

Free flow, high returns!

Illegal transport of rice from Nellore to TN a long-time challenge. The total production of rice in Nellore district as of now is 6.5 lakh tonnes a year. Of this, 2.5 lakh tonnes are set apart to meet the requirements of the 'Mana Biyyam' programme.

The Nellore district administration is grappling with a serious challenge of illegal transport of rice to Tamil Nadu from various parts of Nellore district.

A few months ago, the Revenue authorities had recommended that the government allow free movement of rice as a solution to the issue. They had also suggested increasing the rate of local production of paddy.

The seizure of 27 lorries with rice loads worth Rs. 2.3 crore at one go recently near the inter-State border brought the issue of illegal transport to the fore once again. While police have stepped up vigil, millers are mounting pressure on the government for issuing more permits in accordance with the rise in production.

Illegal transport is being resorted to by almost all millers under what is known as 'jackpot transport'. They call it so because of the high returns involved in the process, as they can evade taxes.

The total production of rice in Nellore district as of now is 6.5 lakh tonnes a year. Of this, 2.5 lakh tonnes are set apart to meet the requirements of the 'Mana Biyyam' programme. Also, permits are issued to millers to transport as much as 65,000 tonnes to other States.

"Clearly, there is excess production of nearly 3 lakh tonnes. Where should all this go? We have written to the government to issue more permits or allow free transport to resolve the problem permanently," said District Collector N. Srikanth.

Nellore District Rice Millers Association president Y. Rangayya Naidu said there was no truth in the allegations that the rice meant

for distribution under the Public Distribution System (PDS) was being diverted to other markets. Given the current situation, the overall production figures and the problems facing farmers and millers should be taken into consideration for resolving these issues, he added.

According to rules, only 25 per cent of the district levy or rice can be legally transported to other States. At the same time, it is alleged that the diversion of PDS rice is taking place at the level of mandal-level storage points.

The Civil Supplies Department comes under the scanner whenever rice-laden lorries without authorised waybills are seized by the authorities. In a recent incident when 27 lorries were seized on one single night, the Civil Supplies officials were forced to register 6-A cases for the first time against rice millers for lack of proper records and variations in stocks. These charges are filed under the AP Rice Procurement (Levy) Order, 1984 and the AP Scheduled Commodities Dealers (LS&R) Order, 2008.

RULES SET ASIDE

1. Allowing free movement of rice is the solution to illegal transport, according to Revenue authorities
2. Increasing the rate or local production of paddy will also go a long way in curbing the practice
3. According to rules, only 25 per cent of the district levy can be legally transported to other States
4. The issue came to the fore after the recent seizure of 27 lorries with rice loads worth Rs. 2.3 crore
5. Millers are mounting pressure on government for issuing more permits in accordance with production
6. Millers resort to illegal transport of rice under 'jackpot transport', which fetches them more returns

QUANTITY QUESTION

*Total production of rice in Nellore dt.: 6.5 lakh tonnes a year

*2.5 lakh tonnes are set apart for 'Mana Biyyam' programme

QUOTE

“There is excess production of nearly 3 lakh tonnes. Where should all this go? We have written to the government to issue more permits or allow free transport to resolve the problem permanently.”

Seeds of success

KKFF, a farmer-owned enterprise, helps ryots in producing seeds and they have been earning additional income ranging between Rs. 5,000 and 7, 000 per acre

Availability of good quality seeds continues to be a distant dream for Indian farmers whose natural preference would be to use seeds from their own farm. A viable solution for the growing demand for quality seeds is production of seeds by Farmers Producers' Organisation (FPO).

Kazhi Kadaimadai Farmers' Federation (KKFF), an FPO from Thiruvengadu village of Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu, has set an example in this direction. KKFF was launched in 2006 as a farmers' federation in the post-tsunami response programme, initially to facilitate rehabilitation of the affected coastal farming communities in Nagapattinam area.

It ventured into seed production with the guidance of Agri-Business Incubation Programme (ABI) under the Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) of ICRISAT. It received funding to the tune of Rs. 7.5 lakh for seed processing machinery and a seed fund of Rs. two lakh for their operations through the Department of Science and Technology (DST) under the Technology Development Board's (TDB) funding scheme.

KKFF initially started paddy seed production with about 25 seed farmer members by sourcing breeder and foundation seed from the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore. The organisation established its seed processing plant at Mullayapattinam village in Nagapattinam and registered its own brand of seed as 'Pudhan' in the year 2009.

In due course, the spread of the seed production unit increased from 59 acres to 250 acres which ensured production and sales of over 300 tonnes of seed annually from there. The level of seed production is sufficient to meet about 20 per cent of the demand Nagapattinam district.

The activity resulted in every farmer member earning an additional income ranging between Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 7, 000 per acre. This factor contributes to encouraging more local farmers becoming profit making seed producers with the present strength of KKFF being over 900.

“Lack of good quality seeds made us forge collaboration with ICRISAT in 2008 and the latter helped us in business plan development, assistance in establishing the seed processing unit among other things,” says A.V. Poomurugesan, Executive Director of KKFF. Currently, this farmer-owned enterprise logs a stupendous annual turnover of over Rs. 1.2 crore.

“Farmers got more from seed production compared to normal grain production,” pointed out S.M. Karuppanchetty, Chief Operating Officer, ABI. “The number of farmers involved by KKFF therefore, has increased tremendously ever since our intervention in 2008,” he added.

Millet meal in a pot

A dish that can be made with any millet of your choice

Millet has become quite the rage in our lives. After I met and made friends with Shanthi, the Director of Programmes at Bhoomi College in Bangalore and a millet lover and recipe developer, I have become taken by the benefits of millets. Millets have been around for thousands of years much before wheat and rice became prominent in modern agriculture. If you keep birds, the grains you buy for them are often millets.

Not only is their sheer variety exceptional – foxtail (*Tennai*), little millet (*Samai*), kodo millet (*Varagu*) – the health benefits they offer are crucial in turning people into millet enthusiasts. Millets are

found to have a high mineral content of iron, magnesium, phosphorous and potassium. They are also packed with vitamins and dietary fibre with a good source of protein. Consumption of millets is also found to keep lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, obesity and hypertension at bay.

I tasted a millet stew at one of the organic food festivals and was hooked to it immediately. Days later, when Nishil attended a millet workshop conducted by Shanthi, he received a handout of millet recipes and ideas. Sure enough, this one pot millet meal was part of it. This is a quick meal recipe but it is wholesome and healthy too. However, I must admit the meal is not photogenic and I am probably not going to persuade you to cook millet with my pictures! But try it; you won't regret you did.

One pot millet meal with roasted vegetables

You will need

1 cup foxtail millet (you can use any millet)

1/2 onion, finely chopped

2 pods garlic, crushed

1 cup chopped vegetables (I used pepper, potato, pumpkin and chayote – Bangalore *kathirikkai* if you will)

1 cup coconut milk

1 tsp olive oil

1 cup hot water

1 tsp mixed spices (I used Italian spices but you can make it Indian and add spices of your liking. Or you could skip it if you do not want the meal spicy at all)

Salt to taste

Here's how you make it

Wash the foxtail millet a couple of times or until the water runs clear and cook it with hot water and coconut milk. Reserve 1/3 cup of coconut milk for later.

Meanwhile, heat the oil in a heavy-bottomed pan, sauté the onions and garlic and add the chopped vegetables. Add the spices of your liking.

Keep it covered and cook until tender (which will be in less than 10 minutes.)

By now, your millet would have cooked. Check if it has become tender and turn the flame off (if not, add more hot water and cook it).

Mix the roasted vegetables with the cooked millet. Add the reserved coconut milk.

Garnish the dish with a generous helping of thyme and serve it hot. Alternatively, you could add milk while cooking and garnish the finished meal with cheese if coconut milk is not handy.

