

Renukacharya demands compensation for farmers

Former Minister M.P. Renukacharya and former MLA Belur Gopalakrishna on Thursday demanded compensation for arecanut growers in Davangere district. The farmers had lost their crops to fruit rot disease last year.

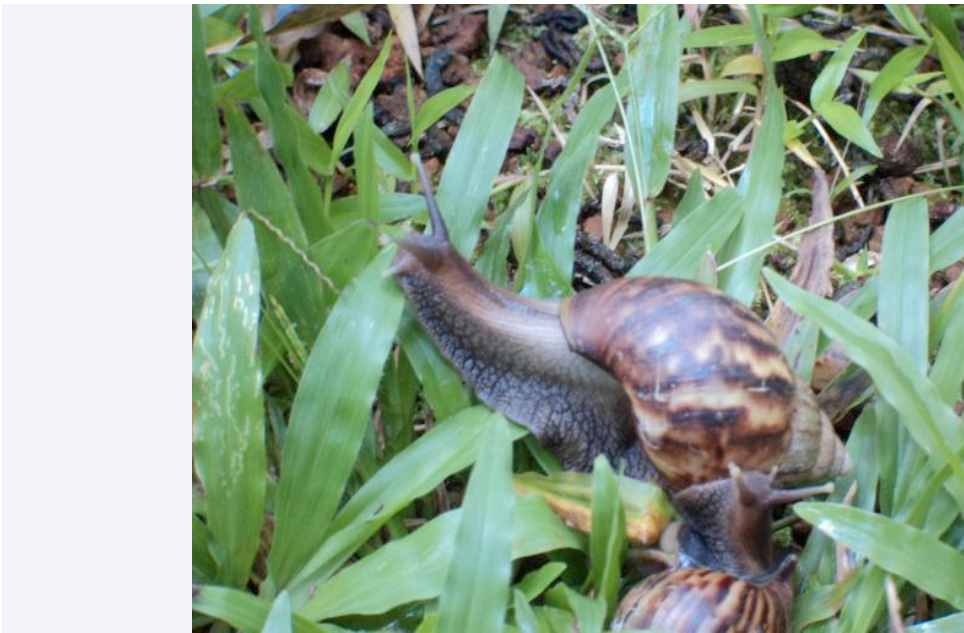
They alleged that the State government has not conducted a proper survey of flood-affected areas in the district to ascertain damage of crops.

Addressing presspersons here, Mr. Renukacharya said the government has released a compensation of Rs. 3.5 crore to arecanut growers in Davangere as against the sanctioned amount of Rs. 22 crore.

Although, Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda visited Davangere recently, he did not hold a meeting with the Deputy Commissioner and officials of the Revenue, Agriculture and Horticulture departments, they said. Mr. Renukacharya sought a joint survey by senior officials of Revenue, Agriculture and Horticulture departments in the flood-hit areas.

Mr. Belur Gopalakrishna said farmers in Soppinagudda in Sagara constituency have been served eviction notice. "Kagodu Thimmappa, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, who represents the area, is silent over the issue," he alleged.

African Giant Snail menace up this year



The African Giant Snail can consume around 500 species of plants. Photo: Horticulture Department

A few farmers have complained that the menace of African Giant Snail (called Daitya Basavana Hulu in Kannada) or *Achatina fulica* has increased in some farmland in Dakshina Kannada this year. This snail mainly affected vegetables, ginger, banana and to some extent arecanut, said Yogesh H.R., Deputy Director, Department of Horticulture.

He told *The Hindu* that this snail naturally existed in swampy area, especially during the rainy season. But this year they have been seen in large number in Alankar, Markanja, Sampaje, Panja, Bellare and

Charmady areas in addition to farm lands along the banks of the Netravathi and the Kumaradhara.

Mr. Yogesh said that specific reasons for the snails multiplying this year were not known. It could be due to high moisture content. He said the snail, which takes shelter under its shell, became active in the night and consumed vegetable plants, banana and its leaves, ginger and several crops. Though the taller arecanut palms were spared, the smaller palms were damaged.

