

## Steps on to tackle monsoon deficit: Agriculture Minister

Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said here on Friday that to tackle problems due to the deficit monsoon, the Union government had taken steps such as increasing the seed subsidy, providing additional assistance for horticulture crops and waiving the import duty on oil cakes.

At a press conference listing his Ministry's work during the first 100 days of the Modi government, he said these steps and success in digitisation and use of technology to provide information to farmers were major achievements. He said that to increase the crop yield and promote agriculture research, more agriculture universities had been set up and soil health cards provided. Plans were on to increase milk yield of indigenous breeds of cattle under the Rs. 150-crore Rashtriya Gokul Mission.

The Minister said the government had drawn up drought contingency plans for 571 districts with help from the Central Institute for Dryland Agriculture. The government aimed to achieve production of 94 million tonnes of wheat, 14 million tonnes of Rabi paddy, 12.5 million tonnes of pulses, and 11 million tonnes of oilseeds.

"The Prime Minister is very keen on using science and innovation to promote agriculture. We will have a 'Lab to Land' approach so that latest innovations reach farmers. New agriculture science centres in Assam and Jharkhand will work on 56 new varieties of foodgrains, fruits and vegetables," Mr. Singh said.

“The government has achieved unparalleled success in the use of IT to reach farmers. Over 32 crore agriculture-based advisories were sent to farmers in the last 100 days, almost equal to the number sent between July 2013 and May 2014.” The government prepared a scheme to distribute three crore soil health cards this year, which would be increased to 5.5 crore next year.

## **Agriculture Minister smitten by Anand model**

With farmers drifting away from dairy sector and cattle stock falling, Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan has said that an Anand model project will be worked out to increase milk production.

Commissioning the high-tech Bull Mother Farm at Kolahalamedu near here on Friday, the Minister said he had visited Anand in Gujarat and Amul units and it could be emulated by the State.

Dairy farming should become remunerative and for it value-added products should be made. He said dairy farmers should be provided facilities for producing and selling value-added products and they should be rehabilitated as was done in Anand. There would be cow hostels at the block level where the cattle would be looked after and farmers could leave them there, he said.

Idukki would be made a dairy district and the high-tech farm was aimed to produce one lakh cattle calves, he said.

The Govardini project of the Union government will be utilised for increasing milk production and supplying superior calves to the farmers. Mr Mohanan said he had met Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh at New Delhi and informed him that the ongoing projects under Idukki Package will not be affected.

## Fall in onion prices worries farmers

Even as onion arrivals at the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees across the northern districts of the State are increasing, onion prices have seen a dip much to the shock of farmers who were expecting fair prices for their produce. While incessant rain and “wet onion” are said to be the reason for the prices going down, the farmers are puzzled to see prices falling, especially when arrivals are increasing.

For Chinnaramagowda, a farmer from Kaltimmanadoddi village near Gadwal mandal, in Mahbubnagar district of neighbouring Telangana, who had brought 22 bags of onion, it was a bad day at the Raichur APMC yard. On arrival, he was shocked to see that the prices had dropped from Rs. 2,000 a quintal a few weeks ago to Rs. 600 a quintal.

After hearing about the falling prices, another farmer from the same area, who had brought a tractor load of onion, was initially reluctant to unload the consignment. He was, however, left with no choice but to sell it at what he called throwaway prices.

Traders attributed two factors for the dip in onion prices — the glut and a “wet” produce. “Being the harvesting season, the supply is far greater than demand. In addition, the produce flooding the market is of low quality,” Hemareddy, a trader, told *The Hindu* .

But State president of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha Chamarasa Malipatil has a different view. “It is primarily because of our erroneous import and export policies. When the onion prices were skyrocketing, the Union government imported the produce on a large-scale causing a glut in the market,” he said. He demanded that a balanced import

and export policy be introduced to safeguard the interests of both indigenous farmers and consumers.

### **Bulk buying**

However, a trader from Hubli, Salim Byahatti, said that the prices had nothing do with the high arrivals. He said that exporters were buying onion in the price range of Rs. 1,500-1,800, and they were buying in bulk. "It is only the 'wet onion' that has been coming to the market in the last few days that is being brought at prices below Rs. 600," he said.

However, a few farmers complained that even good quality onions were not getting fair prices as traders tried to take undue advantage of the good arrivals by quoting prices similar to those of the wet varieties.

## **Farmers demand eviction of encroachments on waterbodies**

The demand for eviction of encroachments on waterbodies, channels and public places echoed in the monthly farmers' grievance meeting held at the Collectorate here on Friday.

