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# THE HINDU

## Going green, naturally



Back to nature Ente Bhoomi offers space for those who want to promote natural living. Right, organic vegetables from Wayanad, which are available  
Photo : Thulasi Kakkat



*A facilitator for natural living, Ente Bhoomi plans to adopt Ravipuram ward for its waste management project*

The problems of life in the city today can be roughly divided into three — waste, water and power. Though this holds true globally, these problems are magnified in Third World countries and specifically in growing tier-two cities. Voluntary organisations, environmentalists and even a few corporates with a conscience are doing their bit towards promoting a sustainable lifestyle. But what really has to be done is to make this green lifestyle accessible to people, believe the founders of a new ‘Green Lifestyle Mall’ that has opened in the city.

*Ente Bhoomi*, which sprawls over 30 cents opposite the Valanjambalam Temple in Ernakulam, has been set up as a facilitator for a natural way of life. The non-governmental initiative while providing organic solutions to a “materialistic life”, will also offer technical knowhow on growing organic vegetables and waste management. As one of its primary campaigns, *Ente Bhoomi* plans to adopt Ravipuram ward for its waste-management project. Ward members have already attended a couple of sessions on segregation and turning kitchen waste to manure and they will, in turn, work towards educating the houses and apartments in the area on waste management. Kudumbashree workers, too, would be employed for this purpose. The idea is to bring about a change in the way kitchen waste is dealt with. The residents will be provided with composting and gardening solutions.

C .N. Manoj, director of *Ente Bhoomi* and founder of Pelican Biotech and Chemical Labs, a company, which works for energy conservation and creating wealth from waste, says the need of the hour is to educate people that living green is not difficult. “There is a general belief that it is not easy to lead a natural life. What we aim to do with *Ente Bhoomi* is to break that notion,” he says.

The composting unit designed by Pelican Biotech installed at *Ente Bhoomi* converts organic waste into manure, where plants can be planted directly without adding soil. It does not leave a stench either.

Krishna Das Menon, the managing director of *Ente Bhoomi*, who spearheaded a successful waste management programme at his apartment on Warriam Road, says though the process of creating awareness was painstakingly long, the results are sweet. A processing unit has been installed in the common area of the apartment and the kitchen waste now yields sacks of manure, which are in great demand. He says, “If apartment complexes and individual houses follow this example, it will help take a huge load off the Corporation and they will only have to deal with plastic and e-waste.”

Apart from educating people about organic alternatives, the green lifestyle mall also offers the space for anyone who wants to promote a natural way of life. The space will also be utilised for yoga classes and seminars. Those interested in pottery or clay modelling too can use the space. A small section of the mall has vegetables, fruits and rice brought from Wayanad. “Farmers following good agricultural methods were identified and we have tied up with them to sell their produce here,” Krishna Das Menon says.

An organic restaurant serving sprouts and salads is set to open on its premises soon. An art gallery that promotes the works of emerging artists is part of the unit. A few works of pottery and crafts carved out of coffee root, are also on display. Rainwater harvesting equipment too will be made available.

The building itself is made from eco-friendly materials such as bamboo and coir.

“We see the space as a culmination of every green initiative. And by involving people in the activities, the message ‘back to Nature’ is sent out,” Manoj adds.

Over the last few years, the city has witnessed a proliferation of stores selling organic produce. From vegetables and fruits to daily provisions and even cosmetics, the ‘organic’ tag catches attention. “It is an expensive option, but an option nevertheless,” says Seema Raghunath, a government employee, who has switched to organic vegetables and fruits. Houses and apartments have started cultivating vegetables in grow bags on their own terrace and kitchen gardens. “All it takes is a little effort initially, once it starts paying off, the results are satisfying,” says Radha S. from Kadavanthra whose kitchen garden yields a steady supply of brinjal, green chillies, tomatoes and ladies finger.

Effort, Manoj sums up, is all that matters: “Just how our malls have brainwashed our young people into a consumeristic way of life, we have to brainwash them into sustainable living.”

### **Bill to allow fixing price for Bt cotton seeds**

In a move that will allow fixing the sales price of transgenic and Bt cotton seeds, the Assembly on Friday passed the Karnataka Transgenic and Genetically Modified Cotton Seeds (Fixation of Sale Price and Payment of Compensation) Bill, 2015. There is no provision in the present seed laws to fix price for cotton seeds. The Bill also makes a provision to compensate farmers in case of failure of transgenic and genetically-modified cotton crops, by fixing the responsibility on seed producers to compensate farmers suitably, thus mitigating hardship.

Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda tabled the Bill and said during 2013 kharif season, transgenic and genetically-modified cotton crop failed on 60,450 hectares in Haveri, Dharwad, Belagavi, Chitradurga, Davangere, and Ballari districts.

It was very difficult to provide compensation to aggrieved farmers, as there were no provisions in the existing laws to compensate them in case of crop failure. As a special case, the government had compensated the farmers with Rs. 36.35 crore, he said.

The present seed laws implemented in the State are enacted by the Union government. Amendments in this regard and other lacunae to the present central seed legislation were proposed by the State government to the Centre in the last two decades, but it is yet to be passed.

The Assembly passed the Karnataka State Motor Vehicle (Special Provisions) Bill, 2015, to grant permission to private bus operators to run services on routes that are not covered by the KSRTC. The Bill will enable the government to grant temporary permits to private bus operators to start carriage vehicles in areas approved by the government.

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***During 2013 kharif season, transgenic and genetically-modified cotton crop failed on 60,450 hectares in six districts***

### **Mettur dam to be opened on August 9**

*Happy farmers say it will give them time to prepare for samba, thalady crops*

The Mettur dam will be opened for irrigation on August 9 to enable Cauvery delta farmers take up samba and thalady cultivation in about 12 lakh hectares.