Balakrishna Suvarna, chairman, standing committee on agriculture, Dakshina Kannada Zilla Panchayat, too said that the menace of the snail was not found in arecanut palms. Mr. Yogesh said the snail was capable of eating 500 species of plants. It could cover two metres per hour and lived up to 12 years. A snail could lay between 100 and 400 eggs at a time.

He said metaldehyde pesticide could be used to kill them. This pesticide should be pasted to papaya or pineapple or cabbage pieces and kept in the farm during night. For a kilogram of the vegetable or fruit pieces, 20 ml of the pesticide should be pasted. If the snails were found after the rainy season, limestone could be spread around the plants to kill them. In this case the snails died out of dehydration.

A release from the department said farmers could call Horti Clinic, Mangalore (0824 2412628) or Krishi Vignana Kendra, Mangalore (0824 2431872) for more information.

These solar pump sets have tracking systems



A Hyderabad-based solar tracking technology solution provider is seeking to spread awareness about the advantages of using solar water pumps fitted with their technology.

Smart Trak has sold close to 100 solar water pump sets with their solar tracking technology, which promises to increase the water flow by 75 per cent, when compared to conventional solar water pumps.

“Increased amount of water will enable farmers to grow three crops instead of two in a year. In the next two years, we hope to sell 1,000 solar water pumps fitted with tracking systems. We have received certification from Non-renewable Energy Development Corporation (NEDCAP) and Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) for our tracking system pump sets,” says Smart Trak’s CEO G. Bhagawan Reddy.

The company officials told reporters on Wednesday that solar trackers maximise the amount of incoming light by following the sun as it moves across the sky.

“Conventional solar panels face the sun all day in only one angle. However, solar trackers enable movement of solar panels by following the direction of the sun. This increases the amount of incoming sunlight,” explains Smart Trak’s COO Naveen Tadpatri.

Smart Trak officials claim there is not much of a difference in price between the two kinds of pump sets.

“We have made sure the cost of the traditional solar pump sets and ours are the same. Moreover, we also offer remote monitoring feature where through cell phones, users can check the performance of their pump sets,” they say. For details, visit www.smarttrak.in or call 6559-9900.

Food park project evokes mixed response



Even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the food park in Tumkur on September 24, the local response to the project has been mixed. While a section of people see it as a project that will generate jobs and boost the local economy, the farming community is sceptical.

The food park is established on 110 acres of land at Vasanthanarasapura Industrial Area, near Tumkur, at an estimated cost of Rs. 145 crore under public-private partnership model. A Mumbai-based private company, Future Group (of Big Baazar fame), has got the tender for the project. A special purpose vehicle,

Integrated Food Park Pvt. Ltd., has been set up in Bangalore to implement the project. Storage units will be opened at Kolar, Chickballapur, Doddaballapur, Chamarajanagar, Shimoga and Chikmagalur to collect fruits and vegetables from farmers. According to chairman of the Abhivruddi Revolution Forum Kundaranahalli Ramesh, the project is being implemented under the 'Mega Food Park' scheme of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries to support food processing sector and farmers.

The former MP G.S. Basavaraj told *The Hindu* that more than 6,000 people in the district would get employment and more than 40,000 families of farmers would be indirectly benefitted from it.

However, according to State secretary of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha B.S. Devaraj, the project will help corporate companies rather than benefit farmers. He alleged that corporate companies might exploit gullible farmers, unaware of the terms of trading.

Farmers' grievances meet on September 26

The monthly farmers grievances meeting will be held at 10 a.m. at the Collector's Office here on September 26, Collector N. Subbaiyan said in a press release.

Farmers who wish to express their views at the meeting should register their names between 8.30 a.m. and 10 a.m.

The first two registered farmers from each taluk would be allowed to speak at the meeting.

Farmers are advised to register their petitions before submitting the same at the meeting. The farmers grievances meeting in Tiruvarur would be held at 10.30 a.m. on September 25, Collector M. Mathivanan said in a release.

GDCCB gets A-grade

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development has accorded 'A' grade to the Gulbarga District Central Cooperative Bank this year and the latter proposes to extend loans for non-agriculture activities including commercial loans from the next financial year.

