water during monsoon would not affect the grains as the commodity bags would be stocked at an elevation from the ground level.

Loading and unloading

Each godown was divided into blocks for easing loading and unloading. In the old model, the bags were kept piled up to a specific height, resulting in labour-intensive effort while moving the commodities, not to speak about the wastage.

NABARD sanctioned the loan to the TNSTC taking into consideration the difficulty in moving the essential commodities to different parts of the district. In the absence of the godowns, the civil supplies corporation had to stock the commodities at the few available godowns built decades ago.

“This resulted in not only delay in moving the stock but also damage to the bags,” says an official of the TNSTC. With a view to minimise this loss, the commodities were sent to fair price shops.

The works will be completed within a month’s time. The effort formed part of the TNSTC’s objective of avoiding wastage at storage godowns, say the sources.

Organic farming dominates 'Kudumbam' training

Farmers should adopt organic farming techniques to ensuring higher productivity and attractive returns, said speakers at a training programme on seed production of traditional varieties in the wake of climate change' organised by 'Kudumbam' at Odugampatti.

The training aimed at benefiting members of ECOMWEL, an agency involved in the promotion of women in collective farming, at Kolunji farm near here recently.

Resource persons Palaniammal, Rajeswari, and Aravindan said that organic farming needed minimum inputs and farmers should focus on quantity of the produce.

"There has been a growing demand for organic produce and organic farmers would benefit through an assured returns," they said and explained the hazards caused by chemical fertilisers in soil wealth.

Pangajavalli, deputy director of 'Kudumbam', spoke on the efforts being taken jointly by Kudumbam and LEISA Network in the cause of propagating awareness and techniques of organic farming.

Oswald Quintal, director of 'Kudumbam', highlighted the importance of water harvesting technique and advantages of expansion of forest cover. Traditional seed varieties and native tree species alone would bring about lasting solution to the current-day problems caused by climatic change.

Ramadoss and Rengaraj, resource persons, conducted a demonstration on various sessions — from selection of seeds to nutrient management and from weed control to post harvest techniques.

Sureshkanna spoke on the procedure to be followed for obtaining certificates for organic products.

Buela, director of ECOMWEL, suggested that organic farming be made a movement through the participation of the trainees.

Samba paddy cultivation picking up in Tiruvarur

Samba paddy cultivation has gathered momentum in Tiruvarur district, the core of Cauvery delta. The district accounts for 10 per cent of the State's foodgrains production.

The plan is to cover 1.21 lakh hectares of land under samba this year. Of this, an area of 72,373 hectares has already been covered, with the bulk — 67,639 hectares — coming under the direct sowing method. The rest 4,734 hectares were raised under the nurseries transplantation method.

Nurseries are available to meet the demand for 47,134 hectares in the current spell while for the balance 1,308 hectare requirements, nurseries would be raised in the days to come.

Asked about the focus of the district administration and its cut out priorities for samba season, Collector M. Mathivanan told *The Hindu* here on Monday that the stress was on timely supply of agricultural inputs and guidance on scientific means of cultivation, especially in direct sowing areas. He said adequate stocks of fertilizers and other agricultural inputs were at hand to meet farmers' demands.

Up to 6,365 tonnes of urea, 5,149 tonnes of Di Ammonium Phosphate and 2,493 tonne potash were available with the cooperative institutions and

private dealers in the district. Mr. Mathivanan said that farmers would be extended credit to the tune of Rs. 140 crore for the current samba season. While Rs. 3 crore had been disbursed, the balance would be given away before the end of November.

The target for samba paddy production was 14.5 lakh tonnes this year and efforts were on to achieve that. Last year, Tiruvarur district produced 10.6 lakh tonnes of foodgrains that translated to around 10 per cent of the State' production of 110 lakh tonne.

With the focus on popularising mechanised farm practices, the district administration had made available 50 transplanters and 50 power cono weeders free of cost to farmers' groups for meeting the demands of individual farmers.

As another special initiative, 30 tractors, 10 laser levellers and 30 seed drills had been pooled from other districts for helping the farmers who went in for direct sowing method.

Joint Director of Agriculture K. Mayilvahanan, Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies K.C. Ravichandran, and B. Ravichandran, Executive Engineer, PWD Vennar Division, were present.

Agriculturists' grievances day meet on Sept.19

The district-level agricultural grievances redressal day meeting will be held under the presidentship of the District Collector at the Collectorate here at 10.30 a.m. on September 19.