Announcing it, Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, in a statement on Friday, said the government expects the south-west monsoon to be normal in the Cauvery river's catchment areas in August and awaiting the State's share of water as per the Cauvery Tribunal's final order. The prediction on normal north-east monsoon was also considered before taking the decision to release water from Mettur dam, she said.

As on July 31, the storage level in the dam stood at 95.91 feet as the inflow went up with rains in the catchment areas in July, she said. Water could not be released at the scheduled date of June 12 as the storage was only 74.21 feet. Usually, water would be released for kuruvai cultivation when the water level is above 90 feet, she pointed out.

Welcoming the decision, delta farmers said the timing was right and gave them adequate time to prepare for samba and thalady crops. Sections of

the farmers also have pleaded for a samba package on the lines of the popular kuruvai package that has benefited the farmers a lot.

“The Mettur dam opening on August 9 will be of great use to the farmers all over the delta as the *samba* preparation time varies according to local practice and water availability,” said Mannargudi S. Ranganathan, general secretary, Tamil Nadu Cauvery Delta Farmers’ Welfare Association. However, in certain areas of Tiruvarur district, samba preparations have already commenced. The August 9 opening would be a boon for thalady paddy growers, he added.

Considering the water availability, he says direct sowing can be taken up in suitable areas, as the method has been proved right by farmers in the *Vennar* basin of Tiruvarur district in the past. Considerable quantum of water could be saved by resorting to direct sowing, he noted. While the aim of all stakeholders must be towards conserving water to last long, the State government must take up with the Karnataka government to get the 139 tmc ft water sanctioned by the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal before September 30 to ensure a bountiful samba crop, he emphasises.

### **Crop insurance**

The Centre must also help delta farmers in implementing the crop insurance scheme in an effective manner acceptable to the farmers. The crop insurance scheme failed us in the past few years, he rues. “It’s good that the authorities have been announcing well in time the schedule of Mettur dam water release that is helping farmers chart agricultural activities accordingly. We also urge the PWD authorities to implement a proper turn system for the whole Cauvery delta region so that even the tail end areas get adequate water,” said V. Jeevakumar, secretary, Tamilaga Vivasaya Thozhilalar Sangam. The Centre should ensure Karnataka released the sanctioned quantum of water for samba and thalady crops, he added.

Farmers also demand adequate stocks of seeds of popular paddy varieties and agricultural inputs to be made available to farmers through the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies and private agencies during the season.

### **“Inspect water sources”**

The Collector, V. Rajaraman, on Friday directed officials to inspect water sources that had suffered damage due to improper maintenance.



Reacting to farmers' demands at the monthly grievance redress meeting here, Mr. Rajaraman ordered a joint inspection by Public Works Department officials and Assistant Director of Panchayats to strengthen the Urichikulam tank bund and repair its supply channel. He also directed officials to inspect the Seevaneri tank to repair its damaged shutter and to desilt Gunavandaneri, Pethankulam, Pungankulam and Viraga Samudram tanks. The Collector asked PWD officials to immediately remove encroachments on Sathampadi tank in Watrap taluk.

Mr. Rajaraman, according to an official press release, assured the farmers that suitable action would be initiated to raise trees in government poromboke lands. Those who participated in the meeting included C. Muthukumar, District Revenue Officer; Joint Director of Agriculture (in charge) M. S. Senbagaraj; Joint Director of Cooperative Societies C. Gurumurthy and District Forest Officer Ashok Kumar.

### **‘Install electronic weighing machines’**

Agriculture Produce Marketing Centre (APMC) in-charge president Rajendra has warned that criminal cases would be filed against wholesale dealers on the APMC premises if they fail to install electronic weighing machines before August 5.

Speaking at a meeting of shop owners and farmers' leaders here on Friday, he said there were complaints from farmers that wholesale dealers on the APMC premises were deceiving farmers while weighing their produce.

“Farmers in the district are in deep trouble owing to adverse climatic conditions and sudden collapse in prices. Shop owners should install electronic equipments to ensure proper prices to farmers,” he added.

Farmers' leader B.M. Satish alleged at the meeting that wholesale buyers behaved rudely with farmers and there were instances wherein vegetables were purchased at lower prices after threatening the farmers. The authorities should initiate stringent action against such persons, he stressed.

They also demanded that the APMC provide necessary infrastructure to farmers and wholesale dealers including good roads, transportation facilities and weighing machines.

“Since the Weights and Measures Department has not taken any steps to rectify the loopholes in existing system, the APMC should file a case

against the department and appeal for stringent action against them,” they added.

APMC Member Shamrao informed the gathering that 75 per cent of development works on the APMC premises, including cement roads, had been completed.

***Farmers’ leader B.M. Satish alleged that wholesale buyers behaved rudely with farmers***

### **Rawat govt to release Rs 100 cr. to help farmers**

An additional fund of Rs 100 crore will be provided to help Uttarakhand farmers whose crops were damaged in the unseasonal rains, while Rs 32 crore will be released for the payment of dues to sugarcane growers in the state, according to the state government official.

Chaired by Chief Minister Harish Rawat, the decision was taken by the state Cabinet in a meeting held for the first time at a village in Haridwar district, official sources here said.

The decision was taken in view of the large scale damage to crops due to heavy pre-monsoon showers in Uttarakhand this year. Also, several sugarcane growers had met Mr Rawat seeking early settlement of their dues.

The Cabinet has also decided that it will implement whatever decision is taken by the Centre on one-rank-one-pension issue to ex-servicemen and will extend its benefit at its own level to ex-para military personnel as well, the sources said. - PTI

### **Rs. 200 cr. released for Pattiseema lift project**



Ministers K. Atchannaidu, Yanamala Ramakrishnudu, Ganta Srinivasa Rao and Pratthipati Pulla Rao discussing the points before briefing media

persons about the Cabinet meeting held in Vijayawada on Friday.—  
Photo: A.V.G. Prasad

State government has released Rs.200 crore additional funds sought for completing Pattiseema lift irrigation project on time.