The ground beneath their feet



It has been a month since R. Sathish Kumar quit his job at Amazon to become a full-time organic farmer. He grows vegetables, coconuts, mangoes, and greens on a leased 12-acre plot at Pavunjur village in Kancheepuram. “Farming is risky business,” says Sathish. “Our work revolves around the most unpredictable of resources — rain. We have to be on our toes and constantly improvise our methods.”

Sathish says that to be a successful farmer, one requires more skills than for a corporate job. “We have to be creative, and plan

well according to the season. For me, every day as a farmer is a learning experience.” Sathish runs an organic shop on ECR where he sells his vegetables and other products he gets from reliable sources.

“My last day at work was August 15,” he smiles. “It was as though I found freedom from the kind of life I didn’t want to lead.” He is developing an online shopping site for organic food. “Customers will simply have to place the order and it will be delivered to them,” he says. “I want to create a model where organic food is affordable,” he adds.

IT professional M.E. Thyagarajan, who is starting an organic-farming venture with four business partners, mentions terms such as “automated drip-irrigation” and “farm operations manager”. He is integrating ideas from IT into farming. He sees organic farming as an “appreciable investment” that will give profits of “lucrative value”. This is because he feels “people are willing to pay for non-contaminated food”. Once business picks up, Thyagarajan hopes to completely switch to farming.

R. Surya, an architect, stopped practising after she decided to live off the produce from her three-acre farm a little beyond the city. “I want to do something for the environment,” she says. “Look at what we’ve done to it — there’s actually no ground water in ECR and OMR. I’ve been part of the construction of many buildings on those stretches. I feel responsible,” she says. “And so, one day, I quit.”

Surya leads a quiet and peaceful life at her farm. She’s constructed the kind of home she always wanted to build for herself — from reclaimed wood, eco-friendly *naatu odu*, and red-oxide flooring. “We produce zero waste. Everything is reused — our food waste goes into our farm,” she says. She grows paddy, toor dal, urad dal, greens and vegetables.

One day, M. Dinakar, an AIR announcer who was struggling to make a name for himself in the movies, decided to stop everything he was doing and become a farmer. It all began after attending a

workshop under Subhash Palekar, a well-known organic farmer. Today, Dinakar lives by himself at his five-and-a-half acre farm near Melmaruvathur, with paddy plants and a helper for company. “I grow traditional rice varieties such as *mappilai samba* and *poongar*,” he says.

The biggest challenge for an organic farmer is to convert land that was abused for years into something that sprouts life with no application of chemical pesticides or fertilizers. “It took me a year to get saleable organic produce,” says Dinakar. But he kept his faith. “Nature will not fool us. After all, it was our mistake in the first place to contaminate our lands with chemicals. We have to be a little patient for it to go back to its original state.”

Another challenge for farming in present times is finding enough farm hands. Dinakar has an idea to overcome this: what if farmers came together to form a cooperative where they could take turns to work together in each other’s farms? “I haven’t found takers for the plan; but I’m sure it will work in the future,” he says.

It was their little boy’s illness that set off V.M. Parthasarathy and Rekha Ramu thinking. Why did he fall sick? Was there something wrong with what he was being fed? With both of them hailing from agricultural backgrounds, they started with food. “We wanted to give our son clean food,” says Rekha.

Natural farming took them in its folds. Partha met organic farming stalwarts such as Nammalvar, and read about Masanobu Fukuoka. The more they found out about its goodness, the more time they wanted to dedicate to it. That meant giving up their jobs in top IT firms. And they did. The couple now grows organic rice and more at their eight-acre land in Pandeswaram. They have an organic store at their garage, which they plan to expand soon.

The change from consumers to producers has transformed their lives. “We never miss the money,” says Rekha. “When I was working, I spent almost Rs. 500 a week on snacks for my son. Today, I make them myself. We do not depend on anyone for food. We seldom eat out or take the car out. Our medical expenses have

reduced. We spend more time together as a family. We've got our lives back," she smiles.

And farmer Jaishankar? Well, we never managed to talk to him. Farmers don't want to waste even a minute.

It was as though I found freedom from the kind of life I didn't want to lead

Farmers demand water for irrigation

The authorities concerned have been urged to ensure adequate supply of water for irrigation in tail-end areas.

Presiding over the farmer's grievance day meeting here on Friday, Collector T. Munusamy told farmers that he had brought the issue of water scarcity in the tail-end areas to the attention of the Chief Engineer of Public Works Department (PWD) for enhancing the quantum of water release.

When farmers of Thattankudi in the Vennar division said that they could not undertake farming work due to inadequate supply of water, PWD official said the supply had been stepped up to 808 cusecs.

Farmers of Mudikondan and Thiruthuraiipoondi sub-division urged the authorities to set up additional shutters so that water could be properly diverted as per the needs of farmers of respective areas.

Another section of farmers said that water did not reach the Thirumari tank even after water was released from Lower Anaicut and Veeranam tank. Kaveri Dhanapalan of Cauvery Delta Farmers' Association said water was required for another 60 days and wondered how officials could ensure water reached the tail-end areas. He said that officials did not visit fields to assess the ground reality.

Representatives of farmers associations demanded removal of damaged electric poles throughout the district. In some of the areas, high tension lines were lying very low which might cause accidents. The Collector asked officials to do the needful before the rainy season.

The Collector said that 146 tonnes of high breed certified seeds were available at Agriculture Extension Centre, 461 tonnes at private seed centres and 42 tonnes at Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies. Adequate quantity of fertilisers, pesticides and seeds of pulses were available, he added.

Targets revised for rabi season

The Agriculture Department has revised the target of the area to be covered as well as the production of food grains and oilseeds for the current year under the rabi season, following good pre-rabi rainfall in the district.

Target

Official sources said in Gulbarga city on Thursday that the original target fixed by the Agriculture Department for the rabi season in Gulbarga district was more than 4.80 lakh hectares and this was revised to just over 5.12 lakh hectares.

The Agriculture Department has further revised the to 5.15 lakh hectares. The sowing of the rabi crops is expected to begin any time now.

The production target of food grains and oilseeds was fixed at 5.86 lakh metric tonnes.

Increase

This has been increased to more than 5.89 lakh metric tonnes due to the increase in targets fixed for the coverage under the rabi cultivation. The fresh targets fixed for the cereals was 2.79 lakh plus hectares and the production target was 2.45 lakh metric tonnes.

5.15 lakh hectares to be covered in rabi season

Agricultural varsity to set up technology hub



Kerala Agricultural University's stall at the Young Entrepreneurs Summit

The Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) will establish a technology hub to offer professional guidance and support to potential investors in agri-business sector. The university has been considering options for encouraging industrial use of technologies developed by its research wing.

KAU Vice Chancellor P. Rajendran said the hub was expected to give a feasible industry-institution linkage for promoting agri-business and providing self-employment through use of the unexplored potential of agricultural technology.

The hub will facilitate incubation, consolidation and dissemination of KAU technologies, and offer consultancy services for agri-entrepreneurs.

"The technologies developed by us are classified into General Category, Microbial Formulations, Engineering Designs and Value-addition Protocols. All these areas have potential for industrialisation. While some can only be adopted as a big venture, others are suitable for medium entrepreneurs. Several options are

available for unemployed youth and self-help groups,” said Dr. Rajendran.

Director of extension P.V. Balachandran said the hub, to function under KAU’s Central Training Institute (CTI) at Mannuthy, would maintain close ties with the Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC).

“The KAU has around 60 technologies and these are ready for industrialisation. They have been refined through discussions and are supported with ready-to-use business plans. The hub, the first of its kind in State agricultural universities, provides opportunity for young entrepreneurs since agri-business is a sector still in its infancy in the State,” he said.

Guidance will be provided to potential agri-business investors.

Kisan Sabha stirs on Monday

The All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) will hold a satyagraha of farmers in front of the District Collectorate here on Monday raising the slogan to ‘save farmers and save agriculture.’