Departments

Officials of the departments of agriculture, horticulture, agricultural engineering, animal husbandry, revenue, cooperation, public works, rural development, transport, dairy development and forests, and of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board and cooperative sugar mills would be responding to the grievances of the farmers.

They would also explain about the action taken on the petitions already given by them.

The Collector R. Nanthagopal has in a press release requested the farmers to speak about the general problems faced by them and submit written petitions about the individual problems during the grievances redressal day meeting.

Heavy rains lash Vellore

Heavy rains lashed most parts of Vellore district on Sunday and Monday.

Arcot recorded the highest amount of rainfall of 37.20 mm during the 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Monday.

There were intermittent rains in Vellore from 7 p.m. and it continued till midnight.

While it was very hot during the day on Monday, temperature came down towards the evening and it began raining after 6 p.m.

Following are the chief amounts of rainfall recorded (in mm) in different parts of Vellore district during the 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Monday:

Arcot 37.20, Vellore 28.50, Kaveripakkam 28.40, Alangayam 26.40, Melalathur 21.60, Walajapet 16, Sholinghur 15 and Arakkonam 11.50.

The district received a total rainfall of 193 mm and an average rainfall of 16.08 mm during the period.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Petro, farm products drag export growth in Aug to 2.35%

A sharp fall in shipments of petroleum products, agricultural produce, electronics and gems and jewellery slowed down export growth in August to a five-month low of 2.35 per cent at \$26.95 billion against \$26.33 billion in August 2013.

Imports grew 2.08 per cent in August to \$37.79 billion, from \$37.02 billion in the same month last year, as oil imports posted a 14.97 per cent fall to \$12.83 billion.

Trade deficit for the month was at \$10.83 billion, slightly higher than \$10.68 billion year-on-year, but lower than \$12.28 billion in the sequential month. Exporters attribute the slowdown to the crisis in West Asia and tension between Russia and Europe over Ukraine. "West Asia is a huge market and not only our direct exports have been hit, but also Indian products used as inputs by third countries for their exports to the region are affected," Rafeeqe Ahmed, President, Federation of Indian Export Organisations, pointed out. In July, export growth had slipped 7.33 per cent to \$27.72 billion, following two months of double-digit growth. Exports in the first five months of the fiscal posted a growth of 7.31 per cent to

\$134.79 billion. There was an overall fall of 2.69 per cent in imports in the first five months to \$190.94 billion, against \$196.22 billion in the same period last fiscal.

'Punjab to benefit from the capital goods sector bonanza'

The Government's decision to allot Rs. 20,000 crore for a scheme to enhance competitiveness of small and medium enterprises working in capital goods sector will give maximum benefit to Punjab, according to Heavy Industries Minister Anant Geete.

"Punjab will get maximum benefit as it has large number of small and medium enterprises followed by Maharashtra. But, that does not mean that other States will not get the benefit. As and when there will be demand from other States, it will be met," Geete said after the Cabinet decision on the package.

Capital goods refer to machineries used in the manufacturing process. The scheme seeks to indigenise large imports. Currently, capital goods import stand at Rs. 1.15 lakh crore.

The size of the capital goods industry is around Rs. 3 lakh crore. More than 80 per cent of these units are small and medium enterprises and these units have limited capabilities to develop newer technologies because of their size.

The scheme will not just develop technology, but also suggest ways to reduce cost of conversion by providing common facilities such as testing, development and industrial area, he said.

The scheme will enable setting up of five centres of excellence in association with IITs, one integrated industrial infrastructure facilities, two common engineering facility centres, a test and certification centre for earthmoving and construction machines and technology acquisition fund programme, in the State concerned.

“There will be no shortage of funds. What so ever will be the requirements in future, they will be provided,” the Minister said.

Coonoor tea auction prices rise again

For the second consecutive week, average prices rose by Rs. 4 a kg at the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association.

The average price at Sale No: 37 rose to Rs. 71.06 a kg from last week's Rs. 67.32.

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the CTC market when Vora Sons bought it for Rs. 191/kg. Among orthodox teas, Chamraj got Rs. 251, Kodanad Rs. 228 and Havukal Rs. 212.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 45-50 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 100-150 for brighter liquoring sorts.