State government has taken up the project to provide water not only to delta area but also to Rayalaseema districts and determined to complete the works by August 15 and conduct a trial run, said Finance Minister Yanamala Ramakrishnu. In a statement here on Friday, he said an input subsidy of Rs.25.46 crore was released to compensate for the extraordinary weather conditions in Srikakulam district due to Hudhud cyclone and loss of more than 50 per cent of paddy crop in 16,972 hectares in 13 districts due to pests. The amount would be credited directly into the accounts of farmers who suffered losses and an SMS message would be sent to farmers once the amount was credited into the accounts of farmers.

The Finance Minister said the proposals for setting up a cyber police station to control the growing cyber crimes in the State particularly in Visakhapatnam were cleared in toto.

A police station exclusively for cyber crimes under the Visakhapatnam Police Commissionerate would help in controlling and regulating cyber crimes. Based on the functioning of the cyber crime police station, such exclusive police stations would be set up in other districts too, he said.

### **JD(S) seeks independent ministry for sugar sector**

The State government should establish an independent ministry and department for the sugar sector, as a concrete measure towards finding solutions to the crisis in the sugarcane sector, said Janata Dal (S) district president Ashok Pujari.

### **Major industry**

Talking to presspersons here on Friday, he said that the sector had grown into a major industry whose economy was directly linked with a vast population of farmers, and provided employment to a large number of workers. Yet, there was no independent department to monitor problems concerning such a major sector.

The government should appoint an honest IAS official as Principal Secretary for the independent department, he suggested. The minister and



the head of the department should also be given adequate powers to take decisions without any obstruction from other officials, he said.

Presently, the sugar sector is under the Ministry of Co-operation. Mr. Pujari called the Directorate of Sugar in Bengaluru “ineffective” and “toothless”. District Sugarcane Growers’ Association president T.T. Murkatnal said the centre should evolve new pricing mechanism for sugar on the lines of the system adopted for domestic and commercial LPG cylinders. The price of commercial sugar, which is consumed by various industries like confectionary, soft drinks, ice creams and hotels, should be double the price for domestic sugar.

### **Loan waiver**

Demanding a waiver of all crop loans in the 83 taluks facing the possibility of drought if there are no adequate rainfall in next one week, he said the centre could do a great service to the farmers even if it released just one percent of money it earned from 2G, 3G spectrum and other auctions.

Mr. Murkatnal reminded the gathering that during the Legislature session in Belagavi, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had promised that the government would clear sugarcane dues Rs. 930 crore by July 31, but only Rs. 350 crore had been released till Thursday.

### **Krishik Samaj launches farmers’ awareness rally**

*‘Objective is to instil confidence among them’*



Members of the Krishik Samaj taking out a rally in Mandya on Friday. The Mandya Taluk Krishik Samaj has launched a rally here on Friday to instil confidence among farmers and prevent them from committing suicide.

Bhushan Gulabrao Borase, Superintendent of Police, inaugurated the rally near the Deputy Commissioner's office and requested the farmers not to commit suicide.

The rally would visit villages across the taluk and appeal to the farmers not to take the extreme step.

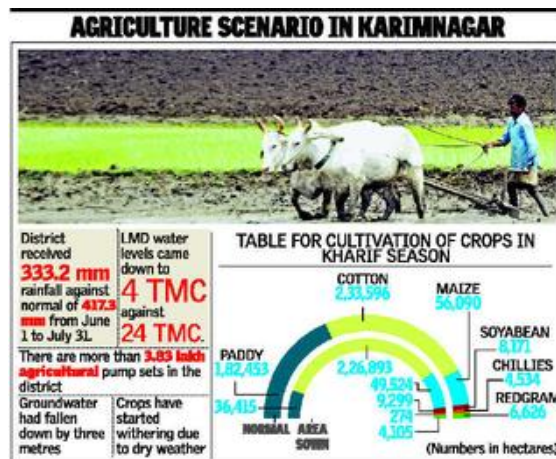
The objective is to boost the confidence among farmers, C.M. Nagaraju, president of the samaj, told *The Hindu*.

The seven-day rally aims at helping farmers distressed over crop losses and pressure to repay their loans, Mr. Nagaraju told *The Hindu*.

Joint Director of Agriculture M.N. Rajasulochana and Deputy Director of Horticulture K. Rudresh were among those present.

### Crops withering due to lack of rain

*Farmers cultivate only 3.43 lakh hectares against 5.14 lakh hectares*



The farming community in Karimnagar district is in doldrums following the prevailing drought conditions and the rains eluding them even after completion of two months of rainy season.

The early monsoon in June had rekindled hope among the farming community about the good rainfall during this kharif season. They started cultivation expecting good rainfall. But, the rains remained only for a few days. Seed such as cotton, maize, green gram which germinated after a few days, withered due to dry weather conditions. The area of cultivation came down drastically in the district. Against the normal area of cultivation of 5.14 lakh hectares during the kharif season, the farmers had so far cultivated only 3.43 lakh hectares, which is only 66 per cent. The rain-fed crops such as maize, cotton, soyabean, etc. had withered in fields due to non-availability of water.

Expecting copious rainfall following the early monsoon, the farmers had cultivated cotton in 2.26 lakh hectares against the normal area of 2.33 lakh hectares. Due to dry weather conditions the crop was withered causing huge loss to the farming community. Similarly, the maize was cultivated in 49,524 hectares against the normal area of 56,090 hectares.

The Sriram Sagar Project (SRSP), which is a lifeline of Karimnagar district, with a total capacity of 90.31 TMC of water, is now having only seven TMC of water. The water for irrigation under the command area of the project would be released only if the reservoir capacity reaches 65 TMC. Due to the poor inflows into the major irrigation project, the paddy cultivation had come down to 36,415 hectares against the normal area of 1,82,453 hectares.

The groundwater also came down drastically because of the poor rainfall in the last two years. Official sources said that the groundwater levels had reduced by more than three meters in the district. In Gangadhara mandal, the groundwater table had fallen down to 22.42 meters. The farmers who had grown paddy nurseries are also worried about the withering of crop and non-availability of ground water.