The fasting will be part of a nation-wide agitation by the Kisan Sabha. CPI district secretary P.P. Suneer will inaugurate the day-long satyagraha. Leaders of different farmer organisations, including the Karshaka Sangham, Karshaka Morcha, Karshaka Congress, Swatanthra Karshaka Sangham, and Kerala Karshaka Union, will address the satyagraha. Among the demands of the AIKS for the agitation are stopping of anti-farmer policies by the State and Central governments, saving of farmers from debts, and increasing of farmer pension to Rs.3,000.

Young entrepreneur policy soon: CM

The government will soon announce a policy for promotion of young entrepreneurs, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy has said.

A committee appointed by the State Planning Board for the purpose had submitted a set of recommendations, an official press note quoting him said on Friday.

Mr. Chandy said new entrepreneurial projects were expected to come up in the tourism, business innovation, electronics, agriculture, manufacturing, and health care sectors, apart from IT. He announced that live- work- play campuses of 5,00,000 sq ft each would be set up for young entrepreneurs. The Industries Department had received 4,897 applications to set up new start-up ventures.

Mr. Chandy said Kerala's industrial culture was on the threshold of a major transformation fuelled by innovation and entrepreneurship. The Young Entrepreneurship Summit (YES) held at Angamaly earlier this month had marked the beginning of the State's journey to a new age.

With a mechanism for funding and handholding of new enterprises, the State's industrial culture was poised for big changes. Though the organisers had expected 2,000 participants for YES, the turnout was more than 4,500. The enthusiasm of the youngsters was evident at the event.

Mr. Chandy said the summit had thrown up an array of radical ideas with the potential to change the world. He said it signalled the transformation of the new generation in Kerala from job seekers to employers. Many of the innovative concepts highlighted at YES were ideas with application potential.

Mr. Chandy said the government had drawn up a pilot programme to mould 80 viable entrepreneurial ventures. An amount of Rs.20 crore had been earmarked as angel funds in the first phase. The fund would be used to establish start-ups and set up incubators.

Officials asked to prepare proposals

District Collector T. Chiranjeevulu held a review meeting with animal husbandry and agriculture allied departments here on Friday to discuss the proposal to be sent to Jathiya Pashu Gana Mission soon. He instructed the officials to prepare proposals for rearing of sheep, rabbit farming, slaughtering houses in municipal areas and cattle fodder seeds.

Farmers' plea to ensure quality of fertilizers

Complain those sold in government depots are of poor quality

Farmers have alleged that the agriculturists had suffered huge loss as the quality of chemical and organic nutrients being sold in the government depots in the district was inferior.

Raising this issue in the farmers' grievance day meeting held here on Friday, P. Perumbadaiyar, State vice-president of Tamil Nadu Vivasaayigal Sangam, said quality of the nutrients being supplied by the government was not up to the mark while the chemical and organic nutrients being sold in the private retail shops were of superior quality. The poor farmers buying nutrients from the government depots with a lot of hope should not be let down by the officials.

"The quality of chemical fertilizers and other organic nutrients should be checked through surprise raids," he appealed and Joint Director of Agriculture Chandrasekaran agreed to it.

Collector M. Karunakaran said special teams had already been formed to check the fertilizers being sold at inflated price and the quality of the nutrients. When 14 retailers from Sankarankovil and Vasudevanallur blocks were found to be selling chemical and organic nutrients of inferior quality, their licences had been cancelled.

"Since certified paddy and vegetable seeds are being distributed to the Department of Agriculture after proper checking, farmers

should use only these seeds to get better yield,” Dr. Karunakaran appealed.

He also informed that the electoral roll for conducting the water users’ association election was being prepared and hence the farmers should include their names in the voters’ list.

When the farmers appealed to the Collector to recommend their case of huge loss which they suffered after the withering of hundreds of lemon trees, Mr. Chandrasekaran said the crop loss compensation under the crop insurance scheme would be disbursed within a month.

The farmers’ appeal for procuring more paddy harvesters by the Department of Agricultural Engineering was also accepted by the officials.

District Revenue Officer M.G. Kulandaivel, officials of various government departments participated in the meeting

Farmers advised to sell small onions upon harvest

Shallot prices will not go up after December, says advisory



Forecast: The AMI&BPC has indicated that price of good quality shallots would rule around Rs.30 to 35 a kg between October and November at the farm level in Dindigul market.— File photo

The Agro Market Intelligence and Business Promotion Centre (AMI&BPC) of the Department of Agricultural Marketing and Agri Business has advised farmers to sell small onions immediately after harvest as there is no chance for increase in price after December.

In a price advisory, the AMI&BPC has indicated that the price of good quality shallots would rule around Rs.30 to 35 a kg between October and November at the farm level in Dindigul market. The expected export demand would keep the price on the higher side in October, it said.

The price advisory was based on an analysis of the prices that had prevailed in the Dindigul market over the past 16 years and a traders' survey. The analysis and survey was done by the back office of 'the AMI&BPC in the Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development Studies (CARDS), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, to help farmers take proper marketing decisions.

India exports small onion to Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Around 90 per cent of small onion is produced in Tamil Nadu and 10 per cent in Karnataka. According to the second advance estimates (2013-14) of the National Horticultural Board, the area and production of onion in Tamil Nadu was 0.39 lakh ha and 4.73 lakh tonnes respectively. Tamil Nadu accounted for five per cent of country's area under onion, and more than 70 per cent of this was small onions.

At present, small onion from Karur, Dindigul, Erode, and Trippur districts are arriving at the markets. During April to June 2014, the farm gate price of good quality small onion was Rs. 22 per kg because of arrivals of stored onion in Tamil Nadu and higher arrivals from Karnataka. At present, small onion price is ruling between Rs. 25 and 40 per kg in Dindigul market since arrivals of Karnataka ended by early August. Trade sources indicated that the demand was expected to increase from September to October which may push the price of small onion, the advisory said.

Agricultural products expo from today

Natural Organic Farmers Association will organise an exhibition of agriculture products and an interactive session on September 27 and 28 at Krishna Industrial Agricultural Exhibition Society near Autonagar Gate here.

Informing this to media persons here, Association treasurer Ch. R.K. Prasad said natural and organic agricultural products, equipment, rice counters, organic bio-manure, vegetables, fruits and other allied products would be showcased during the two-day exhibition which would remain open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Ministers P. Pullarao and Devineni Umamaheswara Rao, former Minister Vadde Sobanadreeswara Rao, MLA Gadde Rammohana Rao, Director of Centre for Sustainable Agriculture G.V. Ramanjaneyulu, NABARD Deputy Director M. Madhu Murthy and other dignitaries would attend the event, said Mr. Prasad.

Grim reaping for east Ukraine sunflower farmers



A combine harvester working on a sunflower field in the outskirts of Donetsk, eastern Ukraine.

Fields of sunflowers burnt brown under blue skies are ready for harvest – but artillery and rocket attacks are stopping farmers in east Ukraine's frontline villages from gathering their crops.

Ukraine is the world's biggest exporter of sunflower oil, with more than half the global market, but fighting between separatist and

government forces has left fields strewn with mangled metal shell casings and torn up clumps of mud.

On the dirt road between Vilkhivka and Zuevka, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) east of the flashpoint city of Donetsk, an unexploded rocket sticks javelin-like in the earth and unharvested sunflower fields sway in the breeze.

Rebels in the area accuse the Ukrainian army of indiscriminate fire, with villagers staying close to home, ready to hide from the shelling in their basements.

"We're not stopping the local people from harvesting their crops but they're too scared to come out," says local rebel commander Vasiliy Petrovich as he drives past the sunflower fields, without a farmer in sight.

The sunflower is Ukraine's chief oilseed crop, generating export income of \$3.28 billion in 2013 according to government figures.

Analysts say overall yields in Ukraine will remain high despite the conflict, with the sunflower seed crop totalling more than 10.2 million tonnes this year compared to 11 million in 2013/14.