They ranged Rs. 45-50 for plain dusts and Rs. 120-185 for brighter liquoring dusts. On the export front, Pakistan quoted Rs. 54-81 a kg and CIS Rs. 43-62 a kg.

Some invoices of better medium CTC leaf grades eased Rs. 2-3 a kg while others gained Rs. 4-5. Plainers gained Rs. 3 and at time more. Better

liquoring CTC dusts gained Rs. 3-4 and better mediums Rs. 2-3.

NCDEX forward trading in maize, sugar from Sept 25

The National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) will launch forward trading in maize and sugar contracts from September 25.

“We are starting in maize and sugar because we have ample experience of having made procurement for various State Governments in these commodities,” said Samir Shah, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, NCDEX.

NCDEX’s Spot Exchange, an arm of NCDEX which conducts electronic spot trading, is currently procuring sugar for the Maharashtra Public Distribution System. It is also procuring sugar in Haryana for the PDS system, while it has bought maize from growers in Karnataka. NCDEX Spot Exchange has procured tur in Gujarat and Karnataka from growers.

Contract difference

The forward contracts are different from futures. Any grade and any variety can be traded under forward trading, whereas in futures the contracts and grade are specified in advance.

“In forward trading, the quality, grade and other norms, including delivery, are decided between the seller and the buyer while signing a contract. Such a facility does not exist in futures, which is pre-determined. We are launching forward trading to attract wider participation,” Shah said. A new category — commodity market participants — has been introduced to rope in farmers, who will have to pay Rs. 50,000 as a one-time fee to become a

member of the exchange besides Rs. 10,000 towards annual membership.

“We will bring our entire experience in NCDEX Spot Exchange for forward trading. If this succeeds, then we plan to bring in our entire portfolio of agricultural products into this,” the NCDEX chief told *Business Line* during an interaction during the India International Gold Convention in Pune.

Rise in volume

Shah said NCDEX trading volume has increased 31 per cent during the June quarter compared with the previous quarter.

“We should be doing better but for the imposition of commodities transaction tax from July last year apart from the problems relating to the National Spot Exchange Ltd,” he said.

According to the Forward Markets Commission (FMC), the volume of trade on all commodity exchanges dropped to Rs. 24.46 lakh crore during April 1-August 30 compared with Rs. 58.98 lakh crore in the same period a year ago.

Tainted pepper

Shah said NCDEX will resume futures in pepper early next season starting January. “We will launch it soon after we solve the controversy surrounding 6,400 tonnes of pepper kept in our warehouses in Kerala,” he said.

NCDEX will move the pepper and get the impurities such as mineral oil removed from pepper stocks. The pepper issue has been hanging fire since 2012 as the food safety authorities found the presence of mineral oil in the stocks.

“We will have the pepper processed and cleaned it up. Then, as soon as possible between January and February, we will resume pepper futures,” Shah said.

NCDEX’s newly-introduced maize contract has met with good response, though there were issues with quality, particularly due to high moisture in the crop from Bihar.

The exchange launched cotton bale contract two weeks ago with Maharashtra and Gujarat as delivery centres. It is a 100-bale contract and is a sort of forward integration to the kapas (raw cotton) futures.

Expansion

Asked if the exchange was attracting more investor interest in 2015 contracts in view of the FMC not clearing next year contracts of rival Multi Commodity Exchange, Shah said it was too early for investors to bet on such contracts. “We will see interest in those contracts picking up after October,” he said.

NCDEX feels its lower transaction fee of Rs. 0.35 and Rs. 0.45 per lakh for various commodities will attract more participation. “We are also planning to expand. We will like to launch futures in metals such as lead, zinc and nickel. We will be exploring the opportunities in the next couple of months,” the NCDEX chief said.

Why setting up a national market is taking time?

With an indication of giving pace to establishing a national market and making it a reality by the Central Government, the concept of national market has become a hot issue. Though the term national market is still

treated just as a concept in India, it had been an useful tool for market integration from long time ago in many parts of the world.

The best example which India could learn from is the 'One Market' concept of European countries. Despite the fact that many of the European countries do not transact in same currencies, the concept of national market has evolved to developed stage.

The movement of products from one country to another without any hurdle and without incurring any unnecessary cost in the form of tax or in the form of indirect cost such as waiting for time consuming paper work while entering into border of another country was a remarkable step in integrating the European market. In order to facilitate the free flow of products among the European countries, adoption of harmonised standard system for all the traded products became a key of success.