Many farmers accused officials of being lethargic in eviction of encroachments on waterbodies. But officials read out an action taken report on 133 petitions received from farmers at the grievance meeting held in August. However, farmers complained that delay in removal of encroachments on waterbodies affected farming activities. An official showed a photograph of a hut put up on a waterbody and explained that the family would be evicted after providing an alternative site.

A farmer complained that the panchayat president of Kottaiyadi had damaged an irrigation canal for making way to his land seven months

ago and, in spite of several appeals, officials were yet to take action to rectify the damage. An official replied that the panchayat president himself had assured that he would repair the damage in a fortnight, failing which action would be taken as per law.

Farmers appealed to the officials to control the declining procurement price of paddy at the local market, as it has touched an all-time-low of Rs. 1200 per quintal. A farmer requested the district administration to make available application forms at the primary agricultural cooperative societies in Tamil.

District Revenue Officer A. Udhayakumar presided over the meeting.

An official attached to the Water Resources Organisation of Public Works Department, on condition of anonymity, said that shortage of surveyors and political intervention were the causes for delay in eviction of encroachments in waterbodies in the district.

## **Farmers seek payment of Rs.10,000 per acre as drought relief**

The Tamil Nadu Farmers Association (TNFA) led by M.R. Sivasamy has appealed to the Central and Tamil Nadu governments to pay drought relief of Rs.10,000 per acre to the farmers in Vellore district which has become a drought-prone district owing to the failure of the monsoon for the last 10 years. A resolution to this effect was passed at a meeting of the Vellore unit of the TNFA presided over by Dr. Sivasamy here on Friday.

By another resolution, the association demanded the central and Tamil Nadu governments to waive the agricultural loans given by all banks to farmers as done in Andhra Pradesh and Telengana.

As a permanent solution to the chronic water scarcity in Vellore district, the association urged the government to implement the Nethravathi-Palar and Thenpennai-Palar river link projects.

The association also wanted the government to withdraw the new legislation governing the drilling of borewells which have been introduced with the aim of preventing borewell deaths. The new law includes penal provisions such as imprisonment for those who drill borewells without remitting Rs.5000 and getting the panchayat permission.

A farmer would have to drill a new borewell within 48 hours of the water level dropping in the existing borewell or if the groundwater current changes direction in order to save the crop, whereas it would take a minimum of 15 days to obtain the permission of the panchayat to drill a borewell.

Under these circumstances, the crop would wither, leading to economic loss to the farmer. Given the fact that 40% of the farmers have already given up agriculture due to non-remunerative prices for the produce, the remaining farmers too would give up agriculture because of the new legislation, leading to scarcity of essential commodities and increase in their prices, the resolution pointed out.

## **Water for single crop areas from October 1**

Water must be released at the earliest to the single crop areas in the district, said farmers at the monthly grievance day meeting here on Friday.

Stating that water should have been released on September 15 itself, the farmers said the storage level in the Periyar credit was above 6,000 mcft which could adequately irrigate 85,000 acres. “We have already incurred heavy losses due to drought-like conditions. Now,

only if the water is released soon we can prepare the fields before northeast monsoon sets in,” said K. Kathiresan from Melur.

Farmers from Melur said many acres of mango and coconut trees had wilted owing to lack of rain and the situation would ease only if water was released soon.

Collector L. Subramanian said water would be released for the single crop areas from October 1 and asked them to prepare their fields. Reacting to queries about why water could not be released earlier, Mr. Subramanian said sufficient storage had to be ensured to release water continuously over a period of time.

### **Clear tanks, channels**

The farmers requested the Collector to expedite works on clearing ‘seemai karuvelam’ trees, de-silt tanks and clear the channels before the onset of monsoon. A farmer alleged that there was a delay in assessing the extent of ‘karuvelam’ tree growth in the tanks by the Forest Department and said the trees must be felled soon.

Questioning officials from the Forest Department about the delay, Mr. Subramanian asked them to assess and prepare an estimate for the same and hand it over to the Public Works Department.

## **Repay and keep crop loans alive, banker tells ryots**

The State government is committed to waiving crop loans of farmers, convenor of the State Level Bankers’ Committee and General Manager of Andhra Bank C. Doraswamy has said, and urges borrowers to keep their loans alive through timely repayment.

Addressing farmers and women members of self-help groups at a meeting organised here on Friday to create awareness on issues

associated with the loan waiver decision of the government, Mr. Doraswamy expressed concern over “zero repayment” of bank loans in the rural areas, and underscored the importance of timely repayment by the borrowers.

Replying to a farmer, he said the borrowers could renew their loans by repaying either the total outstanding or at least the interest component to maintain their relationship with the lending bank.