The Donetsk and Lugansk regions of eastern Ukraine account for just 15 percent of the country's total sunflower seed production.

But those regions are facing a 20-30 percent crop loss, according to analysts at UkrAgroConsult, although the majority of harvesting is going ahead.

However, it will be the smaller farmers who are too scared to harvest or have nowhere to sell their crops who suffer most.

Green thumb

New and green practices together with a slew of tools are turning gardening into an effortless pastime for urbanites. By M.A. Siraj

Gardening is getting greener and easier, thanks to innovations and a slew of new tools that enable urbanites to practice the art in their driveways, roof gardens or in the backyard. Technology has come to lend a helping hand in several areas like transplantation and firm establishment of saplings, regulation of supply of water and

manure to the plants and even pruning of bushes, fence hedges and maintenance of lawns. With introduction of new mediums for propagation of plants, gardening — or for that matter horticulture and floriculture — leaves little scope for muddying the hands.

Transplantation of saplings is certainly a crucial issue when it comes to gardening. The city folk with limited space and time at their disposal, have often found the process cumbersome. Saplings adapting to the new environment and perhaps new soil is always uncertain. Gardening enthusiasts have to look up to the nurseries around the city peripheries to source their supplies of saplings and know-how. One has to keep the fingers crossed until the tiny plants embedded in the pots send out new shoots, the firm signal that the new surrounding has found acceptance.

Hydropony

Hydropony or growing of plants in non-soil mediums has become the buzzword among the urban suppliers of saplings nowadays. Greenhouses in urban nurseries grow the saplings in mediums like coco-peat (powdered husk obtained from dehusking of coconuts), or saw dust, rotten leaves or Perlites. These mediums have enough moisture and nutrients to help nurturing of the saplings. The earlier practice of growing saplings in polythene bags is being fast replaced by compostable pots that disintegrate and get mixed up with soil as the roots of the saplings grow out of them. The polythene bags posed problems as they had to be removed at some stage and the process of removal unsettled the plants to a certain degree.

Compostable pots

Compostable pots are an environmentally-friendly alternative to plastic pots. Made of corn starch, they are designed to break down into carbon dioxide, moisture and humus which in turn work as soil nutrients. They do no harm to the soil, worms or micro-organisms that help flourishing the plants. They begin to break down between two to six months.

Says Athula Fernando, Regional Sales Manager, Jiffy Products, a Norway-based company, the organic substrates are conducive for propagation of all kinds of saplings be they vegetable, flowers, perennial or greenhouse crops. Besides providing an ideal medium (technically termed 'substrates'), Jiffy has also come up with binding agents called 'plant plug' which are shaped like perforated paper sleeves. Filled with the coco-peat or saw dust, these can now be supplied in trays containing cavities. These ready-to-carry-home saplings can even be purchased off shelves and racks in gardening sections of modern shopping malls.

Perambalur to churn out cornflakes for UN programme



Value addition: Machinery for making cornflakes being installed in Perambalur on Friday.— Photo: B.Velankanni Raj

Cornflakes will soon be produced from maize in Perambalur. A cornflakes processing unit will start functioning at the Small Industries Development Corporation (SIDCO) industrial estate at Ilambalur in Perambalur.

“Machinery is being installed currently. The unit would start producing cornflakes in 15 to 20 days,” said V.Sollin Selvan, a mechanical engineering graduate who is setting up the unit.

He has got a subsidy of Rs.50 lakh from the State government for the unit. Motivated by Darez Ahamed, Perambalur District Collector, who gives thrust to value-addition of agriculture produce to enhance the income of farmers and traders, Sollin Selvan has come forward to start the unit.

“The project cost is Rs. 3.3 crore and the State government subsidy is Rs 50 lakh. Venture capital of Rs. 33 lakh (repayment starts after eight years and the amount is interest-free) has been provided by the Central government. We invested Rs. 75 lakh and the rest is loan from Canara bank. We are planning to supply cornflakes to the World Food Programme of the United Nations,” said Sollin Selvan.

Corn flakes manufacturing involves nine important steps: grinding the corn, mixing as per the formula, extrusion, flaking, drying, roasting, seasoning (flavouring), drying, packing, and storage. Machines such as grinder, pulveriser and corn-peeler were installed on Friday.

“Perambalur is a major producer of maize. Now most of the farmers sell them to poultry in Namakkal. Value addition to maize would improve their income.

Four lakh tonnes of maize are produced each year, and the crop is cultivated on 47,740 hectares of land,” Mr.Ahamed said. “We are planning to start units for value-addition to cotton and onion, other major crops of the district,” he added.

Call for more interaction between farmers, bankers

Farmers air their views at grievance meeting

Representatives of various farmers’ associations urged the district administration to take steps for regular interaction sessions between the farming community and bank officials for building a close rapport.

Speaking at the monthly farmers' grievances day meeting here on Friday, S. Jayaraman, president, Salem District Farmers Club Federation, said that there need for close and better relationship between the farmers and the bank authorities in the overall interest of development of farming activities.

C. Vaiyapuri, president, United Farmers Association of Tamil Nadu, complained that a majority of the bank officials are not aware of the problems confronting the farmers and hesitate to solve their grievances.

K. Maharabushanam, Collector, who presided over the meeting, said that a meeting organised between the bank staff and farmers in May last evoked good response.

J. Ravichandran, Lead District Manager, promised to hold an interaction session between farmers and bank officials next month.

Mr. Vaiyapuri said the crop insurance scheme in no way benefited specially the small farmers. The farmers will accept the scheme only if individual farmer-based indemnity is sanctioned.

When Mr. Ravichandran explained the norms of the government in this regard, Mr. Maharabushanam intervened and said that the sentiments of the farmers will be conveyed to the government.

S. Govindaraj of Ammanpalayam said that the recent rainfall has helped in good yield of maize. The maize trash is good feed for the cattle.

S. Sivaprakasam, Joint Director of Animal Husbandry said that the government allotted Rs. 50 lakhs initially for opening the retail outlets at five centres for marketing hay at subsidised rate. Later at the initiative of Collector, Government sanctioned additional Rs. 20 lakhs.

Taking into consideration the severe drought conditions, the Government recently sanctioned Rs. 25 lakhs.

Complaints galore at farmers' grievance day

Farmers demand construction of check dam across Kudaganar



For survival:Farmers taking part in the grievance day meeting at the Collectorate in Dindigul on Friday.— PHOTO: G. KARTHIKEYAN

Farmers flagged a series of complaints, ranging from drought relief and desilting of irrigation tanks to extraction of ground water by private units and compensation for crop loss, at the grievance meet held here on Friday.

When farmers explained how they struggled for survival under acute drought conditions, Collector N. Venkatachalam said that drought and failure of monsoon were natural happenings. “We cannot stop them but we can take steps to overcome them.”

Farmers demanded construction of a check dam across the Kudaganar at Lakshmananpatti to recharge wells along western part of Veda sandur and Gujiliamparai blocks. Water could be diverted from the river at this point through a channel to recharge hundreds of wells in dry belts of Gujiliamparai. Overflow from these tanks would reach the Amaravathi river and seepage water from the channel would again reach the Kudaganar. They criticised the PWD officials for draining rainwater stored in the dam to repair worn out shutters. The Collector advised the PWD officials to

construct a check dam near the old sluices of Kudaganar dam to prevent seepage.

The district received 430.17 mm rainfall, against the average yield of 411 mm, in September. Farmers should use drip irrigation to minimise water use for irrigation, Mr. Venkatachalam said.

A farmer from Vangamanuthu village alleged that a private water packaging unit was drawing large quantum of ground water for sale, leading to water depletion. He charged that no action had been taken against the unit despite repeated complaints.

Theni

Collector K.S. Palanisamy distributed assistance to the tune of Rs.1.25 lakh to 23 farmers under farmers' social security scheme at the grievance day meeting.