With the agenda of conceptualising and formation of national market in India, the topic is under discussion at different forums. Though there are many issues which have to be considered while formulating a draft policy, a few barriers have to be looked at seriously by the Central as well as state governments.

Taxation System: In India, the taxation systems are structured in such a way that both the Centre and the State Governments have powers to collect tax in various forms. At micro-level, even the local authorities (municipals) are engaged in levying tax.

Though in the case of direct tax, there is no structural issue, the same is not the situation with regard to indirect tax. Many forms of the indirect tax such as octroi, entry tax, state excise duty, surcharge on sale tax and motor vehicle tax, etc., are State subjects.

According to a report by Assocham, the absence in uniformity in the pattern of commodity taxation results in harassment to taxpayers by multiple tax authorities. The taxes imposed on the movement of vehicle, which is essential for goods transport also vary. It is imperative to formulate the concept of national market to overcome the tax barriers charged by different authorities in different forms.

Reform in APMC Acts: Though the APMCs in States were set up to protect the interest of farmers, it was restrictive in selling the produce outside the mandi. Many States have reformed their APMC Act on the lines of the Model APMC Act 2003 and permitted farmers to utilise the service as an option (by allowing the farmers to enter into contract farming); despite this, there have been instances of mandi fee being levied on corporates sourcing directly from farmers (in Delhi).

Infrastructure Promotion and Development: Type and availability of cold chain infrastructure in the country need to play a major role if the dream has to come true in the case of marketing of fruits and vegetables. The present status of cold storage capacity is considered pathetic as the country does not have even 50 per cent of the required capacity.

Except Punjab, all Indian States face acute shortage in cold storage capacity.

The Assocham reveals that “India incurs post-harvest fruits and vegetable losses worth over Rs. 2 lakh crore each year largely owing to the absence of food processing units, modern cold storage facilities and a callous attitude towards tackling the grave issue of post-harvest losses. West Bengal tops the list with annual post-harvest losses worth over Rs. 13,657 crore followed by Gujarat (Rs. 11,400 crore), Bihar (Rs. 10,700 crore) and

Uttar Pradesh (Rs. 10,300 crore).”

If a national market for fruits and vegetables is established and there is free inter-State movement, the availability of the product will help check inflation. Thus, if the prices decline, it may result in increased consumption of fruits and vegetables which will not only reduce wastage but also ensure nutritional security.

Online trading and alternative mandi: The concept of online trading at national level for fruits and vegetables can be realised with modern cold chain infrastructure, which may act as an important platform for bringing up buyers and sellers on pan-India basis. This requires a strong will and promotion of modern cold chain infrastructure on war-footing level in the country.

This will help in adoption of online trading facility for farm produce. The way commodities in India are being traded at exchange platforms, fruits and vegetables can easily be traded.

The writers are with National Institute of Agricultural Marketing, Jaipur

MCX-gold faces key resistances ahead

The gold futures contract traded on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) has tumbled 1.8 per cent last week. Market is turning cautious ahead of the US Federal Reserve’s meeting on Wednesday.

Increasing fear in the market that the US could signal an early interest rate hike is dragging the gold price lower.

The global spot gold price fell about 3 per cent last week. It dropped below

\$1,250 per ounce and recorded a low of Rs. 1,228.

Though the yellow metal has recovered slightly from this low, it has strong resistances coming up at \$1,240 and \$1,250 which can restrict any intermediate rallies.

The outlook is bearish and gold can fall to test its next supports at \$1,217 and \$1,185 in the coming days.

On the domestic front, the MCX-gold futures contract has reversed higher from Friday's low of Rs. 26,790 per 10 gm on the back of weak rupee coupled with a recovery in the global spot price on Monday.

The contract is currently trading near Rs. 27,200. Significant resistances are poised at Rs. 27,320 – the 38.2 per cent Fibonacci retracement level and at Rs. 27,485 – which is a trendline as well as the 50 per cent Fibonacci retracement resistance level.

An immediate breach above Rs. 27,485 looks unlikely. Such a reversal from this level will keep the overall down trend intact and drag the contract lower to Rs. 26,400 in the coming days.

Traders with a short-term perspective can go short at Rs. 27,350 with a stop-loss at Rs. 27,700 for the target of Rs. 26,700.

Note: The recommendations are based on technical analysis. There is a risk of loss in trading.