He urged the borrowers to realise that by not repaying they were putting at stake their long relationship with the Chodavaram branch, established in 1953.

The farmers had totally stopped repayment in the light of the statements by political parties and the elected government, he noted. As a result, the loans had become ineligible for being considered under the government’s interest-free loan scheme. The borrower would also have to pay the accumulated interest, Mr. Doraswamy said.

The government was seeking data from the banks on the borrowers and their outstanding amount, including crop loans, gold loans for crop, and crop loans converted into term loans following natural calamities. After compilation, the process of identification of borrowers eligible for the waiver would be taken up and the amounts transferred to their accounts, he explained.

## **Supplyco online system for paddy procurement**

The Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation (Supplyco) is all set to introduce an online paddy receipt sheet system for the procurement of paddy from the second crop season onwards. The move is aimed at preventing delays that occur during the processing of payments due to farmers.



As part of the computerisation, Supplyco will incorporate the use of GPRS-enabled electronic devices for the issue of the receipt sheet. The mill agents will be able to enter the details of the farmers, including their allotted registration number and other related information regarding the paddy procured, directly into the machine. A token receipt will be issued soon after the details have been entered and the collected data will be transmitted to a database.

### **Online form**

A.V. Suresh Kumar, Paddy Marketing Officer, Monkombu, said the collected details would have to be verified by the Krishi Bhavan concerned, following which these would be forwarded to the Paddy Marketing Officer for initiating payments to the bank accounts of the farmers. The farmers would also be required to fill an online form for the completion of the process.

### **Complaints**

Mr. Kumar said the decision to switch over to the computerised system was made on the basis of numerous complaints of delays in disbursing the payments. The current system involved the tedious task of preparing quadruplicate copies of the paddy receipt sheet.

Farmers were also required to submit the sheet to the Paddy Marketing Officer along with a 100-gm sample of the paddy for the payment. Although a deadline of 20 days had been set for completing the payment, delays often crept in owing to various technicalities involving bank accounts, among others, Mr. Kumar said.

# Water to be released from Veeranam

Water release from the Veeranam tank will begin on Sunday for irrigation of 1.3 lakh acres in Cuddalore, Thanjavur and Nagapattinam districts:

## Neglect of farm workers decried

Neglect of farm labourers by policy makers came in for harsh criticism at the 11th conference of Tamil Nadu Agricultural Workers Union organised by the Communist Party of India (CPI) here.

The three-day conference culminated on Friday.

Pension for agricultural workers, house sites, land for cultivation, quality education for children of farm workers, better allocation under free house scheme, proper implementation of SC/ST sub-plan, a central legislation for welfare of agricultural workers, and larger attention to implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme were the points that received optimum emphasis in the speeches of national and state functionaries of CPI, including senior party leader R. Nallakannu, and State Secretary D. Pandian.

“We will continue to pressurise Central and State Governments with our charter of demands. A demonstration will be conducted at all the district headquarters in the country on October 15,” Nagendranath Ojha, General Secretary of CPI’s Bharathiya Keth Mazdoor Union, and former Member of Parliament, said.

Mr. Nagendranath called for enactment of a separate ‘Pension Act’ for agricultural workers, ensuring minimum of Rs. 3,000 per month, 15 cents of house site for each worker, and land for cultivation, without which, he pointed out, poverty cannot be eradicated.

The Central Government must allot not less than Rs. 3 lakh per unit of house, and the State governments have to pitch in with their own contributions, for the group houses constructed under Indira Awas Yojana.

A Central legislation was necessary for welfare of agricultural workers.

At present, such legislation has been enacted only by the Kerala and Puducherry governments, Mr. Narendranath said.

Referring to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, he criticised the Central Government for attempting to alter the wage-material proportion from 60:40 to 51:49. The existing proportion must remain.

There should be no diversion of funds, he said, and demanded daily wage of Rs. 400 per worker.

The other demands he highlighted included quality education for children of agricultural workers, better compensation for land acquisition, proper implementation of health insurance scheme, and amendment to the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act.

## **Forest department's media foray evokes good response**

Madurai District Forest Division's foray into the social media has evoked a positive response.

The forest division's Facebook page, launched on August 7, has close to 900 likes. The updates range on the page range from media reports on forest and wildlife to various schemes undertaken by the Forest Department.

The page also has contact details of officials, including the District Forest Officer and forest range officers of Madurai, Sholavandan and Usilampatti. District Forest Officer Nihar Rangan, who is the administrator of the page, says interaction with public through social media helps the department get continuous feedback on its initiatives.

“The social media interaction also increases transparency in functioning of the department. People get to know means to avail benefits of schemes such as Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Conservation and Greening Project,” he told *The Hindu* on Friday.