### **Masula scientists develop salinity-resistant paddy seed**



Scientists of Agricultural Research Station display MCM-103, a new paddy seed variety at Machilipatnam in Krishna District. Photo: T. Appala Naidu

*The seed varieties developed by Principal Scientist T. Anuradha and Scientist K. Nagendra Rao are MCM 103, a Kharif variety and Rabi variety MCM110, which are salinity resistant.*

Plant breeding scientists of Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University's Research Station at Machilipatnam have developed two new

paddy seed varieties, exclusively meant for saline soil and the 10-year research has yielded expected results.

The seed varieties developed by Principal Scientist T. Anuradha and Scientist K. Nagendra Rao are MCM 103, a Kharif variety and Rabi variety MCM110. The duration of crop period of the varieties is 140 and 120 days respectively.

“The Directorate of Rice Research (DRR), Hyderabad, has tagged the MCM 103 as the best paddy seed variety among the 40 entries from across the country in 2013. The DRR has also tested the variety in the six states, where it gave expected results including yield and quality grain”, T. Anuradha told The Hindu.

“The MCM-103 seed variety gives nearly six tonnes of yield while the MCM-110 gives up to 5.5 tonnes per hectare”, she added. The scientists have claimed that the yield of the two varieties would arguably be much higher in the normal soil. Another Scientist K. Nagendra Rao added that the MCM 103 is being tested in the saline fields in the coastal Andhra districts from the ongoing Kharif season and the other variety would also be tested from the next Rabi season in the State.

The District Agricultural Advisory & Transfer of Technology Centre in the respective districts in the State had selected the fields to test the seed varieties from the Kharif-2015. “The medium duration paddy varieties will primarily encourage the farmers to turn the saline soil fields into cultivable fields. The varieties will also ensure better yield”, opined Ms. Anuradha.

### **Farmers indebted to scientists:**

The farmers having saline soil are indebted to the scientists, said Ms. Anuradha and Mr. Nagendra Rao, who had developed two paddy seed varieties – MCM 100 and 101- in 2011. It has been proposed for seeking approval of the Andhra Pradesh State’s Seed Varietal Release Committee for final release of the two varieties into the market.

### **MGNREGS work days increased to 150**

In an attempt to prevent migration from rural areas and ensure livelihood of the people in the drought-hit areas in the State, the Cabinet has decided to increase the number of man days under the MNREGS to 150 from the earlier 100. To bail out farmers in the drought-hit areas, the Cabinet discussed the options such as alternative crops, supply of seeds in time.

## **Chalk out action plan to increase milk production'**

District Collector Siddarth Jain on Friday directed the officials of the Animal Husbandry Department to undertake a massive campaign to educate the dairy farmers about techniques to be adopted for increasing milk yields.

The Collector was interacting with the members of self-help groups (SHGs) at the TTDC Bhavan here. Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) adviser Ramalakshmi also took part in the event. Mr Jain said that the officials should chalk out an action plan to train the SHGs in marketing arena also.

“Apart from marketing milk and milk products, the SHGs should also have orientation in goat and sheep rearing, which envisages low investment with high profits. Poultry industry should also be given a major boost,” he said.

The Collector said that ‘Drink Milk’ scheme had to be taken up with extensive publicity with schoolchildren and pregnant women.

## **Water released into canals to irrigate 24,504 acres**

*Will face shortage of farm labourers, say farmers*



**CULTIVATION TIME:**Water was released from Periya Kodiveri Dam into Thadapalli - Arankankottai canals for irrigation in Erode district on Friday.—**PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

Water was released from Periyakodiveri Dam into Arakankottai-Thadapalli canals for paddy cultivation on Friday, following completion of concrete-lining works.

District Collector S. Prabakar initiated the water release for irrigating 24,504 acres in Gobichettipalayam, Anthiyur and Bhavani areas in the



presence of senior PWD officials and representatives of farmers' organisations, as instructed by Chief Minister Jayalalithaa.

Construction work for concrete-lining the canals to a length of 2 km each at a cost of Rs. 40 crore delayed release of water by about two months. Usually, water stored in Bhavani Sagar Dam is released into the canals through the Periyakodiveri Dam during the mid-April, and the start of June and August. The June cycle had to be skipped, since the construction work was initiated only around that time.

Though relieved over the completion of concrete-lining work, a long-pending requirement, farmers in the Arakankottai-Thadapalli ayacut are apprehensive that they would face shortage of farm labourers during the cultivation period.

Since release of water into the Lower Bhavani Project canal with an ayacut of over 1.03 lakh acres is just a fortnight away, and the date for release of water from Mettur Dam into Cauvery for cultivation in delta districts is fast approaching, ensuring adequacy of farm labourers during the cultivation season would be an ordeal, according to Subi Thalapathi, representative of Thadapalli-Arakankottai Farmers' Welfare Association.

Had the construction work been completed before April, farm workers could have been retained. Due to the skipping of the June cycle, there has been migration of the labourers elsewhere.

There are possibilities for the farm activities getting impacted due to labour shortage, and the eventuality of farm labourers demanding more wages in a situation of demand also cannot be ruled out, Mr. Thalapathi rued.

### **Grape growers ask government to provide financial aid within a week**

*They threaten to intensify agitation, if their demand is not met*



Abhaykumar Nandrekar, president of the Karnataka State Grape Growers' Association, speaking at a press conference in Vijayapura on Friday.

Grape farmers of 22 districts, piqued by the government's failure to give them financial relief, have resolved to give a week to the Siddaramaiah government to address the issue.

The decision was announced at a press conference by Abhaykumar Nandrekar, president, Karnataka State Grape Growers' Association, here on Friday.

“Ever since the Congress came to power, we have been asking them to waive off interest on loans borrowed from banks. The government, except rendering lip service, has not done anything so far,” he remarked.