Festival demand sweetens jaggery

The price of Jaggery (*Nattusarkarai*) in Erode markets increased due to demand from a temple at Palani.

On Saturday at the Kavindapady Regulated Marketing Committee (RMC) 2,600 bags (of 60 kg) of jaggery, were brought by farmers from Bhavani, Gobichettipalayam and Perundurai areas. The temple authorities also attended the auction. They purchased 1,200 bags while the rest was purchased by some other traders. Because of the demand, prices were higher by Rs. 40 a bag and was sold at Rs. 1,720 a bag.

October, November and December are the peak periods for jaggery arrival and sale in the Kavindapady RMC, and this year the authorities expect an arrival of 10,000 bags a week.

At the Kavindapady private jaggery market, more than 3,000 bags were sold at Rs. 1,700 a bag. At Chitode, 4,000 bags fetched Rs. 1,650-1,700 a bag.

Vegoil imports at a record high on Malaysian duty-free exports

Vegetable oil imports increased 75 per cent in August to touch a record high of 1,333,480 tonnes (757,830 tonnes).

The shipments were the highest ever since imports were allowed in India under open general licence in 1994. The previous highest level was at 11.6 lakh tonnes recorded in January last year, according to the Solvent Extractors' Association.

Import boost

The import of vegetable oil into the country was boosted by scrapping of duty by Malaysia, one of the largest exporters of edible oil. Saddled by huge inventory, the exporting countries have decided to do away with the export duty on palm products.

Malaysia has allowed duty-free export of palm products since September from \$35 a tonne in August, while Indonesia, which charges nine per cent or \$66 on exports, is expected to follow suit in October, said the Association.

Domestic edible oil prices may come under pressure, with the exporting countries largesse and sharp fall in international prices to 2008-levels. The expected fall in prices may cast a gloom on farmers growing oilseeds as they will harvest their kharif crop in the next five to six weeks.

There is an urgent need to support farmers by increasing import duty on crude vegetable oils to 10 per cent from 2.5 per cent and refined vegetable oils to 25 per cent from 10 per cent, said the Association.

Inventory pile up

Import of soya oil in August jumped to a record level of 350,373 tonnes in August breaching the previous high of 306,068 tonnes logged in the preceding month. India imported 1,321,345 tonnes of edible oils and 12,135 tonnes of non-edible oils.

However, import of non-edible oils in August more than halved to 12,135 tonnes (28,794 tonnes). The overall import of non-edible oils in the past ten months was down 37 per cent at 155,926 tonnes. Major non-edible oils that were shipped in include palm fatty acid distillate and crude palm kernel oil.

As on September 1, edible oil stock at various ports is estimated at 860,000 tonnes, up by about 50 per cent from previous month and about 960,000 tonnes is in the pipeline.

Inventory at ports includes 360,000 tonnes of crude palm oil, 105,000

tonnes of refined palmolein, 250,000 tonnes of degummed soybean oil, 140,000 tonnes of crude sunflower oil and 5,000 tonnes of rapeseed (Canola Oil). Total stock, both at ports and in pipelines, increased to 1,820,000 tonnes from 1,590,000 tonnes in August.

Non-basmati rice exporters keen to scale Chinese wall

Indian rice exporters keen to tap the Chinese market want the Union Government to take up the issue of non-tariff barriers with visiting President Xi Jinping this week.

China, which began importing rice for the past four years, has not granted access to the Indian non-basmati rice in absence of any defined phytosanitary norms between the two neighbouring countries. However, China has been sourcing its requirement from countries such as Pakistan, Vietnam and Thailand.

Though China opened up its market for Indian basmati in 2012, the non-basmati varieties cannot be exported because of a lack of a phyto protocol.

“Without the phyto protocols in place, we cannot initiate our exports to China. The Government should take up this issue so that our exports are facilitated,” said B Krishna Rao, representing the Agri Exporters Association. Any increase in exports will eventually benefit the growers, considering that the Government has decided to cut down the levy rice procurement from the 2014-15 kharif marketing season. Trade sources feel that Indian non-basmati rice was denied access to Chinese market for political reasons.

“If they can buy from Pakistan, they can buy better quality Indian rice as well,” said Tejinder Narang, a grains trade analyst. “Chinese rice imports

are rising every year as they are moving away from water-intensive crops and India should not be ignored in this regard,” he added.

China’s rice imports were close to around 5 million tonnes last year and the steady increase in its purchases have kept the Vietnamese prices firm.