Farmers demanded compensation for drought-hit crops and supply of solar power pumps.

Farmers find sericulture remunerative

Marginal farmers L. Nagarajan and S. Mayan, who had been cultivating sugarcane and chilli for several years, bid adieu to the two labour-intensive crops two years ago.

Thanks to the technical guidance offered by Sericulture Department, they switched over to sericulture and found it extremely remunerative as they could make six to eight crops a year, producing 75 to 85 kg of cocoons in each crop and earn a profit of about Rs.20,000 per crop.

Nagarajan, who owns five acres of land, has cultivated mulberry in one acre, and started rearing silkworms since September last year. He has put up the rearing shed after getting a bank loan of Rs.2 lakh with the help of subsidy given by the department.

The eight-day-old chawkie worms (young silkworms) started spinning and building cocoons in the next 15 days, he says.

He has so far harvested six crops and sold one kg of cocoon for Rs.300 to Rs.400 per kg. Each crop fetched him Rs.25,000 to Rs.30,000.

“I spent about Rs.5,000 to Rs.7,000 per crop,” he says.

Mayan (60 took to sericulture last year after he found it difficult to cultivate chilli for want of water.

He underwent a week-long training at Tamil Nadu Sericulture Training Institute in Hosur, and is now rearing silkworms with the active support of his wife Irulayi. “Both of us are leading a happy life,” says Irulayi.

Plans to make Panaji climate-resilient city

The Corporation of City of Panaji on Wednesday announced its vision to make Panaji a well advanced developed climate resilient city. “The administration of the CCP has initiated steps to address various problems of the city. May it be the problem of streamlining of garbage problem, vulnerability assessment of the city, green house emission, converting of streetlights, designing of building to create alternate source of energy,” said Commissioner of CCP Rodrigues at the inaugural of a three-day workshop on ‘Towards a Climate Resilient Panaji’ held in the city on Wednesday.

The workshop was organised by International Council for Environmental Initiatives in association with UN Habitat and The Rockefeller Foundation.

The objective of the workshop was to discuss on climate resilience and low carbon initiatives in Panaji, present to all local stakeholders the objectives and expected outcomes of the project and also the future action to be taken in the city and role of stakeholders in the project.

Sustainable

Deputy Secretary General ICLEI Emani Kumar has said that Panaji is to be developed as a city that is environmentally and

economically sustainable, a city with a mixture of heritage and modernity, a city that cares for its citizen, for its tourists, maintains its culture, a city that provide high quality infrastructure services and facilities, a well managed clean, green, and safe city that provides and better present and bright future to its people.

Panaji is capital of Goa-internationally renowned coastal tourism destination.

The sanitation challenge

Positive examples of sustainable rural sanitation have come from Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim. By S. Vishwanath

The U.N. set the Millennium Development Goals or the MDG between 2000 and 2015. Goals 4 and 7 was to halve the number of people without access to improved water or sanitation.

The goal for water is likely to be reached by the deadline but sadly not for sanitation.

Unfortunately, in the quest to provide access to facilities for people, the sustainability component was missed.

This miss will hopefully be rectified when the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) come into place as the next phase of the MDGs.

As estimated by UNICEF and WHO, the burden of bad sanitation for India is the death of over 386,600 children due to water-borne diseases particularly diarrhoea, a crippling physical and mental stunting called enteropathy which disables children from absorbing nutrition, and finally the loss to the economy amounting to 6.50 per cent of the GDP in 2012 as per an estimate of the Water and Sanitation Programme of the World Bank.

What is sustainable water supply and sanitation? A global network of individuals and institutions which have come together under the banner of the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (www.susana.org) tries to answer this in the following manner.

Sustainable sanitation is defined as that which is universally accessible, is used by all, that which lasts and that where the waste products are safely disposed, if not productively used.

In the rural context sustainable sanitation would mean not only the construction of toilets but their continued and correct usage; after the pits are full an adequate and safe mechanism for their emptying and potentially the reuse of the waste material as fertilizer after it has been safely sanitized.

It should also be remembered that a whole community approach is needed to make the environment entirely open defecation-free, with not a single violator; else the benefits of sanitation will not accrue.

Positive examples of sustainable rural sanitation have come from Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim in particular and in the case of Sikkim the entire State has been declared as open defecation-free. This is an example to emulate for other States particularly when more than 600 million people in India do not use a toilet. In the urban context it would mean not only the construction of sewage lines and sewage treatment plants but their ability to convey all sewage without leaking to the STP which would then treat it to meet standards as prescribed. Ideally in a sustainable sanitation paradigm, there would be recovery of energy through bio-gas, recovery of nutrients in the waste-water stream such as nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium and finally the recovery and reuse of the water component from waste-water.

The landscape of urban India is littered with leaking sewage lines, uncollected waste-water and dysfunctional sewage treatment plants and is nowhere near the sustainability desired. On-plot sanitation systems too would be important in many urban areas and may be relevant for a long time given the high investment needs for underground lines.

Chennai leads the way with four of its Sewage Treatment Plants generating enough energy through bio-gas and electricity so as to

provide for about 80% of the plants' running requirement for energy.

Unfortunately both the rural and urban examples are few and far between, registering as a mere blip on the requirement radar. India will do well to invite SuSanA to set up an Indian chapter which will provide the ideas, examples, experience, knowledge and a platform to bring together the community of people and institutions working on sanitation to understand, discuss and implement sustainable sanitation in India at a scale and reach necessary for the problem.

The Prime Minister has called for a clean India and a clean Ganga. Both can be achieved only when there is sustainable sanitation for all in India.

PSUs to form 2 JVs for revival of Talcher fertilizer plant: Minister

State-owned companies such as Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers (RCF) and GAIL will form two joint ventures to revive the closed urea plant at Talcher in Odisha with an estimated investment of Rs.9,000 crore, Fertiliser Minister Ananath Kumar said here on Friday.

RCF, Coal India, GAIL and Fertilizer Corporation of India Ltd. (FCIL) will form the joint ventures.

The first joint venture (JV) will be for setting up of an upstream coal gasification unit and the second JV is for a urea-cum-ammonia nitrate complex.

Talcher will be the first plant in the country using coal gasification technology.

"The plant will have a capacity of 1.3 million tonnes per annum of urea and 3.3 lakh litres of ammonium nitrate per annum and around Rs.9,000 crore will be invested in this project with an aim of generating employment," Mr. Kumar told reporters here.

He added that signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between PSUs would be held before November. The Minister was speaking after the meeting with Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Secretary, Fertilisers, J. K. Mohapatra.

Mr. Pradhan said: "With the setting up of this plant, our aim is to generate employment opportunities in North-Eastern parts of the country."

This is perhaps the first greenfield plant in the fertiliser sector in almost in the last 10 years.

Mr. Kumar said work was also going on to revive the Ramagundam fertilizer plant. There were also plans to set up 2-3 fertilizer plants near the Jagdispur-Haldia gas pipeline. — PTI

Talcher will be the first plant to use coal gasification technology.

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Rain: 0

Humidity: 84

Wind: normal

Tomorrow's Forecast

Saturday, Sep 27

Max 30° | Min 26°
Cloudy

Sunrise: 05:58

Sunset: 06:01

Barometer: 1012

Sunday, Sep 28

Max 34° | Min 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Monday
Sep 29



35° | 26°

Cloudy

Tuesday
Sep 30



34° | 26°

Partly Cloudy

Wednesday
Oct 1



34° | 26°

Partly Cloudy

Thursday
Oct 2



34° | 26°

Partly Cloudy

Friday
Oct 3



34° | 26°

Partly Cloudy

DECCAN Chronicle

Krishnagiri farmers demand relief package for Rs100cr loss



Kishnagirir farmers who suffered Rs 100 crore crop loss have demanded relief package

Krishnagiri: The farmers in drought-hit Krishnagiri district have demanded a relief package to bail out agriculturists who have suffered an estimated Rs100 crore of crop loss. K.M.Rama Gounder, secretary for Tamilaga Vivasayikal Sangam, said “the northeast monsoon season played havoc dashing the hope of the farmers.” Vast expanse of groundnut, red gram crops besides mangoes and coconuts cultivated on more than Rs3 lakh hectares have failed leading to a loss of over Rs100 crore for farmers.