Chairman of the Gulbarga District Central Cooperative Bank Somashekar Gonayak told presspersons here on Thursday that the NABARD took into consideration the performance of the bank over the past few years, recovery percentage, low NPA and the high working capital.

The bank which covers all 11 branches in Gulbarga and Yadgir districts, proposes to have a tie up with a commercial bank for introducing ATM facilities for the account holders.

He said that the members of the bank have donated Rs. 2.80 crore voluntarily so far for the construction of a new building of the bank in Gulbarga. Mr Gonayak said that the bank had set itself a target of Rs. 280 crore this year covering 1.5 lakh farmers.

Farmers in Raichur hit by urea scarcity

Agriculture Department says there has been a delay in arrival of fertilizer



Farmers in Raichur are an unfortunate lot.

First they had to see their standing crop hit by drought during July and the first two weeks of August. According to reports crop in around 2 lakh hectares of land in the district was affected by the drought. But 1 lakh hectares of land was not cultivated.

By the third week of August rain lashed across the district and the farmers started cultivating on the 1 lakh hectares of land. But the gentle showers changed into a downpour within just a couple of days.

During the last 10 days of August incessant rain lashed across Raichur. Water bodies started overflowing, low-lying areas in the district got submerged and unfortunately for the farmer, their crop became submerged.

Standing crop, which had been turned yellow due to drought and later turned greenish for a brief period due to initial rain, have now turned yellow again due to water-logging.

The farmers need urea to save their crop but unfortunately for them there is reportedly a shortage of the fertilizer across the district.

Agriculture Minister Krishna Bhairegowda had, on his recent visit to Raichur along with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, said that there was no scarcity and that the district had 7,000 metric tons of urea. His statement has been proven false by the situation on the ground.

“I need 20 bags of urea to mix with equal amount of DAP and complex fertilisers to save my cotton plants that are struggling to survive on 20 acres of land.

However, Raichur Agriculture Produce Marketing and Processing Cooperative Society gave me only 2 bags of urea,” Tayappa, a farmer from Udumgal village in Raichur taluk, told *The Hindu* on

Thursday. He has been visiting Raichur daily over the past one week to get the fertilizer.

On Thursday, there was a tense situation outside the Raichur Agriculture Produce Marketing and Processing Cooperative Society outlet at the market yard in Raichur on Thursday as farmers gathered demanding Urea.

“By the end of August, the district received 53,000 metric tonnes of Urea as against the target of 69,850 metric tonnes. In this month, we have received 12,000 metric tonnes against the target of 22,000 metric tonnes. The delay in arrivals has caused the problem,” sources in the Agriculture Department said.

However a farmer leader Lakshmgowda Kadagamdoddi said that the very target set by the Agriculture Department was far lower than the actual requirement.

“The plants that consume more water due to water-logging demand more urea for survival,” he added.

Small onion prices touch new high at auction

Marketing complex comes as a boon to onion growers



Even as trading of shallots through open auction at the newly established marketing complex at Chettikulam in Perambalur district

has been on the upswing in recent months, auction at the complex touched a high with 25 tonnes of small onions being auctioned on a single day on Tuesday.

The opening of the marketing complex has come as a boon to onion growers, who have been complaining over exploitation by middlemen. Farmers alleged that they were being cheated by middlemen who offered low prices for their produce.

With the opening of the exclusive marketing complex for small onions in the middle of July this year, the quantity of onions sold through open auction has been increasing steadily. On Tuesday, as many 62 farmers from Irur, Alathur, Chettikulam, Eachankaddu, Nattarmangalam, Ammapalayam, Padalur, Elambalur, Sirvayalur and Bommanapadi villages participated in the auction.

Women farmers lead the way

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Women farmers felicitated on the occasion of ICRISAT Women Farmers' Day at Patancheru in Medak.–
Photo: Mohd. Arif

Mandabai Bhikaji Kale is a 45-year-old farmer from Baza Wahegaon village in Jalna district of Marathwada region in Maharashtra. The region has been facing severe drought conditions since the last three years.