He said that about a year ago, the government had promised to get the interest on loans waived, but the promise has not been fulfilled.

Mr. Nandrekar said that recently a delegation of grape growers, accompanied by about 10 MPs of grape growing districts, met Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in Delhi and urged him to waive off the loans.

“He replied that the government could consider giving a special package on a cost-sharing basis with the Karnataka government ready to bear some cost,” he said.

He informed that when the same information was conveyed to Mr. Siddaramaiah, he did not give any satisfactory reply, saying that he would be taking an all-party delegation to Delhi soon to discuss with the Union government.

Mr. Nandrekar said that the growers would wait only for a week. If the State government failed to take a delegation, then the agitation would be intensified against the government.

Grape growers of the district had demanded that the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee start trading of raisins from Raisin Online Trading Centre in Vijayapura within a week.

“Else, we will boycott the selling and see that the raisin is not sold at the APMC yard by grape growers. The APMC spent about Rs. 2.5 crore to build the centre, but even today, no facilities have been given to traders,”

said Abhaykumar Nandrekar, president Karnataka State Grape Growers' Association.

He said that the APMC must install grading and raising storing machines at the centre which would help the growers to earn higher revenue.

### **An exhibition of all things organic**



Visitors at the Organic Expo in Madurai on Friday. Photo: S. James

In a bid to promote a natural and healthy way of living and lifestyle, Soroptomist International Madurai is organising 'Soroptifest 2015,' an exhibition of organic and eco-friendly products and energy saving solutions here.

The exhibition, which was inaugurated in the city on Friday, featured stalls selling organic vegetables, garments in pure cotton and other natural fibres, cosmetics made of organic ingredients and jute bags. Organisations that specialise in energy-saving products such as biogas, solar panels and LED lights have also set up stalls.

"We have noticed that there is a small but definite shift in the society towards organic products and healthy lifestyle. Through the exhibition, we hope to bring people closer to organic solutions which can be incorporated in all aspects of daily living," said Valli Annamalai from SI Madurai.

Latha Abiruben, president of SI Madurai, said that the expo would be a platform to showcase products such as straw mats made by weavers from Veeravanallur which were slowly being sidelined by new products. "For these weavers and other persons traditionally involved in manufacturing eco-friendly and organic products, we have given a chance to showcase their works to a larger number of people," she said.

Among one of the unique solutions to add green to living spaces, Samyukta Kalingarayar, who runs Landscape in a jar, a Coimbatore-based organisation, showcased terrariums — glass containers in which small plants could be grown. “They do not take up much space and brighten up living spaces. The plants need not be watered for months and survive inside the glass container,” she said.

The expo will be open on August 1 and 2 at Fortune Pandyan Hotel from 10.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. Contests for school and college students as well as competitions for cooking organic food would be conducted as part of the expo, the organisers said.

### **‘Common treatment plant for silk, cotton units will save groundwater’**



The site selected for setting up the Perarignar Anna Handloom Silk Park Limited at Keelkathirpur near Kancheepuram.— Photo D. Gopalakrishnan.

The proposed integrated silk park in Kancheepuram is expected to protect groundwater in and around the temple town from being polluted with effluents.

With the State government coming forward to form more handloom cooperative societies to save silk saree weavers from the clutches of private master weavers, the number of silk yarn dyeing units also registered a steady growth. .

The spurt in number of colouring units also resulted in protests from activists who claimed that untreated effluent let out from the dyeing units into canals such as Manjalneerkalvai, Ashtabujam channel and Vegavathi river was polluting the groundwater table in the town.

They insisted that the colouring process trade be regulated and a common effluent treatment plant (CETP) be set up to save the groundwater

potential, traders recalled, but there was no progress on creating this facility.

A ray of hope has now emerged among silk yarn dyeing unit owners when the integrated silk park project was announced. The proposed project includes a CETP for silk yarn dyeing units, officials said.

However, as the modalities for setting up of the park were formulated, the Peraringnar Anna Handloom Silk Park was pressured to include cotton yarn colouring units as stakeholders in the project. Thus, the number of dyeing units to be accommodated in the silk park has almost doubled, officials explained.

Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board has issued notices to existing dyeing units directing them to either become a member in PAHSP or close down the business. Under such circumstances, bringing all dyeing and colouring units under a single umbrella and treating effluents through the CEPT will help in preventing further damage to the ground water table, officials hope.

### **Panel to guide Vaigai river restoration soon**



#### **FOR A CLEAN RIVER**

**Committee to guide restoration of the Vaigai to be headed by Collector.**

**It will include officials and heads of educational institutions.**

**Students will be involved in rejuvenation and restoration of the legendary river.**

*Students to be involved in a big way, says Collector*

A committee would be set up shortly to guide and facilitate restoration of the Vaigai, said Collector L. Subramanian here on Friday. A preliminary meeting to this effect was convened at the Collectorate in which officials from the Public Works Department, Corporation, Revenue Department, Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board and representatives from various educational institutions in the city participated.



“The formation of a guidance committee was the objective of the meeting and its members will interact on a regular basis about the steps to be taken towards conservation of the Vaigai,” Mr. Subramanian said.

Human waste and effluents are released at various points and garbage is dumped in the river’s stretch between Mathichiyam and Kamarajar Salai in the city. In December 2014, K. Phanindra Reddy, Principal Secretary, Municipal Water Supply, had suggested during a visit to Madurai that a long-term plan be implemented to restore the river and mooted the idea of forming a committee for the purpose.

“We have begun the work to set up a committee and chalk out an action plan for restoration of the river,” Mr. Subramanian said.

While the committee will be headed by the Collector, S. Shanti, Deputy Commissioner, Madurai Corporation, will be the vice-chairman. Executive officers of the Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple, Sundararaja Perumal Temple and Vandiyur Mariamman Temple, chairpersons of four corporation zones, Superintending Engineers of TWAD Board and Tamil Nadu Housing Board, District Forest Officer and District Revenue Officer will be included as other members.