The forum in Facebook is also helpful in creating awareness and spreading knowledge of wildlife and environment, he adds.

A recent post in the page explains the difference between pug marks of leopard, wolf, jackal, wild boar, wild dog and hyena. “The purpose was to quell the fear of villagers near Vickramangalam, who thought it was a pug mark of leopard they spotted at a farm, while it was actually that of a jackal or a dog,” Mr. Ranjan explains.

“Every village will have at least one person or two using social media. We are hopeful that the message in the updates will be spread among the villagers,” adds the official.

Recently, an alert from public to the District Forest Officer’s mobile regarding an elephant being subjected to begging had helped the officials crack the whip on the mahout. “The caller who alerted me got my number from the Facebook page,” says Mr. Ranjan.

Through a group on WhatsApp “Friends of Madurai Forest,” the official also interacts with members of the media and posts constant updates on happenings.

# 5,000 rotten eggs dumped in field at Puliyarai

The western part of Puliyarai on Tirunelveli – Kerala border was virtually submerged by an obnoxious odour after over 5,000 rotten eggs were dumped in a field after Thursday midnight.

The residents and the farmers of Puliyarai allege that the border town of Puliyarai was being used by some of the traders and the hospitals in Kerala for dumping biological and medical waste being generated in the neighbouring State.

Vehicles which were taking vegetables, grocery items and other essential commodities from Tamil Nadu to Kerala, were being used to send the waste into Tamil Nadu.

## Trucks bring waste

After taking money from the Kerala traders, the truck drivers bring the waste and dump it on the roadside along Puliyarai. When an unidentified lorry driver dumped over 5,000 rotten eggs in a field at Puliyarai after midnight on Thursday, the entire area was engulfed by an unpleasant smell that chased away the farmers from visiting their ranches on Friday morning.

“Since dead chicks could be seen in most of the eggs dumped in the field, we suspect that discarded eggs from the incubator centre in Kerala had been dumped in our farms. The officials, particularly the police, should check this menace,” said the farmers, who suggest that the empty trucks returning to their hometowns here after offloading the consignment should be checked thoroughly so that the truck drivers would not indulge in such activities.

When the chicken and medical wastes were dumped inside the Tamil Nadu border near Puliyarai in the past, the farmers informed the

police about this problem, who checked the problem to some extent, thanks to constant monitoring.

The farmers expect the continuation of similar surveillance along the border.

## **Stalls set up for food festival**

Scores of stalls have been reserved for food processing and manufacturing industries to showcase and market their products under direct sale from factory to consumers at the Dasara 'Ahaara Mela' from September 25 at the Scouts and Guides Ground.

This is the first time that food processing and manufacturing sectors have been accommodated in the food mela, according to a press release from the Dasara sub-committee.

Rameshwarappa, executive president of the sub-committee and senior deputy director of the Food and Civil Supplies Department, said the district administration is expecting over 10 lakh people to visit the mela this year.

He said that micro, small and medium entrepreneurs are eligible for 50 per cent to 80 per cent subsidy.

### **On subsidy**

The Central Food Technological Research Institute will provide information at the venue on various support schemes and subsidies available for establishment and expansion of food procession and manufacturing industries, he said.

The Aahaar mela would be held from September 25 to October 3.

# Wild elephant electrocuted in Sorab village

A tusker was electrocuted in the forest near Bommanahalli village in Sorab taluk on Thursday, according to Forest Department sources.

P.P. Banerjee, Deputy Conservator of Forest, told presspersons here on Friday that the elephant that was electrocuted on Thursday was the same one that had strayed into agricultural fields and destroyed crops in the Udri gram panchayat limits in February this year.

The Department of Forest had pressed into service four tamed elephants drawn from the Sakrebail elephant camp then to catch this wild elephant. However, they could not catch it as the wild elephant had escaped into the forest areas in the neighbouring Uttara Kannada district then. After a gap of five months, the same elephant had re-appeared in the forests in Sorab taluk in August, he said.

Meanwhile, the electrocuted elephant was around 15 years old.

## Power drawn illegally

It is said that a few farmland owners near Bommanahalli village had illegally drawn electricity from the 11-kV main power line that passes through the region.

The elephant had died after coming in contact with this power line drawn illegally by the farmers. Mr. Banerjee said that he would order a probe into the incident. If it was proved that the power line had been illegally drawn from the main power line in the forest land, stern action would be initiated against the persons concerned, he said.

## **‘Conserve, cultivate medicinal plants’**

The need to conserve and cultivate invaluable medicinal plants was one of the resolutions taken at a two-day seminar on green health and green food held recently at Raghavendra Kalyan Mantap, here.