Sorghum crop grown during these years were damaged at the seedling stage itself, resulting in severe shortage of seed. That was the time Ms. Mandabai took the lead and underwent training in the scientific method of production technology and seed produce, along with members of Surabhi Mahila Bachat Gat (SHG). As a result, they have been able to sow improved varieties of seed in the subsequent seasons and thereby, undertake profitable ventures. Ms. Mandabai's services were also recognised by the Government of Maharashtra.

Ms. Sabita Nayak, in her mid-40s, is from Kharsawan village of Seraikella district in Jharkhand. She cultivates maize twice a year and has never let her land lie fallow at any given time. She is the only woman in the village who undertakes cropping throughout the year. Cultivating dry-land crops has increased her income. Ms. Sabita became a role model for the women in the village by sending her daughters to school, constructing a *pucca* house and buying a computer for her children. She has convinced her mother-in-law to allow her to go to work and in order to go to the field, she cooks food early in the morning every day.

“Step out of the confines of your house and do something on your own. This not only helps you to get more income but also enables you to gain respect in society,” was the message given by her to the women in her village. These are only two of the 83 success stories published by International Crops Research Institute for Semi Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), which celebrated Women Farmers' Day recently. Titled 'Women Leaders,' the book was aimed at telling the society about 'unsung heroes' in the farming sector, as described by its Director General William D. Dar.

Ginger growers in distress

The steep fall in ginger price in the market has disappointed farmers, who cultivated the crop hoping good returns this year.

In the last two months, the price has come down from Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 1,500 for a bag weighing 60 kg.

Last year, ginger growers earned good returns as the price stood at Rs. 4,000 a bag. Hoping that the same would continue this year too, many farmers preferred growing ginger.

Venu Kumar, a ginger grower of Salagame in Hassan taluk, said last year he had cultivated tomato and this time he opted for ginger. “Last year, many friends had earned good returns by growing ginger. I followed them this year. But I did not get a good price,” he said.

One of the prime reasons for dip in price is decrease in demand due to increase in production. In Hassan alone, ginger is cultivated on 13,000 hectares (ha) of land, against 8,000 ha last year.

Similarly, the area covered by ginger has increased in Shimoga, Chikmagalur and other districts this year. The merchants are of the view that the price may increase by a few hundred rupees in two months. “This trend of decrease in price is temporary. In a couple of months, prices may increase,” said Ramachandra, a merchant.

Ginger was introduced to Hassan in a large scale by farmers from Kerala. Many farmers took land on rental basis to cultivate ginger in the last decade. Till 2012, many local farmers gave away their land to Kerala farmers on rent to cultivate ginger. Gradually, they understood that Kerala farmers were earning good returns by cultivating ginger in other’s land and started cultivating the crop on their own.

The price of the crop has dipped from Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 1,500 for a 60-kg bag

‘There is no shortage of fertilizer in the district’



Urea is required for top dressing of the paddy crop.— FILE PHOTO: M.A. SRIRAM

M. Mahanteshappa, Joint Director of Agriculture, has said there is no shortage of fertilizer in any part of the district and said that over 1,000 tonnes of urea (of SPIC) were received on Thursday. He said that 700 tonnes of urea (REF) had been supplied to Mysore a few days ago and another 1,200 tonnes of urea would be supplied in a week's time.

All together there would be 2,900 tonnes of urea as against the total requirement of 5,000 tonnes, he said.

Discounting the allegations that there had been shortage of fertilizer in many parts of the district, Dr. Mahanteshappa said it would be distributed through Primary Agriculture Co-Operative Societies and as and when the societies placed orders for fertilizer, it would be supplied to them within a reasonable time frame.

He said that a few private fertilizer dealers had been involved in spreading rumours that urea was unavailable so that farmers would buy it from them at a high price. He appealed to farmers not to pay heed to such rumours. Urea is required for top dressing of the paddy crop.

Dr. Mahanteshappa said that paddy transplantation had been completed in over 95,000 hectares as against the targeted area of 1,05,000 hectares in the district.