Besides, the cattle population is also affected as the cultivation of the fodder crops have also failed. “The crisis has forced farmers to send their cattle to slaughter houses; mango and coconut trees were sold to the fire wood traders. The state should act immediately and compensate the losses faced by the farmers.”TN

government should immediately draw up a plan to link local water bodies and the South Pennar river to help farmers during monsoon failure.

“Krishnagiri water bodies and South pennar should be linked to save water from the river being wasted as surplus discharge during good monsoon season” Rama Gounder said.

T.Kodandaramiah, district treasurer for Tamilnadu Vivasayigal sangam also demanded the linking of South Pennar River and ‘Shoolagiri-Chinnar reservoir project (SCRP)’.

“SCRP was constructed at the cost of Rs 551 lakhs in 1984 for the benefit of 871 acres of farm lands in 16 villages. Water from the dam was used for cultivating two crops annually to produce 1711 metric tons of food grains” T.Kodandaramiah, district treasurer for Tamilnadu Vivasayigal sangam told DC.He further said “The food production has declined in recent years as the dam has gone dry because of no rains after 2005. This has forced many farmers to sell their lands and migrate to other states for livelihood”

The plight of farmers will end if Kelavarapalli dam (constructed across south Pennar River) and SCRП are linked, say farmers. They argue that the project is feasible because the left main canal of Kelavarapalli dam is just one km from Durai Lake.

[About 40% of food items adulterated](#)



Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

Chennai: About 40 per cent of food items tested by government labs in the state in 2013-14 were either adulterated or

“misbranded”, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) statistics said. Interestingly, the rate of adulteration in Tamil Nadu is two times higher than that of the national average of 19 per cent, according to information availed from FSSAI through RTI by this newspaper.

Food samples tested range from commonly used items such as edible oil, masala powder, dals, salt, sugar and grains to ready-to-eat packed foods available in grocery shops as well as big departmental stores. As per FSSAI guidelines, food samples were collected from the markets and tested to find whether it met the set standards or not.

The rate of adulteration found in food samples tested in the state has gone up by four times from 8.43 per cent in 2011-12 to 39.66 per cent in 2013-14. A senior official of the food safety administration department attributed the high rate of adulteration or misbranded food items found in the state to lifting of more suspected samples from the market rather than taking random ones.

“We mostly take food samples based on complaints from people, officials or media reports. That is why the rate of adulteration in the food samples tested in our labs is high,” the official explained. According to sources in the FSA department, daily used items are normally adulterated. In edible oils, used cooked oil is mixed with fresh oil. Pepper powder packets sold in the markets are mostly adulterated with cornstarch with only five per cent pepper it, said sources.

Consumer activist and founder trustee of the Consumer Association of India R. Desikan said that he was not surprised by the large adulteration found in food samples tested in the state. He said that traders, hoteliers and manufacturers in the state are making every effort to prevent enforcement of the FSSAI Act by filing numerous cases against it in various courts. There are about 34 cases filed in various courts including the Madras high court against implementation of the Food Safety Act by traders and others.

Water security to top summit talks



Conservation of water sources, solution for waste water management and industrial waste water treatment are some of the aspects that will be discussed at the summit. Experts from Germany will lead panel discussions on various topics. (Photo: DC/File)

KOCHI: The second Indo- German water partnership summit will be held in Kochi on October 6. The summit, to be inaugurated by Chief Minister Oommen Chandy, will focus on the topic of water security. The first water partnership summit was held in Bangalore last year.

The corporation is the first local body in the country to draft a local water policy which will have guidelines on use, conservation and future requirement of water. The summit is being organised in partnership with the Centre for Sustainable Water Technology and Management (CSWTM) at SCMS School of Engineering and Technology.

Conservation of water sources, solution for waste water management and industrial waste water treatment are some of the aspects that will be discussed at the summit. Experts from Germany will lead panel discussions on various topics.

Addressing a press conference here on Friday, Mayor Tony Chammany said that exploring the latest German technologies in the field of water and waste water treatment would help in finalising the water policy.

“Members of German Water Partnership (GWP), a consortium of 350 German companies working on various aspects of water technologies, have been working in coordination with CSWTM. The GWP members have decided to collaborate with us to fine tune the outstanding German technology to be ideally customized for Indian conditions for solving the water related problems,” said Dr Sunny George, director of CSWTM.

According to him, the major thrust is on urban water security. “The latest technologies like electro dialysis can be used through which saline water can be purified to drinking water. Since salt content is very low in Kochi backwaters, it will be easy to purify it,” observed Dr Sunny George.

SCMS Principal Prof M.Madhavan and Ralf Heilmann and Marius Dietmann, invitees from the University of Applied Science, Germany, were also present.

Business Standard

Climate concerns gaining traction in boardrooms

Study finds 81% of 320 firms analysed have integrated climate change into core biz strategy

As the world grapples with the threats from climate change, the [business community](#) has been called up to take on a greater role. The hope is that more firms will take the lead from the [ICT sector](#) as the ICT occupies a unique position in that despite being a sector that has an increasing carbon footprint, it can also help other sectors reduce their impact.

"The ICT sector, while not the largest, is still a significant contributor to carbon emissions. ICT firms can create significant competitive advantages for themselves by fashioning a comprehensive sustainability strategy. In turn, ICT's cascading effect on other sectors by virtue of its value chain linkages cannot be underestimated," said P D Jose, Professor of Corporate Strategy and Policy Area, IIM Bangalore.

"A more sustainable ICT sector would drive its adjacent sectors onto a more sustainable growth trajectory. Policy makers could leverage this linkage to reduce an economy's overall emissions," he added.

"Saying yes to videoconferencing, incentivising energy-efficient practices of employees, consolidating operations in energy-efficient loca- tions are some of the many things that the ICT firms

are doing to reduce carbon emissions," said Damandeep Singh, Director, CDP India, at the release of the report 'ICT Sector's Role in [Climate Change](#) Mitigation' at IIM Bangalore.

CDP (Carbon Disclosure Project India), in association with IIM Bangalore, has analysed responses from the top ICT companies from across 35 countries, which include Infosys, TCS and Wipro along with global majors like Accenture, BT, Google, IBM, Microsoft, Vodafone among others.

The report, released by IIMB Director Sushil Vachani, has an encouraging highlight - concern for climate change is establishing itself in corporate boardroom conversations. The report notes that 81 per cent of the 320 global ICT companies analysed have integrated climate change into their core business strategy and over 40 per cent them have managed to reduce their carbon footprint.

While Wipro has consolidated operations in energy-efficient locations, Infosys has set voluntary goals to reduce energy and water consumption in daily operations.

The report covers the state of preparedness of the ICT sector in addressing the intensifying climate change, major risks and opportunities presented by climate change for the sector, carbon emissions trends in the Indian ICT sector, best practice examples of how leading companies in the sector are managing these threats and exploiting the emerging opportunities.

"Climate concerns are increasingly influencing corporate strategy and finding greater traction at the board level. Reducing carbon emissions continues to dominate corporate agendas with a majority of firms setting emission reduction targets and focusing on quantifying impacts and financial implications of climate change on their businesses. Though over 40 per cent of companies report a decrease in absolute emissions there still is a sizeable group which is not yet geared up to manage risks arising from climate change and could get left behind by their peers. The report emphasises the need for more efforts to monitor and facilitate corporate disclosures of climate change related information," added Damandeep Singh.