The other resolutions are a call to cooperative societies, medicine comparatives and farmers to come forward to cultivate medicinal plants and a request to distribute such plants by the Health Department with the support of Medicine Plant Board, New Delhi. House hold remedies should be encouraged, and useful medicinal plants should be cultivated in kitchen gardens. Ishwar Shashtri, retired Deputy Director of Ayush, H.R. Nayak of Horticulture Department; and Anant Asisar of Vrakshalaksha Andolan Karnataka, participated in the programme.

## **BusinessLine**

### **Kharif crop output estimates lower, but could improve: Ministry**

The first advance Kharif foodgrain production estimates released by the Government here on Friday projected an over 7 per cent decline due to deficient monsoon rains, compared with the record highs seen last year.

The Agriculture Ministry said the Kharif sowing coverage was as per the average of the past five years, and only 3 per cent lower than last year.



According to the Ministry's preliminary estimates, foodgrain production stands at 120.27 million tonnes (mt), a reduction of nearly 10 mt from the fourth advance estimate of 129.24 mt last year. The estimate for rice (88.02 mt) is lower than the fourth advance estimate from the last Kharif season, which stood at 91.69 mt.

"Focusing on a particular number at this stage would be premature. These are conservative estimates," said Agriculture Secretary Ashish Bahuguna at an event outlining the Ministry's achievements in the first 100 days of its tenure.

Bahuguna said the decline in rice production, despite similar acreage as last season, could be attributed to the first half of the monsoon being poor, which resulted in late sowing, and consequent floods in parts of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Assam that further adversely affected productivity.

"Let's also appreciate that the duration of the Kharif and Rabi seasons are not the same across the country. There is still a lag in sowing in the South, in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, so the area will keep increasing. But, let's be clear, the figure we have provided is likely to rise over the next few months," he added.

Earlier, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh commended the efforts of the country's farmers and the proactive approach of officials to deal with challenges posed by the delayed monsoon.

"The deficit was 43 per cent in June and by July, it came down to 22 per cent. We took important measures and prepared contingency plans for 571 districts. As a result, sowing coverage is just 3 per cent lower than last year," he said.

Singh said output for maize would be 16.03 mt against last year's fourth advance estimate of 17.68 mt. Pulses output has been pegged at 5.20 mt, lower than the 6.02 mt fourth advance estimate from 2013-14. Tur and moong production were likely to be around 2.74 mt

and 0.71 mt, both registering a decline from 3.29 mt and 0.98 mt last year. The production of Urad, the other major Kharif pulse, is expected to be higher than last year's fourth advance estimate, at 1.15 mt as against 1.07 mt.

Total oilseed output is expected to decrease to 19.7 mt from 22.4 mt as estimated last year. Groundnut production, in particular, is likely to be hit with a nearly 3 mt reduction at 5.02 mt against 7.81 mt as per last year's fourth advance estimate.

Cotton production will also see a likely decrease with production expected to 346 lakh bales of 170 kg each, down from 366 lakh bales estimated last year. Jute and Mesta output are estimated at 113.43 lakh bales of 180 kg each while they were estimated at 115.80 lakh bales in 2013-14.

Sugarcane production, on the back of 12-13 per cent reduction in Tamil Nadu, is estimated at 342.79 mt (350.02 mt).

## **Worried over low prices, rubber growers stop tapping**

Rubber prices have dropped to levels of Rs. 120 a kg despite efforts to prevent the downtrend in rubber prices by various stakeholders in the industry.

The Kerala Government's efforts to drive the market higher have also failed. Various reasons could be attributed to this trend but the general belief is that the domestic price is plunging in tandem with the international price.

Rubber growers had a good time when prices scaled to a record Rs. 245/kg for the RSS 4 grade. There were times when growers did not

release the stock, awaiting further rise in prices. Some were fortunate in getting good prices, as they sold their stocks at the right time.

### **Panic growers**

There are reports from the plantation areas that rubber growers are panicking and will not hesitate to shift to other crops that will be more profitable. Some have stopped tapping.

They are reluctant to continue tapping as returns for them are low even as labour costs remain high. The input costs have also surged.

Natural rubber production dropped in May to 53,000 tonnes from 59,000 tonnes during the corresponding period a year ago.

### **Rising imports**

Though it could have resulted in a price hike, nothing happened as the prices in the international market ruled low. Manufacturers could make use of the opportunity.

Rubber imports, on the other hand, continue unabated. According to reports, China still holds a sizable stockpile. To compensate low productivity, they have extended the area under rubber. They are also producing synthetic rubber on a large-scale.