He advised farmers not to stick to only one brand of fertilizer. He noted that all branded fertilizers had been tested by the department and they all contained uniform ingredients. Referring to complaints that officials of the Agriculture Department were forcing farmers to buy other fertilizer apart from urea, Dr. Mahanteshappa said that the use of only urea would not help farmers get a good yield and that they would have to use other fertilizer such as NPK.

Loan waiver benefit sought for horticulture farmers

The Zilla Parishad, in its first general body meeting here on Thursday, adopted a resolution urging the State government to extend loan waiver scheme for horticulture crop loans too.

Kamalapuram YSR Congress MLA P. Raveendranatha Reddy proposed a resolution for waiver of all types of loans . Reiterating the same, Kadapa MP Y.S. Avinash Reddy said that mango, papaya and banana crops were damaged owing to gales. The farmers never got crop insurance, though they had paid five to six per cent of the loan amount as premium.

Congress MLC B. Chengarayulu said that only chilli was included in the scheme and termed exclusion of mango, papaya, banana, turmeric and other horticulture crops as irrational. TDP MP C.M. Ramesh Naidu and Simhadripuram ZPTC member P. Prabhakar Reddy said that 96.2 per cent of farmers would benefit from the loan waiver scheme. After a debate on loan waiver, ZP Chairman Guduru Ravi said a resolution was adopted and it would be sent to the

government. The meeting also discussed issues such as release of irrigation water and drinking water scarcity in the district. YSRC MP P. Mithun Reddy proposed a resolution seeking State and Central funds for augmenting drinking water supply in the district, while Mr. Mithun Reddy sought clearance of bills for water transported last year.

GM food: regulatory mechanism mooted

Agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan has called for a regulatory mechanism to monitor genetically modified food. Addressing a national symposium on nutrition security organised by Compound Livestock Feed Manufacturers Association of India (CLFMA) here on Thursday, he said a credible and transparent system was required to verify aspects pertaining to GM food. "The U.S. has a regulatory body and GM food is permitted there under its supervision," he said.

Dr. Swaminathan highlighted the need for an evergreen revolution to increase productivity without harming the environment. He also underlined the necessity for strategies such as inter-cropping of pulses and cereals and avoidance of wastage of food, in order to achieve nutrition security as envisaged by the United Nations under its Zero Hunger Challenge programme. "The future belongs to nations with grains and not guns," he said.

Shrinking per capita land and climate changes affecting agricultural productivity were indicators that required prime attention and there was no time to relax.

"The right to food begins from the farmer," he said.

Kerala Chief Minister Oommen Chandy said unbalanced diet among children was a matter of concern as it resulted in lower immunity. India was one of the countries which recorded high levels of malnutrition.

Administration of protein from plant and animal sources could be an effective way to help achieve nutritional security. He also promised to look into the taxation issues affecting the livestock feed manufacturing segment.

Cover agriculture, media urged

Former Chairman of Karnataka Krishi Mission S.A. Patil on Thursday appealed to media to give extensive coverage to agriculture. Speaking at a seminar on 'Agriculture and Media', organised by the Rajya Kabbu Belegarara Sangha (sugarcane growers' association) here, Mr. Patil said media, through their reports, should highlight the lapses in implementation of agricultural schemes.

Farm conference in Dharmasthala

A two-day conference on 'Sustaining small farm holding: issues and challenges' will be held at Dharmasthala from September 24. Uma Shankar, Karnataka Regional Director, Reserve Bank of India, will inaugurate it. Mundoor Monappa Karkera, member, National Agriculture Pricing Corporation, will deliver the key-note address. Representatives of more than 100 non-governmental organisations have registered to participate in it.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Volume drops at Coonoor tea auction



Coonoor, September 17:

The falling trend witnessed last few weeks in the offer for Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction continues for Sale No: 38 to be held on Thursday and Friday. A volume of 12.52 lakh kg has been catalogued – among the lowest so far in 2014. It is some 84,000 kg less than the offer of last week.