India has emerged as the biggest rice exporter in the recent years with annual shipments hovering or exceeding 10 million tonnes on firm demand for its cereal mainly from African countries and renewed interest from Russia and Ukraine. The exporters here are keen to gain access to the Chinese market considering that India can offer better quality and price and a wider variety.

“If Russia, which is the most stringent in quality norms, is accepting the Indian rice without any hitch, China should ideally not have any issues. India, as a supplier, ideally suits China in terms of dependability,” said an official at a large commodity exporting firm.

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Agro mall selling fruits & veggies makes debut in city, more in offing



The mall in Chinchwad. Produce bought directly from farmers, without involvement of middlemen, sold here. (Source: Express photo by Rajesh Stephan)

To give a boost to direct marketing of fruits and vegetables, the state government has embarked on a model that would see private parties operating 'agro malls' on government land given on lease. The first such mall has recently become operational in Chinchwad.

Pavan Gurav, senior partner of Transcool, the company operating the mall, said they would be opening more such ventures in future. The mall in Chinchwad, Gurav said, was on a land taken on a 10-year lease from the Warehouse Corporation. In the business of cold storage and transportation of agro products, Gurav said his concept of a refrigerated vehicle for transport of products from the farm gate till storage had won accolades. Storage and transportation of fruits and vegetables, as per Gurav, has always been a grey area in India due to the high volume of wastage incurred in the process. Reports suggest as much as 40 per cent of farm products are wasted due to lack of proper handling and cold houses.

The present initiative, Gurav said, would see the coordination between the project implementation unit of the Department of Agriculture, called ATMA, and Transcool. While the officials of ATMA will help identify farmers and coordinate with them, Transcool will manage the transportation and sale of the wares. Also, the state government will help in identifying and getting land on lease for starting collection centres and opening of malls.

"Though the concept of shopping in air-conditioned malls has caught up, especially in the Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) section, it is yet to catch up in the fruits and vegetables section. A survey shows the business of fruits and vegetables is often relegated to a small corner in the malls," said Gurav. He also pointed out that farmers were often at the mercy of the

traders and middlemen, while the absence of proper storage and handling facility made it important that fruits and vegetables were sold as soon as they were harvested. The farmer also has to pay the transportation, handling and other charges for his product.

In this model, the shorting and grading is done directly at the farm gate by officials of ATMA and Transcool. “After comparing the prevalent prices in APMCs, we quote a price which is Rs 2 more than the prevalent price. The farmer does not have to pay for transport or give any cuts to the middlemen in the process. Transportation of the fruits and vegetables are done in our refrigerated vehicles, so there is hardly any fear of wastage,” said Gurav.

At present, Transcool has tied up with 50 farmers’ groups in Satara to source their fruits and vegetables. The work of identification of the farmers’ group is done by ATMA, *continued...*

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Netherlands, India to set up 10 centres of agriculture excellence



The Netherlands is working with India to set up 10 centres of excellence across the country with an aim to raise agriculture output.

NEW DELHI: The Netherlands is working with India to set up 10 centres of excellence across the country with an aim to raise agriculture output and introduce modern farm technologies and techniques. "The work has already been started on three centres, one each in Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab and the work is soon to be expected to start in Karnataka," the Netherlands Counsellor for Agriculture in India Wouter Vethey told PTI.

He was speaking on the sidelines of an event by the Kerala government to announce the 'Global Agro Meet' in the state from November 6-8. Vethey added that centre in Kerala and Maharashtra will be for horticulture, while in Punjab the centre of excellence will be for potatoes. He also said that all the centres will come up in a few years. or the remaining the six centres, the European nation is looking to set up the centres on dairy, horticulture, floriculture and others.

In June this year, Dutch Ambassador Alhponsus Stoelinga had called on Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh and informed him about the developments made in the areas Indo-Dutch agriculture cooperation plan of dairying, post harvest management, including cold chain infrastructure and hi-tech agriculture.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Soaring vegetable prices affect puja decorations in Cuttack

CUTTACK: Inflation and the rising prices of vegetables have taken a toll on the decoration expenses of many puja committees in the millennium city.

Refusing to compromise with the quantity and quality of prasad served at the pandals to the devotees, many puja committees have cut down their decoration expenses this year.