There should be strict control over imports, demands the Indian Rubber Dealers Federation. As the production season begins shortly, imports of rubber will have to stop.

Since the decision on natural rubber policy is getting delayed, Union and State Governments should intervene, George Vally, President, IRDF, said. The annual conference of the Federation slated on September 27 will discuss the issues in detail.

## Action plan

The current replanting subsidy has to be doubled and a price stabilisation scheme introduced without delay, said President of the Forum Kunikoli Moideen and Secretary PP Mohamudkutty.

Rubber growers want only a result-oriented programme to get a remunerative price for their produce, said Prof Devasia, a small grower who champions the cause of fellow farmers in Kannur and surrounding areas.

A time has come to cut down the trees and sell it for firewood as the income realised from the trees is not enough to meet even the cost of inputs.

Many in the plantation sector feel that if there is no end to imports especially at a time when harvesting season is on the cards, an immediate solution to the crisis is difficult.

## Cotton wilts on high arrivals

With start of new arrival, price of raw cotton or *kapas* was down on Friday. Moreover, weak demand from mills also pressurised the price.

Kapas lost Rs. 15-20 to Rs. 850-1,000 for a *maund* of 20 kg in Gujarat. New crop was at Rs. 400-700 in Rajkot. Gin delivery *kapas* was Rs. 960-990.

Gujarat Sankar-6 cotton was down by Rs. 200 to Rs. 36,500-38,500 per candy of 356 kg.

Average quality traded at Rs. 33,500-35,500 and lower grade Rs. 31,500-32,500.

# India's water reservoirs at 79% of capacity: govt

Water levels in India's main reservoirs in the week to Sept. 18 were at 79 per cent of capacity, down just 5 percentage points from a year earlier, government data showed, aided by a late revival of rains despite a shaky start in June.

The latest level is 2 percentage points higher from a week earlier and 5 percentage points above the 10-year average, the data showed on Friday.

Weather officials expect rains to weaken from this weekend as the June-September monsoon season begins a delayed retreat.

Water level in reservoirs is vital for hydropower generation and irrigation. Reservoirs also provide water later in the year to irrigate winter crops such as wheat and rapeseed.



## ONGC Invests Rs 81k cr in New Discoveries

NEW DELHI: India's largest oil and gas producer ONGC said it has invested Rs 81,890 crore to bring on stream new discoveries and arrest natural decline in its ageing oil fields.

“Our major oil and gas producing fields are ageing and showing natural decline,” ONGC CMD Dinesh K Sarraf told shareholders at company’s AGM on Friday.

ONGC, Sarraf said has taken measures to arrest this trend and uphold production from such fields.

ONGC has deployed the best-in-class technologies in its Improved Oil Recovery (IOR) and Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) schemes on these fields.

“Our efforts have paid off well – with 7.46 million tonnes in FY’14 alone, which is about 33 per cent of ONGC’s domestic crude production. Thus, till FY’14, a cumulative incremental gain of 87.41 million tonnes has been achieved,” he said, adding a total of Rs 41,316 crore capex has been planned for such interventions across 24 projects, out of which 19 have already been completed.

Stating that ONGC was committed to expeditiously developing its oil and gas reserves, he said out of 15 prospective projects taken up for development, 7 are already complete and 8 are under various stages of implementation.

“These projects, with an estimated capital outlay of over Rs 40,573.7 crore, are geared up to produce additional 45.66 million tonnes of crude oil and 67.44 billion cubic meters of natural gas,” he said.

India’s crude oil production in 2013-14 was largely flat at 37.77 mt compared to 37.86 mt in the previous financial year.

However, a substantial drop in the natural gas output was reported. The production was pegged at 35.39 billion cubic metres (BCM) against 40.68 BCM in the preceding fiscal. While crude oil imports increased by over 2 per cent to 189.24 million tonne, LNG import remained almost flat at 10.76 million tonne against 10.90 million tonne in FY’13.

# Foodgrain Production to Fall This Year'

BANGALORE: Karnataka's food production is likely to come down by 10 lakh tonnes due to severe drought and floods in 2014-15, said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday. Speaking to reporters after chairing a meeting to assess the damage caused due to natural calamities in the state, Siddaramaiah said that the target fixed by the government for the current year is 135 lakh tonnes. He said drought-like situation prevailed in 66 taluks of Kolar, Chikballapur, Bangalore Urban and Rural, Ramanagaram, Bidar and Gulbarga districts.

He said that these 66 taluks will be officially declared as drought-hit at a cabinet meeting scheduled for September 26.