Of this, a volume of 8.46 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 4.06 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades. As much as 11.58 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 94,000 kg, orthodox variety. In the leaf counter, only 41,000 kg belongs to orthodox while 8.05 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 53,000 kg belongs to orthodox while 3.53 lakh kg, CTC. With substantial volumes remaining unsold in previous auctions, as much as two lakh kg of such teas are being re-offered this week.

In the Leaf auction last week, among corporate buyers, Hindustan Unilever Ltd bought brighter liquoring varieties. Tata Global Beverages Ltd., was fairly active on good medium sorts. Godfrey Philips India Ltd showed some interest on medium broken.

Duncans Tea Ltd bought some good medium broken. In the Dust auction, HUL was fairly active on good medium smaller grades. Godfrey Philips was fairly active on medium smaller grades. Indcoserve expressed interest for good medium smaller grades. There was good demand for brighter liquoring teas from upcountry buyers.

Overall, internal buyers were less active. Exporters chose mostly plainer grades.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated September 18, 2014)

For the 5th year in a row, surplus seen in sugar output



New Delhi, September 17:

The country's sugar production is likely to increase five per cent to 250-255 lakh tonnes (lt) next season starting October despite a one per cent drop in sugarcane acreage, according to Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA).

A statement released by the ISMA on Wednesday said that another surplus production is likely for the fifth consecutive year. This season, production was 243 lt against 230-240 lt domestic demand.

“On the basis of September 2014 satellite images, ISMA estimates the total cane acreage at 5.29 million hectares, which is just about one per cent less compared with last year,” said the statement.

Production is estimated to rise by 20 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively, in Maharashtra and Karnataka, the two key cane-producing States. However, ISMA estimates that Uttar Pradesh, the State owing a bulk of Rs. 7,760 crore cane arrears to farmers, will see its production fall to 6 lt from 6.5 lt.

Sugarcane acreage in Tamil Nadu has particularly been impacted by poor rainfall and is some 12-13 per cent lower, as a result of which sugar output is expected to decline by nearly 20 per cent, ISMA said.

Export incentives

With an estimated 72-75 lt of opening stock likely on October 1, which is 25 lt more than domestic requirement, ISMA wants the Government continue the export subsidy to help inject some liquidity into the cash-starved industry. Surplus stocks could hurt depressed prices even further and increase worries for debt-ridden mills around the country, it said.

The Government is currently providing export subsidy of Rs. 3,371/quintal of sugar. “As already decided in February 2014 by the Government, it is important to continue with the export incentive scheme for raw sugar in the 2014-15 sugar season,” said ISMA.

The sugar industry reiterated that to deal with surplus sugar, it would convert cane juice into ethanol to be blended with petrol according to the mandatory 5 per cent requirement.

“One billion litres of additional ethanol procurement can reduce about 1.7 million tonnes of surplus sugar from the market. This can help the industry with better cash flows and they can pay cane price to the farmers on time in the next sugar season,” said ISMA.

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Monsoon all set to withdraw from north-western parts

Thiruvananthapuram, September 17:

The India Met Department has announced that conditions are becoming favourable for the withdrawal of the monsoon from parts of northwest India.

The process may begin during the rest of this week to end a roller-coaster ride of the monsoon that has run up a deficit of 11 per cent as on date.

There is not much scope for a drastic change in the deficit situation even while not ignoring the low-pressure area in the Bay of Bengal and potential rain for parts of peninsular India.

Rains withdraw

The US Climate Prediction Centre agrees with this view, and sees the rains having already withdrawn from north-west except the western half of Jammu and Kashmir and adjoining Punjab. It also suggests that most of the gains from the ‘low’ in the Bay would pan out over peninsular India during the very last week of the month (starting Wednesday next, September 24). Till then, rains or thundershowers are seen lashing parts of the eastern coast covering mainly Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu and the adjoining interior.

Meanwhile, other models suggested that the ‘low’ may not cross the peninsular coast but retreat back to the outer seas and chug towards

Odisha-Gangetic West Bengal coast. It would merely leave the field clear for the monsoon to withdraw from central India, especially Madhya Pradesh, in what looks like a process loaded with some intent of haste.