"This year, we are not spending much on the decoration of the pandal. As our budget is only Rs 15 lakh, we have decided not to compromise with the quality and quantity of dahi pakhal bhog (curd rice) which is served along with a mixed vegetable fry among 7,000 devotees on dashami," said Niranjan Sahoo, secretary of Chauliaganj puja committee.

Last year, the committee had spent around Rs 8 lakh on decoration, but this year it has reduced the budget by Rs 2 lakh. "Apart from installing lighted gates, we will not be doing anything more this time," added Sahoo. Almost all the puja committees in the city serve various Odia delicacies such as curd rice, anna, dalma, kheeri and ladoo as bhog during Saptami, Ashtami, Navami and Dashami.

"The rising prices of vegetables and other essential commodities have definitely affected our budget. But we cannot compromise on the quality of the bhog as it is an integral part of the community Durga Puja and a tradition as well," said S K Sanganeria, president of Balu bazaar puja committee, the oldest puja committee in the city.

The committee has set aside Rs 2.5 lakh for bhog and puja expenses, out of the total budget of Rs 4 lakh. Only Rs 1 lakh will be spent on the pandal's decoration.

"Rising prices of vegetables and other edible items has become a cause for concern. Instead of decoration, we have decided to focus more on the puja and the traditional dahi pakhal bhog, which is a speciality of our pandal," said a member of Choudhary bazaar puja committee. The puja committee has decided not to install any lighted gates near the pandal. "Every year, 12 quintals of dahi pakhal are served among the devotees and this year too, the quantity will remain the same," said the puja committee member.

Chemical test on seepage water

KOCHI: The Supreme Court-appointed joint inspection committee on Mullaperiyar dam on Monday decided to conduct chemical test of the samples of seepage water from the over 115-year-old dam.

The decision was taken by the committee members after visiting the dam following complaints from Kerala that the level of water seepage was rising fast. However, the committee felt that there was no reason for panic at this stage.

The chemical analysis is expected to track whether any leak of surkhi (finely powdered burnt clay that was used by mixing with sand, lime and egg yolk in the construction of the dam) is occurring now. "If surkhi is leaking in a significant way, it is a serious issue as it could indicate a weakening of the dam," said V J Kurien, the Kerala representative in the committee.

According to Kerala officials, the seepage from the dam is found to be increasing in the last two weeks, reaching 90.396 litres/minute on Monday. This marks an increase of 20 litres/minute in the flow of water in the last 15 days, said an official at the dam site.

Kurien said the Tamil Nadu representative in the committee had agreed to provide the data on the past seepage levels from the dam as demanded by Kerala. Tamil Nadu was declining to provide the data earlier. Kerala officials had agreed to find an office to house the committee and Tamil Nadu will pay its rent.

The next meeting of the three-member committee, which has one representative each from Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Central Water Commission, will be held on October 20. The water level in the dam rose to 132.9ft on Monday.

Conference on agribusiness in developing economies to begin from October 9

MANGALORE: The Department of Business Administration- Sahyadri college of Engineering and Management (SCEM), Mangalore in association with National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad will organize three day international conference at Sahyadri campus from October 9. The aim the conference is to explore and map various opportunities and challenges for agribusiness in developing economies including India in the internationally integrated and globalized economic environment.

Gayathri Shetty, assistant professor at the institute said the main themes of the conference are retaining youth in agriculture; creating employment through Agri-business; institutional and infrastructural framework for agribusiness management; entry of global agribusiness firms and FDI in agribusiness. The conference would also explore the dimensions of Domestic and international agricultural trade; eco-friendly agriculture and agri-business; agribusiness management education; agricultural marketing and policy; agri-food supply chain management and commodity trading. The conference would lay emphasis on harvest and post harvest technologies; innovative agribusiness models; women in agribusiness; agriculture services: finance, insurance and extension and corporate social responsibility and agri-business.

Policy makers, financial institutions supporting agribusiness' non-governmental organizations, experts from the industry, academicians and researchers from the related areas and students from related streams will participate in this conference. The selected best 15 papers will be published in ITIHAS - The Journal of Indian Management. Around 200 delegates including 60 international delegates from 10 countries are expected to participate in this programme.

Farmers win much more than compensation

GREATER NOIDA: Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) in its 51st board meeting took several decisions to settle long-pending farmers' issues that are expected to speed up development. Agitations and litigations by farmers over the past two years had hampered development projects in the area.