Last year, the state had achieved food production of 132 lakh tonnes despite drought, he said. The chief minister said that a meeting of Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of all the 30 districts has been convened in Bangalore on Tuesday to review drought and flood situation in their respective districts. He said that the government will assess the situation by this month-end and submit a memorandum to the Centre seeking additional funds to tackle drought.

Also, `169 crore had been given as input subsidy to farmers and the government had disbursed `336 crore (including `82 crore released by the Centre) to farmers whose crops were destroyed due to hail storms.

Siddaramaiah said that sowing was complete in 68 lakh hectares as against the target of 74 lakh hectares in the kharif season. The chief minister said that the government is considering to hike the compensation given for houses and crops damaged due to floods.

He said that the loss due to heavy rains in Bidar, Gulbarga, Koppal, Raichur, Bijapur, Gadag and Bellary between August 18 and 30 is estimated at `426 crore.

# Centre to Take Steps to Strengthen Tobacco Products Act

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Declaring war on cancer and discouraging consumption of the products that cause the deadly disease, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said here on Friday that the government was for strict implementation of the laws to check use of tobacco products.

As part of the strict implementation of the laws against tobacco and its consumption, the government will soon discuss measures to strengthen the Cigarette and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), he said while declaring the Regional Cancer Centre (RCC) here as a State Cancer Institute.

“The task force set up to look into Cigarette and Other Tobacco Products Act and its implementation has submitted its report to the government about the measures to be adopted for strengthening the existing laws. The report will be placed before the Cabinet,” the Union Health Minister said.

Stressing the need for prevention and early detection of cancer, Harsh Vardhan said that a lot needs to be done to ensure that people keep away from all deadly things that cause the killer disease.

The Union Minister also said that a movement would be launched across the country for early detection of cancer.

Harsh Vardhan also noted that all the State Governments should strictly implement anti-tobacco laws.

“Fight against tobacco products and alcohol is a fight against death. I strongly advocate for stringent anti-tobacco laws,” the Health Minister said.

He also said that there should be a strenuous effort to educate the people against the disease apart from having more cancer institutes.



“Preventive education and positive attitude development should be the focus,” he said.

Health education should be the priority, he said and added that Kerala could develop a model in this regard.

### **Harsh Vardhan Praises Chandy**

T’Puram: Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan was all praise for Chief Minister Oommen Chandy for his government’s decision to impose restriction on liquor in the state. “I was impressed by the bold decision of the state government. I was the first to tweet, congratulating the Chief Minister,” he told a function here to declare the Regional Cancer Centre (RCC) as State Cancer Institute. “I do not know how much criticism he might get because of taking such a bold step. But anything good for the society should be praised,” Harsh Vardhan said. He stated that it was the duty of the government to see that the people were saved from alcohol and tobacco.



## **Jackfruit, the new food on your diet chart**

Jackfruit, known as Kathal in Hindi, is a large irregularly shaped oval fruit. Often, listed among the exotic tropical fruits to have originated in India and Malaysia, jackfruit is now now grown in Asia, Africa, the US and Australia.

Reported to be the food for Orrangutans, a jackfruit can

weigh anywhere between 4 kg and 20 kg. Jackfruit has a fibrous texture, resembling meat. As a result, it is often used as a meat substitute by vegetarians. Ripe jackfruit has a bland flavour and is a bit sweet. It is often peeled before consumption and can be had raw, boiled, roasted, fried or in a curry.

Jackfruits are rich in protein, starch (carbohydrate), calcium, vitamins A, B, C, copper and potassium. Though high in carbohydrates (80 per cent), it has a low glycemic index owing to its high fibre content (11 per cent) and the nature of starch, which is resistant.

Being high in fibre, it aids in digestion. Its mucilagenous pulp has been found to be useful in boosting the immune system. Other benefits include improving thyroid function, anti-cancer benefits, skin and vision improvements, lowering blood pressure and increasing sperm count.

Many people stay away from this fruit as they believe it is high in calories and carbohydrates. Contrary to this, jackfruit can be eaten by those trying to lose weight simply because it helps you keep energised and full for longer. Besides, it helps provide antioxidants such as vitamin C, flavanoids, phytonutrients and potassium, which boost skin and immune function.

Several studies have reported various health benefits of jackfruit, including its role in the management of type 2 diabetes and obesity. In one study, the extracts of jackfruit significantly improved glucose tolerance in both normal and diabetic patients.

Jackfruit has also been found to have anti-ulcer effects and is useful for those with heartburn, asthma and breathing

disorders. Studies have also explored the anti-inflammatory role of jackfruit, which can be important to prevent the progression of obesity associated low-grade inflammation and its complications.