In this manner, the rains got dragged well into October. Meanwhile, India Met Office said on Wednesday that the 'low' in the Bay has already spun away north into the west-central basin off north Andhra Pradesh-south Odisha. Heavy rain is forecast for Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Odisha, coastal Andhra Pradesh and the North-eastern States over the next three days.

Rains will grow in intensity over the north-east from the weekend, indicating the track of the 'low.'

Thundershowers are forecast for West Bengal, Sikkim, Odisha, Telangana, Rayalaseema, coastal Andhra Pradesh into early next week.

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Ornamental fish production can boost micro enterprise growth

Mangalore, September 17:

The production and marketing of ornamental fish can spur the growth of micro enterprises in the fisheries sector, according to Lakshminatha Reddy, General Manager of Corporation Bank.

Inaugurating a training programme on 'Ornamental fish production and marketing' at College of Fisheries in Mangalore on Wednesday, Reddy said activities related to ornamental fish production are gaining importance in the fisheries sector.

India's contribution

Stating that India's contribution to the global ornamental fish trade is less than 1 per cent, he said the production and marketing of ornamental fishes can create more micro enterprises in the fisheries sector.

The country needs more and more of micro enterprises, he said. Urging the trainees to get technical knowledge from the training programme, he said Corporation Bank would finance them, if they are interested in creating micro enterprises in ornamental fish production and marketing.

The Western Ghat section has rare varieties of ornamental fish. There is a need to conserve these varieties, he said.

Shivakumar Magada, Programme Coordinator and professor of fisheries at the college, said the ornamental fish has created a big market in the past one decade. Giving the example of Bangalore, he said the number of outlets selling ornamental fish was nearly 700 a decade ago. Now more than 1,200 outlets sell ornamental fish there, and the monthly turnover is around Rs. 1.5 crore in Bangalore alone, he said.

H Shivananda Murthy, Head of Department of Aquaculture, College of Fisheries, said the country exports fish worth Rs. 20,000 crore a year. Of that, the share of ornamental fish is around Rs. 300 crore. There is still scope to increase production of ornamental fish varieties, he said.

Truant monsoon could hit Rabi crop prospects too

New Delhi, September 17:

Rabi or winter season sowing could be affected on account of the South-West Monsoon receiving 12 per cent deficit rainfall this year, according to Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh.

“Regions that received deficit rainfall will be affected during Rabi season sowing. However, despite deficit in rainfall, the situation is not like what it was in 2009 and the (Kharif) acreage is down only three per cent,” said Singh, inaugurating a national agricultural conference convened in preparation for the Rabi season. In 2009, rainfall deficit during the South-West Monsoon was 23 per cent, affecting production of almost all kharif crops.

Major wheat producing States such as Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh are experiencing deficit rainfall, with UP declaring 40 districts as drought-hit this week. Haryana declared all 22 districts as drought affected on September 2. Wheat, barley, potato, mustard, maize, rapeseed/mustard and onion are the primary Rabi crops, sowed from October and harvested from April.

States would be provided all assistance to achieve production targets, the Minister said. JS Sandhu, Agriculture Commissioner, said that the production target for wheat had been set at 94 million tonnes and that the Government would attempt to utilise 3.37 million hectares of land that had been left fallow during sowing for the kharif season due to rainfall shortage. Other Rabi crop targets are: rice (14 mt), barley (1.75 mt), maize (6 mt), millets (2.5 mt), pulses (12.5 mt), oilseeds (11 mt) and foodgrains (130.75 mt).

“We are trying to enforce seed certification standards and also further the area application of micronutrients in the soil. The promotion of seed production during the off-season to make up for deficiencies is something we are trying as well planning in advance for summer pulses,” said Sandhu. Strategies to tackle wheat crop diseases like Yellow Rust and Karnal Bunt are underway as well, he said.

Kharif strategy

On strategies for the Kharif crops, the Minister said: “We managed to come up with timely policies to face the challenges of the delayed monsoon. We implemented a diesel subsidy scheme, increased ceiling of the subsidy on seeds, waived duties on the imports of various feed ingredients and provided financial support for horticultural crop growers etc. Contingency plans were prepared for 565 districts.”