Water alert

If you live in Delhi, there is a one-in-three chance that the packaged water you buy could be spurious

A news report earlier this month had some alarming data for consumers of [packaged water](#) in Delhi's National Capital Region. North [Delhi](#) Municipal Corporation Mayor Yogender Chandolia told a news agency, "The number of unlicensed bottling units in Delhi is over 10,000. There's a shortage of drinking water in many parts. Operating illegal units is a lucrative business. We did a survey this year and over 2,000 people were caught running unlicensed water bottling plants in parts of North Delhi alone. But no action was taken against them. This has again given them the freedom to keep running their illegal business."

While the figures themselves are alarming, the core issue is not a revelation. The Delhi High Court had directed the government to crack down on units manufacturing and selling drinking water without a licence and BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) certification as early as 2010. The court was hearing a petition filed by the Bottled Water Processors' Association. It was alleged that despite the central government's attention being drawn to illegal manufacturers, no action was taken to stop such activities. That was four years ago and if industry executives are to be believed, the number of these illegal bottling units has only climbed since.

The 10,000 illegal plants are producing an equal quantity of output to the 64 licensed plants if not more, according to Pankaj Agarwal, president of the Bottled Water Processors' Association. These illegal units have mushroomed all over town, hidden away in slums and suburban areas. thus escaping notice from both the authorities and the consumers. He identified areas such as Jamia Nagar, Batla House and Dwarka as hotspots for this activity. A conversation with the local *panwari* and juice shop owner at Bahadur Shah Zafar road revealed that an individual with unknown affiliations comes on a bicycle every morning to deliver the packaged water bottles. One kirana store that supplies 20-litre water jars to paying guest accommodations in Lajpat Nagar was doing so without any labelling whatsoever. And this is only where this writer lives and works; presumably the rest of the city has similarly disturbing tales to tell.

A spokesperson for Coca-Cola India, whose brand [Kinley](#) is a major player in the packaged water industry, believes that there are various reasons behind this growing menace. "The industry is very fragmented; there are some 1,800 brands already in play." Water is treated as a commodity, and nobody thinks of it beyond something to quench the thirst, leading to rampant misuse. He says that licensed packaged water products are much more expensive, since they make sure the quality of water is up to the mark. But in a retail market where a 20-litre tub is available for Rs 40, "the economics just doesn't add up - which obviously means the manufacturers are scrimping."

Ramesh Chauhan of Bisleri asserts that the problem lies not within the law itself, but in its implementation. "The law states clearly that the BIS mark is compulsory for all packaged water, but it is not enforced properly. We don't have any policing system to check all the products we manufacture - they only check the plants they have already licensed." Aggarwal adds: "Every registered bottling unit has to set up a lab for testing the presence of chemicals and microbes, reports of which have to be submitted to BIS periodically. But these tests are not conducted by the unlicensed plants. Most of them operate even without any proper water purification equipment."

The net sales of Bisleri, the largest player in the industry, in Delhi and the National Capital Region stand at around 240 million bottles per year, which gives it control over half the market. But when you factor in the bottles coming in from the unlicensed plants, the numbers tell an entirely different story. According to Chauhan, this

issue is larger than the consumers realise. "One in every three bottles comes from an unlicensed plant!" It is not difficult to manufacture 1,000 bottles per plant per day - one can even do it out of one's own kitchen (not to give you ideas, there). The 20-litre jars constitute the majority of the problem, as they are easily available - the label is already placed and they are meant to be reused.

Local health officials need to be cognizant of the danger to people's health, yet repeated calls to BIS, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India and New Delhi Municipal Corporation resulted in responsibility being palmed off to the state authorities. The news report mentioned above also said that cockroaches and house flies were found in water supplied to the headquarters of the East Delhi Municipal Corporation and a media organisation in Noida recently. Rahul Kumar, deputy director central regional office at BIS, says that they are only responsible for approving the quality of the source material. They do conduct regular search and seizure raids on the feedback they receive, but only if plants are using their trademark without actually having obtained it. Agarwal says that till the government can provide a definitive solution by raiding these illegal bottling units, the people of Delhi will be in grave danger of consuming spurious water. Sharma claims the liability also lies with the consumer. "Next time you buy packaged water of any kind, look out for the usual signs and ask tough questions: check the seal, manufacturing date, ISI mark, batch code, MRP, et cetera," says he. "And if you find anything amiss, question your supplier."

Onion hits the bottom on subdued demand

Average onion price in August plunged by over 40% from the corresponding month previous year

[Onion](#) price have fallen dramatically this month owing to poor offtake from domestic bulk consumers and overseas importers. Such a fall during the peak-demand festive season is unusual.

Onion's average price dropped a staggering 44 per cent to Rs 10 a kg on Friday from Rs 18 a kg early this month in Hyderabad mandi. In the benchmark, Lasalgaon market, too, onion nose-dived by 24 per cent to Rs 12 a kg now after hitting a low of Rs 11.50 a kg on Thursday. The politically-sensitive commodity is selling at Rs 13 a kg in Mumbai and Rs 16.29 a kg in Delhi compared to their respective levels of Rs 19 a kg and Rs 17.36 a kg on September 1.

Data compiled by Noida-based Indian Agribusiness Systems, popularly known as Agriwatch for Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SAFC), showed an average onion price decline of 17 per cent in Pimpalgaon, Asia's largest spot onion selling market yard. Average onion price in August plunged 40 per cent from the corresponding month in the previous year.

"Onion price has bottomed out. I don't think farmers would allow the price to fall further. Supply may be controlled in case arrivals go up. Therefore, onion is unlikely to fall further," said R P Gupta, director of Nashik-based National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation.

LESS TEARS

Market	Sep 1	Sep 26	(₹/quintal)	Change (%)
Hyderabad	1,800	1,000		-44.44
Mumbai	1,900	1,300		-31.58
Bangalore	2,152	1,575		-26.81
Lasalgaon	1,575	1,200		-23.81
Indore	1,250	1,000		-20.00
Kolkata	2,230	1,969		-11.70
Delhi	1,736	1,629		-6.16

Source: National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation

Consumers, however, continued to cough up Rs 24-26 for a kg of onion in and around Mumbai. Onion price has reached the pre-crisis level in June when delayed monsoon rainfalls threatened its sowing this kharif season. Although sowing started with a delay of a month, resulting in proportionate delay in harvesting, its price remained low thanks to government intervention.

When onion price started soaring towards June-end and hit Rs 40-44 a kg in the wholesale mandis and Rs 60 in retail markets, the government brought the commodity under the Essential Commodity Act. The Act restricts farmers and stockists to hold beyond a justifiable quantity. Also, the government threatened hoarders with stern action in case of violation of this Act. Consequently, farmers started releasing onion gradually. Also, they did not preserve the vegetable supplement for future sale. Rainfalls during the season damaged the stockpile with huge moisture content.

“Stored onion got wet in the monsoon rainfalls, which has reduced its shelf life. Also, exporters are staying away from fresh purchases

due to huge spoilage potential. Feared with high price rise, overseas importers had booked orders from alternate suppliers including China and Pakistan. Hence, onion exports from India have come to a grinding halt,” said Ajit Shah, president, Horticulture Exporters’ Association.

Meanwhile, harvesting of kharif onion has started in the south. Because of the delay in the rainfalls, harvesting in Maharashtra will commence by October-end or early November. Until then, exporters will remain away from fresh purchases, said Shah.

Total area under onion crop is estimated to have risen significantly this year. SFAC data showed a 39 per cent rise in sowing area in Karnataka to 110,374 hectares as of September 4 this season against 79,264 hectares by the same date last year.

By contrast, area under kharif onion crop in Maharashtra has declined to 49,155 hectares so far this year, compared to 56,533 hectares in the previous year.

Total onion production in kharif season, therefore, is estimated to be 4.5-5 million tonnes. Last year, India’s overall onion output was 19.5 million tonnes.

Shah forecasts India’s onion exports this year at less than one million tonnes, compared with last year’s 1.4 million tonnes.