Principals of Lady Doak College, The American College, Fatima College, Thiagarajar College and Sri Meenakshi Government College for Women will also be part of the committee.

“By roping in educational institutions, we hope to involve students in awareness creation as well as other activities. A separate meeting with educational institutions and NSS volunteers will soon take place,” Mr. Subramanian said.

### **Students bring produce from college garden**

In a novel initiative, Botany Department of Vivekananda College has been maintaining an exclusive herbal garden on half acre on their college premises for the last two years.

N. Lakshmanan, Head of Department, said that they had been growing about 60 species of medicinal plants. Four students from the college who showcased some of the products in a stall at ‘Sorpotifest ‘15’ said that both the students and faculty were involved in maintaining the garden. “We have grown Nilavembu which can be used to make ‘kashayam’ used to fight dengue, herbal oil made of neem and aloe vera and natural

fertilizers which we make from ingredients grown in the garden,” said R. Karnan, a student.

C. Pandiamurugan , another student, said that they had also raised and distributed ‘nocchi’ plants, which would help keep mosquitoes away.

“We are already distributing seedlings to people who come and see out herbal garden. This is our maiden attempt to sell products which we grow and make from our herbal garden,” Vigneswaran and Rajesh , two third-year students, said.

### **Youth clean up water body in village**



Members of Pasumai Vizhuthugal Iyakkam who renovated the lake in their village at Nallipalayam in Namakkal on Friday.—PHOTO: E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

Desilting a water body and strengthening its bunds without external funding is a bigger challenge.

Yet, a group of youth formed ‘Pasumai Vizhuthugal Iyakkam’, and took up the massive work and completed it on time with their own resources and help from philanthropists.

The sprawling 7.5 acre Urkuttai Lake is located in Nallipalayam village that came under the extension area of the Namakkal Municipality. The lake is located along the Namakkal – Karur National Highway and is said to be more than 150 years old.

### **Movement**

After the village with a population of over 5,000 found it difficult to meet their daily water needs, youth, all in the age group of 27 to 37 years, formed the movement and undertook the work that includes desilting,

strengthening bunds, removing encroachments in waterways and beautifying the lake.

With help from a few philanthropists and mobilising funds from their own friends, they were able to desilt and strengthen the bunds in the past two months.

Recently, they obtained 42 saplings from the Forest Department and planted it on the bunds.

However, encroachment of waterways is seen as a major hurdle for making the project successful.

Member of the movement K. Rajkumar said that all the waterways are encroached and wanted the revenue officials to clear it.

“The lake is ready to receive water during the ensuing monsoon. However, the source needs to be strengthened,” he added.

### **Groundwater level**

Members pointed out that once the project is successfully completed, the lake would help in recharging the groundwater level in the area that helps in over 1,000 borewells receiving water. “The empty lake is giving us sleeping nights,” said the members.

This is the first of its kind in the district where youth have joined together to renovate a lake without seeking assistance from the government.

“They should be encouraged so that the project becomes a role model for implementing in water-scarcity areas,” said the villagers.

### **Life is too rough for these Kodyakkadu fishermen**



They collect fish, crab and shrimp in adverse conditions. —File Photo  
Imagine squatting in knee-deep sea water for close to six hours under scorching sun or drenching rain with just king fishers and other avians for company. At the end of the daily chore, these fishermen and women of Kodiyakkadu near here take home a princely sum of Rs. 150.

The toil of these fisher folk numbering around 100 during peak season and about a dozen during lean days is a saga of severity, combating adverse weather conditions, unfriendly seawater, unseen catch and untold misery back home.

This is a group of small-time fishermen and women who don't venture into the sea or go to work in any establishment, not even for works under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

They set out from their modest dwellings in Kodiyakkadu fishing hamlet before dawn to the sea shore from where water is pumped through reservoirs to two private chemical salt manufacturing industrial units some distance between Agasthiyampalli and Kodiyakkarai.

Wading through knee deep slush of mud flats to reach the sea water reservoirs where there would be no waves, they squat and search under water with their bare hands for any shrimp or crab. When they feel the fish or crab, instinctively they clasp their fingers and catch the prey.

This job they do for close to six hours every day to collect a maximum of a kilogram of shrimp and a dozen crabs on a lucky day. But those days are few and far between for them.

“Karthigai-Margazhi is the best season for us when we land better grown shrimps and crabs in these regions. Our difficulty would be compounded when rains come. Not that we are happy labouring under the scorching sun, but rains would add to our agony but we won't mind as the catch would be better,” explains V. Sargunam (56) of Kodiyakkadu as he returns to the shore and holds aloft his catch for the day.

“We sell our catch every day to small-time traders or even to retailers when we reach the market place at Kodiyakkarai. Standing in three-four feet deep salt water takes a toll on our health. But we don't know any other trade for a livelihood and press ahead with this type of fishing in seawater. That's not all as crabs inflict stinging bites before they perish as we don't know immediately when we grab them. All that make for an unpopular work,” rues G. Selvi as she scurries to the market and be among the early birds to encash the catch.

During the season, these fishermen get a maximum of Rs. 300 a day but the daily wading and squatting has definitely taken a toll on their health as could be seen from bent legs and twisted fingers that have turned pale due to exposure to salt water. All for a square meal a day.

### **Select medicinal plants distributed for free**

The Muniyal Institute of Ayurveda Medical Sciences distributed selected medicinal plants free of cost on the occasion of 'Guru Poornima' on Friday.

Medicinal plants, including Amla (*Emblica officinalis*), Ashoka (*Saraka indica*), Kokum (*Garcinia indica*), Nagchampa (*Messua ferrea*), Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanica*), and Ramapatre (*Myristica dactyloides*) were distributed.

The Department of Dravyaguna (Ayurveda pharmacology) at the institute distributes free medicinal plants to interested people every year.