Antioxidant functions of jackfruit have been document in several studies. In fact, the jackfruit seeds have much higher anti-oxidant capacity than the edible portion. The seeds can be eaten roasted or boiled. Roasted dried seeds are also ground to make flour which is blended with regular flour for baking.

## Business Standard

### Kharif output to be lowest in 5 years

**Fall in oilseeds, pulses could push up retail prices; rice decline not much and buffer stock is adequate**

The [kharif](#) season's foodgrain output is expected to fall to a five-year low to 120.27 million tonnes, a decline by almost nine million tonnes (mt) over that in the same period last year, due to the uneven southwest [monsoon](#) in the first part of the season. There could be adverse repercussions on rabi crops as well, which could hinder [agriculture growth](#) in the remaining three quarters of the current financial year. The first advance estimate of production was issued on Friday. The biggest impact of the erratic rain is expected to be on coarse cereals, pulses and groundnuts. Production of rice, the bulk grain grown this season, is estimated to be 88.02 mt, four per cent

less than last year's. "Due to lower area coverage and productivity, production of most crops is expected to be lower than their record production levels last year," went an official statement. Coarse cereal production is expected at 27.05 mt as against 31.25 mt in 2013-14, down 13.4 per cent. Production of pulses is expected to be 5.2 mt as against 6.02 mt last year. Oilseeds is expected to be 19.66 mt, down from 22.4 mt. "A drop in oilseeds, pulses and coarse cereals in the kharif season will definitely have an impact on prices, as most of these are a single-season crop and usually don't have big stocks. In rice, there is not much impact seen on prices as the huge government stocks will buffer against it. I feel this estimate of crop production will be high on the Reserve Bank's agenda when it reviews its monetary policy next, as in the case of oilseeds and pulses, import dependence will increase," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist, CARE Ratings. The biggest fall in oilseeds has been in groundnuts. Production is estimated at 5.02 mt, almost 36 per cent less than last year's kharif. Issuing the estimate, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said the aim would be to try to achieve last year's level despite the adverse weather, with drought in some parts and floods in some others.

## PRODUCTION PLUMMETS

1st advance estimate of kharif foodgrain production (2014-15)

Crop	2013-14	2014-15	% change
Pulses	6.02	5.20	-13.62
Coarse cereals	31.25	27.05	-13.44
Oilseeds	22.40	19.66	-12.23
Cotton*	36.59	34.62	-5.38
Rice	91.69	88.02	-4.00
Sugar cane	350.00	342.70	-2.08
Jute**	10.98	10.87	-1.00

\*1 bale=170 kg; \*\*1 bale=180 kg

Source: Department of agriculture

Production of cotton in 2014-15 is expected to be 34.62 million bales (a bale is 170 kg) as against 36.59 mn in 2013-14. Sugar cane output is projected at 342.8 mt, down from 350 mt last year. Jute output's estimate is 10.87 mt, marginally down from 10.98 mt last year.

On the impact of deficit rains on the forthcoming rabi harvest, Radha Mohan Singh said that there is still a possibility of adverse impact on rabi crops due to lack of adequate soil moisture.

If that happens, agriculture growth in the remaining three quarters may not reach the level of 3.8 per cent, witnessed in the first quarter. This may prove to be a drag on the overall gross domestic product (GDP) expansion, which stood at over two year high of 5.7 per cent in April-June, 2014-15.

The monsoon's deficit was 43 per cent at the end of June, triggering fear of widespread drought.

Sowing of kharif crops was almost 50 per cent less than in 2013 during that period. However, the rains recovered from mid-July, narrowing the deficit to 11 per cent and pushing sowing to almost last year's level. The revival, though, was not uniform. In some pockets, the early deficit continued, leading to drought-like conditions in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

The water levels in 86 major reservoirs across the country, though better than in June, are still less than last year. This could become a problem if winter rains are not good.

The kharif foodgrains production in 2014-15 (july to june) is the lowest since 2010-11

## Australia sees gain in exporting pulses to India

CAIRNS: While focusing on exporting mineral resources to China, Australia is sensing an opportunity in shipping pulses to India, a product where India is heavily import reliant.

"One of the target markets for trade and investment for Queensland is India... About 18 months ago, I put Australian \$5 million in a programme to invest in resilience of tropical pulses, recognizing that there is a strong growing market in India. We are looking at where we can improve that product,": Queensland treasurer and trade minister Tim Nicholls told reporters.

He said the state was particularly keen in chickpeas and other pulses as India was relying on Canada to meet a large part of its protein requirement. India imported pulses worth close to \$2 billion last year, and with the monsoon rain being weaker than normal, the government is expected to import more pulses to keep prices under check.