NGOs sought to monitor child nutrition projects

A new plan has been designed to ensure nutrition in the children particularly those within the age of six years

The state government is seeking out non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or corporate bodies to monitor several programmes launched by the department of women and [child welfare](#) to ensure proper nutrition.

Principal secretary to the woman and child development department, Karnataka, Amita Prasad told reporters in Dharwad at the weekend that the department had launched two programmes - Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) to ensure that the overall development of the children and the expecting mothers. Recently, under the ICDS, malnutrition component has been incorporated and a new plan has been designed to ensure nutrition in the children particularly those within the age of six years.

However, due to a shortage of staff in the department, it has been decided to rope in [NGOs](#) and corporate bodies interested to take up the intervention and monitoring of the nutritional programmes.

Any NGO interested to partner with the department for the successful implementation of the scheme can approach the district-level authorities and spell out their plan.

In Dharwad district, the Deshpande Foundation has partnered the department for the implementation of the nutritional programme.

The parent department would act as a nodal authority and would provide the assistance required for the NGO, while the representatives would design the plan which is best suited for the local area and work on it, she added.

Referring to the Ksheera Bhagya scheme, the flagship programme of the Congress government in the state, Amita stated that after the launch of this programme, there has been a dip in the percentage of children identified as malnourished. As per the latest statistics, there were 56,000 children suffering from malnutrition and now this has come down to 37,000. In Dharwad district, over 2,896 children were identified as malnourished as on April, 2013 and now this figure has dipped to 1,663.

If monitoring activities are effectively taken up, there is every possibility of making the state free of malnutrition, she added. Replying to a query, Anita stated that malnutrition is prevalent more in north Karnataka than in the southern part of the state. One of the reasons is early marriages and lack of information regarding breast feeding. Women residing in rural areas too have stopped breast feeding the newborn. This is leading to malnutrition among children from a very young age.

Hence, the department has decided to leave no stone unturned to take the support of private players to create awareness among the rural populace and see that the government welfare schemes reach the beneficiaries at the right time.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Cotton body gears up for MSP operations as prices dip

Procurement of the fibre will be restricted to select States: Cotton Corporation of India



gilya/shutterstock

Mumbai, September 25:

With cotton prices falling steadily over the last few days, Cotton Corporation of India is gearing up to procure the fibre at the minimum support price in Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Odisha.

The corporation has 14 branches with 300 centres across major cotton growing States.

Cotton prices are currently ruling at Rs. 37,000-38,000 a candy (of 356 kg) against Rs. 40,000 sold last week.

The Government had fixed a minimum support price (MSP) of Rs. 35,000 a candy for long staple cotton and Rs. 32,500 a candy for medium staple.

CCI last conducted the MSP operation in the cotton season 2012-13, and procured 23 lakh bales (of 170 kg each) worth Rs. 4,600 crore in Andhra Pradesh.

Limited procurement

Speaking to *BusinessLine*, BK Mishra, Managing Director, Cotton Corporation of India, said the procurement this year will be restricted to select States as prices in Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Gujarat were expected to prevail over the support price. "It is too early to fix a target for procurement as it all depends on arrivals and demand.

However, many banks have shown an interest and can fund us, in case we have to intervene in the market on a large scale. We are prepared for any eventuality," he said.

Arrivals

India is expected to produce about 400 lakh bales of cotton this year, worth about Rs. 70,000 crore.

Though the cotton arrival season was expected to begin in November this year due to the delayed monsoon, cotton arrivals have already started from well-irrigated regions of Punjab.

A fresh crop of about 4,000 bales hit the Punjab market last week.

Shipment restrictions

India is also expected to surpass its earlier record harvest of 403 lakh bales, with the area under cotton crop touching 127 lakh hectares against 117 lakh hectares recorded last year.

The sentiment in the cotton trade has turned bearish after China, one of the world's largest importers of cotton, clamped restrictions on shipments in order to offload its inventory.

The drop in cotton prices and lower demand in China may lead to India's cotton exports dipping to 90-100 lakh bales against 114 lakh bales registered last year.

Despite restrictions, the mills in China have to import 50 lakh bales to remain competitive. Markets expect it to source about 20-25 lakh bales from India.

Cotton prices in international markets have dropped 27 per cent this year on prospects of a good harvest in the US backed by favourable weather condition.

Cotton for December delivery dropped 2.4 per cent to a near five-year low of 61.57 cents on ICE Futures in New York on Wednesday.

Hybrid turmeric gains Rs. 700/quintal

Erode: Due to arrival of super fine hybrid turmeric, price increased by Rs. 700 a quintal.

“Virtually, we are not getting heavy demand from North India for the past three or four months and so the farmers and traders are in distress now. Because of receipt of one or two orders, the traders are quoting a lower price for the yellow spice, buying very limited stock. But on Thursday due to arrival fine variety hybrid finger and root turmeric, the buyers procured all the 470 bags of hybrid turmeric for a higher price,” said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

Because of arrival of fine variety hybrid finger turmeric, the traders quoted an increased price of Rs. 700 a quintal more than previous sale price. They procured all the 320 bags of hybrid finger turmeric. The hybrid root variety was increased by Rs. 200 a quintal. The price of local finger turmeric was increased by Rs. 200 a quintal.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, finger turmeric was sold at Rs. 3,600-6,065 a quintal, the root variety Rs. 3,496-5,377.

Salem Hybrid: The finger turmeric fetched Rs. 5,377-7,029 and the root variety Rs. 4,515-5,409. Of the total arrival of 410 bags, 103 were sold.

Wagh Bakri supports Greenpeace in scrapping pesticides from tea cultivation

Ahmedabad: Ahmedabad, September 25As nearly 40,000 citizens signed a petition asking tea companies to clean up *chai*, The Wagh Bakri Group, India’s third largest tea packager, on Thursday said it would support Greenpeace’s attempts to eliminate pesticides from tea cultivation in the country.

Wagh Bakri has engaged with Greenpeace India whose report “Trouble Brewing” highlighted pesticide residue in tea samples recently.

Hindustan Unilever Ltd and Girnar Tea have already announced their commitment to support the ecosystem-based approach and

gradual phase out of pesticides, since the launch of the Greenpeace study. “Wagh Bakri has set a precedent for other Indian tea companies to do the right thing for the consumer, growers and the environment. We now urge the remaining tea companies, including Tata Global Beverages Ltd, to follow suit and commit to clean *chai* for their consumers,” said Neha Saigal, Senior Campaigner, Greenpeace India.

Wagh Bakri has committed to invest in pilots, along with other stakeholders, to facilitate the development and evaluation of non-chemical crop protection management with an approach of holistic rejuvenation of the ecosystem. This initiative has the potential to lay a firm foundation for the industry, regulatory authorities and tea growers to further develop a clear roadmap at the end of the pilots for achieving sustainable crop practices and livelihood in tea cultivation, she said.

Since the launch of the Greenpeace report, over 40,000 people across India have supported the campaign by signing petitions.

Mixed trend in rubber



Kottayam, September 25:

Sheet rubber closed unchanged at Rs. 122 a kg on Thursday. According to traders, RSS 4 managed to sustain at the prevailing levels on covering purchases at lower levels.

The grade dropped to Rs. 120.50 (Rs. 121) and Rs.117.50 (Rs. 118) respectively, as quoted by the Rubber Board and dealers. The trend was mixed.

October futures improved to Rs. 120 (Rs. 119.27) while the November futures slipped to Rs. 118.41 (Rs.118.99), December to Rs. 118.30 (Rs. 118.67) and January to Rs. 118.30 (Rs. 118.79) for RSS 4 on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) weakened to Rs. 96.08 (Rs. 97.18) at Bangkok. October futures closed at ¥169 (Rs. 94.89) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg): RSS-4: 122 (122); RSS-5: 113 (114); Ungraded: 102 (103); ISNR 20: 103.50 (103.50) and Latex (60% drc): 87 (87).