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THE ECONOMIC TIMES

JAMMU: As the flood waters recede, a grim picture emerges from the agriculture sector in Jammu where the deluge has washed away crops worth Rs 365 crore and 13,000 hectares of cultivable land. While the Maize crop suffered Rs 248 crore damage, rice/paddy crops suffered a loss of Rs 48 crore followed by Rs 40 crore loss to vegetable crops besides damage to pulses and saffron.

"Loss of 365 crore has been caused to crops in Jammu region in the flash floods", Director, Agriculture, Jammu, S S Jamwal told PTI.

He said an elaborate report has been submitted to the government on the basis of the preliminary assessment done across the region. Jamwal, who himself led teams of the Department of Agriculture to assess the losses caused to crops and farm lands, said 13,000 hectares of agriculture land has been washed away in the floods. Tawi, Basantar and Devak rivers have changed courses at places resulting in major damage to huge chunks of agriculture land in Niki Tawi and Ramgarh belts of Jammu and Samba districts.

"It is the biggest challenge for the government to ensure protections to farm lands and later reclaiming these lands for use in agriculture activities", Jamwalsaid.

Taking stock of the situation, the Department of Agriculture has pressed into service its monitoring teams to make an on-the-spot assessment of damages caused to vegetables, paddy, maize, pulses and fodder crops by the flash floods and heavy rains in different districts of Jammu division since September 14.

Jamwal has also held detailed interaction with farmers of Kukrian,

Kothey Manhasan, Haripur, Chak Jaggar, Thub, Mahaveer Basti, Kothey Puran, Ghou Manhasan, Sandawan, Bhagatpur, Suhagani, Chakrali, Nai basti, Marh, Kana Chak, Kayanpur, Panjore and adjoining areas of Marh sub-division.

Hit by the floods, farmer Parkash Singh of Kukerian area said, "There has been tremendous loss to the farmers of the area who need immediate relief and help. We have lost everything. Our life depends on farming".

Similarly, Janak Singh said, "We cannot do farming for the next one year as some land has been washed away and some rendered barren by the floods. We will take more than one year to reclaim the farm land".

In Suhagani panchyat and adjoining areas, about 500 acres of cultivated area has been affected due to breach of protection bunds and floods in Tawi River.

Some of the areas on which paddy and other Kharif crops were grown have been totally washed away. The land has been converted into a riverbed and silt, sand and stones have deposited on a large cultivated area.

"Vegetables particularly hybrids and cauliflower sown by farmers have been completely destroyed due to heavy and continuous rains", Jamwal said.

Vegetables which are sown early like radish and knol-khol have been damaged in Nai Basti, Marh, Gajansoo Kana Chak and Panjore areas, he said.

crops was huge as areas, which were supplying vegetables to Jammu city, are now unsuitable for cultivation.

Many pumpsets and cattle sheds have also been damaged and washed away due to the flood waters besides irrigation channels. The Director, after visiting the affected areas at Kothey Manhasan, Nai basti, Kana Chak and Panjore, has instructed the field staff to identify the damaged patches and carry out detailed documentation of the crops and the areas damaged.

Palm oil import default unlikely despite price fall

MUMBAI: The sharp fall in international prices of palm oil, one of India's biggest imports after crude oil and gold, triggered fears that Indian importers would default on their purchase commitments, like they did in the past, but a leading industry authority said this is unlikely.

The price of crude palm oil (CPO), the largest imported vegetable oil, has fallen by around \$100-120 a tonne over the past two months. During this period, crude palm oil, which is traded on Malaysian multi-asset class bourse Bursa Malaysia, hit a five-and-a-half-year low of 1,914 ringgit.

Though prices have recovered from the low to around 2,153 ringgit on Thursday, concerns over further imports in the pipeline from Malaysia and Indonesia spooked a few market stakeholders who fear the likelihood of huge import defaults, similar to what happened in 2008-09.

But Dorab Mistry, director of Godrej International, and a globally respected authority on the subject of vegetable oil have discounted this. "The fall of \$100-120 is not a problem for big, well-financed Indian importers," Mistry said.