"More than 300 persons took home the plants this year," said Chandrakanth, professor and head of the department.

### **KVASU workshop on sustainable farming**

The Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU) will host an international workshop on sustainable farming as part of its Global Innovative Initiatives (GII) project in Kochi on August 19 and 20.

Experts from GII Universities, stakeholder departments, and research institutions across the world will attend the programme. As many as 15 experts from partner universities of the initiative, including University of Bristol, Kansas State University, Rothamsted Research Institute, University of Western Australia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Zhejiang University and

the KVASU, will present papers.

The programme will facilitate sustainable dairying and organic farming in the State, B. Ashok, Vice Chancellor, KVASU, said.

The two day programme would address the issues such as carbon credit, soil fertility, pasture management, mineral status, good fodder management practices, and emerging diseases.



### **NAFED to supply onion to 8 cities to meet shortage**

National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (Nafed) has started preparations to supply onions to eight major cities in the country from the second half of August following fresh instructions from the Union government.

The onions will be supplied to Patna, Ranchi, Kolkata, Raipur, Bhubaneswar, Lucknow, Chennai and Hyderabad in the next few days to tide over the scarcity in the market.

Nafed has already procured 2,500 tonnes of onions for the Centre government under the Price Stability Fund (PSF) in a bid to tide over the scarcity and stabilize onion prices in the domestic markets. The onions have been stored at its two warehouses in Lasalgaon and Pimpalgaon.

TOI had on July 28 had reported that Nafed has initiated the process for dispatching onions to the Delhi market. Now, the Union government has issued fresh instructions to Nafed to supply onions it had procured under the PSF to the eight major cities in the country.

Speaking to TOI, a Nafed official said, "We have received fresh instructions from the Union government to supply onions to the eight cities. We are in the process of appointing transporters to supply the onions to these cities. We will start supply ing once we finalise the transporters. We have 2,500 tonnes of onions stored at two locations - Lasalgaon and Pimaplgaon, which were procured during May 15 to June 25 for the Central government under the price stability fund. Our responsibility is to supply onions to the destinations the government wants and it is up to the government to decide how to distribute those."

A decline in supply has led to the rise in the average wholesale onion prices that have triggered a sharp increase in retail prices of onions up to Rs 45 a kg in the country. The average wholesale onion prices at the country's largest wholesale onion market at Lasalgaon Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) in the district has shot up by almost 117% in a month from Rs 1,450 a quintal on June 30 to Rs 3,150 a quintal on July 31.

As part of precautionary measures, the Union government has already created a buffer stock of close to 10,000 tonnes through Nafed and the Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) under the PCF. The small farmers' consortium has procured around 7,500 metric tonnes of onions for the Centre, while the NAFED procured 2,500 metric tonnes of onions between May 15 and June 25 from Lasalgaon, Pimpalgaon and other APMCs. The buffer stock has been created in a bid to supply onions to consumers during scarcity and stabilise the prices in domestic market.

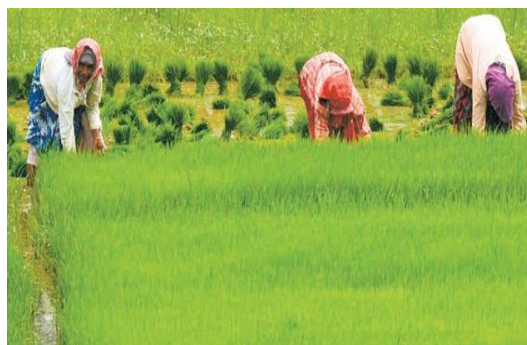
Sources said the Centre has asked the SFAC to supply onions procured under PSF to Delhi.

On Friday, the average wholesale onion prices at Lasalgaon was recorded at Rs 3,150 a quintal. The rates were same on Wednesday. The market was closed due to a holiday on Thursday. The minimum and maximum prices were recorded at Rs 1,500 and Rs 3,446 a quintal, respectively. Around 6,000 quintals of onions have been were auctioned at Lasalgaon on Friday.

An agency report stated that high-quality onion prices have shot up to Rs 50 per kg in the national capital region (NCR) because of limited supplies. However, low-quality onions are still available for Rs 30-40 per kg. Much of the rabi (winter) onion crop is stored to meet the demand in the lean period. But this year, most of the onion kept in storage is of poor quality as the Rabi crop got damaged due to unseasonal rain and hailstorms in early March. The country's onion production is estimated to have declined to 189.23 lakh tonnes in the 2014-15 crop year (July-June), as against 194 lakh tonnes in the previous year, as per government data.

## THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

### **Kharif sowing up 9% as pulses, oilseeds acreage rises**



The sowing of Kharif crops has taken place over 76.43 million hectares (mh), up 8.7 per cent from 70.34 mh recorded during the corresponding period last year. Around 73 per cent of sowing for the season has been completed at the halfway mark.

The latest estimates released by the Agriculture Ministry here on Friday show Kharif acreage having risen 10.2 per cent over the previous week, after recovery of the South-West monsoon over the second half of July. Increased coverage has been registered for pulses, coarse cereals and oilseeds.

### **Rain deficit**

Between June 1 and July 31, India received 429.8 mm of rainfall, around 5 per cent below normal. According to the India Meteorology Department (IMD), there was 16 per cent surplus rainfall through June but a dry spell resulted in 33 per cent deficient rain through the first half of July. “Overall, we estimate 17 per cent deficient rain in July, higher than our forecast of 8 per cent. The El Nino strengthened and there was an unfavourable switch in the Madden-Julian Oscillation,” said DS Pai, Director, Long Range Forecast, IMD.

IMD data showed 22 out of 36 sub-divisions having received normal or excess rainfall till Friday. Regions hardest hit with lower precipitation include parts of the peninsula such as North interior Karnataka, Rayalaseema and Kerala, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Central regions such as Marathwada, Central Maharashtra and Vidharbha.