YEIDA CEO P C Gupta said, "Apart from additional compensation, we've decided on a process to regularize abadis, for which we'd already formed a committee. It, however, could not address the issue so far because of glitches. But under new rules, absent members can participate by proxy in committee meetings. This will speed up the process," Gupta said. Another condition incorporated by the board for all land acquisition in the future is that schools and educational institutes set up on such land will have to earmark 10% seats for children of locals who lose their land. "This quota won't apply if there's a competitive qualifying exam for the seat, as, say, in case of an engineering seat," said Gupta. He added that the authority plans to reserve 10% of 3rd and 4th grade jobs in factories for children of farmers whose lands are acquired for the industries. "In such cases, educational qualification of an applicant will get priority," said Gupta, adding that the authority will invest Rs eight crore to set up an ITI (industrial training institute) for farmers' children in Mirzapur. The number of ITIs will be increased phase-wise, he

Pioneer

KISAN SAMMELANS TO BE HELD IN 34 DISTRICTS FROM SEPT 17

Kisan Sammelans will be held in 34 districts of the State from September 17 to 20 where certificates of adjustment of crop insurance claim under National Agriculture Insurance Scheme will be distributed to farmers. The certificates will be given away in the presence of the Chief Minister or Minister-in-charge of concerned districts.

All the respective Collectors have been directed to prepare lists of farmers to be invited to Kisan Sammelans, which will be held at Hoshangabad, Sehore, Harda, Dewas, Raisen, Rajgarh, Ujjain, Sagar, Shajapur, Vidisha, Betul, Guna, Bhopal, Khandwa, Seoni, Damoh, Indore, Narsinghpur, Chhindwara, Mandsaur, Ashok Nagar, Ratlam, Shivpuri, Satna, Dhar, Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh, Neemuch, Panna, Rewa, Balaghat, Khargone, Jhabua and Barwani. At Kisan Sammelans, copies of Chief Minister's letters inviting farmers to Krishi Mahotsav to be held in the State from September 25 to October 20 will also be given to farmers along with certificate of insurance claim adjustment. Principal Secretary Farmers Welfare and Agriculture Development Shri Rajesh Rajora has directed collectors that if a beneficiary does not turn up at farmers' convention then the certificate along with copy of CM's letter should be delivered at his home.

It is noteworthy that Krishi Mahotsav is being organised in all 51 districts of the state to apprise farmers of latest farming techniques and methods. Presence of large number of farmers is being ensured in the festival to be held as part of efforts for making agriculture profitable. During Krishi Mahotsav, Krishi Kranti Rath will visit village to village to provide necessary

information to farmers. Agriculture science exhibitions and agriculture fairs will also be held in districts during the period.

NABARD TO PROVIDE REFINANCE FACILITY TO BOOST AGRICULTURE SECTOR

In an attempt to boost capital infusion in agricultural sector the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has decided to provide refinance facility with a repayment period of five years at an interest rate of only 7.85 percent to cooperative banks and Regional Rural Banks (RRB).

Informing newsmen here on Monday about the decision the Chief General Manager (CGM) Uttarakhand region CM Mohan said that substantial reduction in interest rate for refinance would help in building capital formation in the agricultural sector.

He said that the bank is planning to disburse 150 crore to cooperative banks and RRBs in Uttarakhand this year. Mohan said that the bank has decided to reduce interest from existing 9.3 per cent to 7.85 per cent in the refinance facility. The capital infusion would help the poultry, dairy, farm mechanisation and horticulture activities in the state. He said that RRBs and the Cooperative banks provide long term loan facility to small and marginal farmers and have a better outreach in the rural areas.

The CGM of NABARD said that the bank would provide a loan of `550-600 crore to the Government of Uttarakhand under Rural Infrastructure Development Fund this year. He informed that the bank has sanctioned `3,200 crores to the state since its creation to build infrastructure in the rural areas. Mohan said the bank is planning to venture in new sectors to develop the rural areas, he cited the infrastructural gaps in the existing projects as one such area. Giving example of infrastructure gap he said

that in rural road projects the rural population can be benefited more by building small bridges.

To provide refinance facility to the RRBs and Cooperative banks the NABARD launched the Long Term Rural Fund on Monday. Announcing the launch of fund at Mumbai the Chairman of NABARD Dr H K Bhanwala said that Cooperative banks and RRBs would be motivated to extend term loans/ investment credits to their clients at concessional rates.