### **August showers**

Pai said rainfall for August was forecast at 90 per cent of the long period average (LPA). “We expect rain through the first week or 10 days of the month but there is likely to be a dry spell by mid-August,” he added.

IMD’s prediction is in line with private agency Skymet’s forecast, which revised their monsoon forecast to 98 per cent of the LPA from 102 per cent earlier, factoring in a stronger El Nino.

“The major quantum of rainfall in August is likely to be received during the first fortnight. We expect a break between August 15-20, a revival between the August 20 and 24, and another small circulation at the end of the month,” said Jatin Singh, CEO, Skymet.

He said peninsular India continued to be at risk while the Konkan region and Kerala is not likely to see a revival. The Indian Ocean Dipole

(irregular oscillation of sea-surface temperatures) is at present neutral but was “on track” to becoming positive in August, a favourable development for the monsoon.

“Sowing is progressing well, but August will be crucial since 25 per cent of sowing remains and the flowering stage is in mid-August. With good rains so far, there was timely sowing, and the expectation is that there will be good production for the Kharif season. At present, it is going parallel to the 2013-14 season,” said JS Sandhu, Agriculture Commissioner and Deputy Director-General, Crop Science, Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

### **Crop-wise data**

Pulses like arhar (tur), urad and moong, have been sown over 8.24 mh, up nearly 21 per cent over the 6.82 mh covered at the same time last season. Acreage of moong and urad, in particular, has registered increases of 32.2 per cent and 29.5 per cent, respectively.

Acreage of oilseeds such as groundnut, soyabean, sesamum and castor are up 9.5 per cent at 14.9 mh (13.6 mh). Soyabean planting is up 11.17 per cent while that of groundnut is up 10.5 per cent.

Coarse cereals have been sown over larger tracts in central India where rainfall has been lower, and have covered 14.9 mh compared to 12.6 mh at the same time last year. Jowar acreage is higher by 26.12 per cent and bajra by 28.8 per cent.

Rice, the main Kharif foodgrain, has been covered on 22.8 mh – up 6.1 per cent from 21.5 mh earlier. Sugarcane acreage is also up marginally by 2 per cent.

Area under cotton has, however, fallen around 3 per cent to 10.19 mh from 10.5 mh during the corresponding period in 2014-15, while jute and mesta’s acreage stands at 0.78 mh, lower than the 0.81 mh earlier.

### **Beef price shoots up in Kerala as TN cattle arrivals taper off**

Most of the beef stalls remained closed and the price of beef shot up to ₹280-300 a kg across Kerala as a section of the meat industry extended its shutdown in support of the cattle farmers and traders in Tamil Nadu who stopped exporting cattle to Kerala on July 19 to protest against attacks on cattle trucks.

The Kerala State Meat Workers Congress, affiliated to INTUC, had called for a shutdown of all meat shops and slaughter houses on July 29-30. The union had expected that the issue would be sorted out at the talks that would follow the scheduled march on the State Secretariat in Chennai on July 29. KU Kunjumohammed, Ernakulam district secretary of the union, told *BusinessLine* that meat stalls were awaiting the outcome of the deliberations of the Tamil Nadu cattle traders and farmers scheduled to be held at Ottanchathram on August 1. He said more than 60 per cent of the beef stalls in the State were closed.



As cattle arrivals from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka had trickled off following the Tamil Nadu cattle traders' ongoing agitations, meat stalls were facing severe shortage. He said Kerala's demand for meat cattle was largely met by the other southern States as the cattle raised within Kerala could meet only a fraction of the demand.

A fallout of the ban on beef-eating in some States and the Centre's policies that promote cow worship, cattle trucks have been routinely waylaid by right-wing outfits in Tamil Nadu's Coimbatore and Tirupur districts. Kunjumohammed said the attacks on the cattle trucks took place at isolated places. In many cases, the gangs took away the cattle purportedly to be handed over to the 'goshaalas' that have come up recently in Coimbatore. He said the loss of a truckload of cattle would mean a loss of around ₹8 lakh.

### **Monsoon deficit rises as peninsula dips into red**

The overall monsoon deficit at the end of July, the rainiest of the four months, has deteriorated to five per cent for the country as a whole.

The south peninsula slipped deeper into red with a regional deficit of 20 per cent. Central India has a deficit of four per cent and east and north-east India, nine per cent.



North-West returned the lone regional surplus of 11 per cent.



### **Higher July deficit**

July rains have been below normal by 15 per cent in July, says Naveen Mathur, Associate Director, Commodities and Currencies, Angel Broking.

This is only slightly better than the position at the end of last week (a deficiency of 26 per cent) with large tracts of southern peninsula remaining dry.

The India Met Department had projected a deficit of eight per cent for the month. But it has been proved wrong by a wide margin despite the very heavy precipitation in the east and the west of the country. The rainfall trend also goes to put upside down what was forecast in advance by most models in terms of geographical distribution.

### **Belies forecast**

They had projected northwest India as the worst sufferer of what would be a deficient monsoon overall.

India Met Department and a number of global agencies expected the south peninsula to return the best figures among the four regions but have been proved wrong by a long margin as on date.

The big deficit in the South does not bode well for the region since there are indications that the monsoon could go into a lean phase by end of the first week of August.

Projections by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts say that the monsoon would be hijacked by a likely super typhoon brewing in the west Pacific early next week.

### **Cyclone weakens**

Meanwhile, on Friday, erstwhile cyclone 'Komen' that crossed Bangladesh coast the previous night has weakened into depression. But the cyclone remnant will still carry some punch in terms of rain output over east India where it is headed now.

The low-pressure area over north-west India has now crossed the international border and was located over central Pakistan.

This effectively leaves east India – especially West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, east Madhya Pradesh – as the region where the monsoon would be most active during the next few days.

Low arrivals due to monsoon have propped up tea prices at Kochi auctions.

Good Liquoring teas in CTC dust were dearer by ₹3-5 a kg and it appreciated further up to ₹10 and more as the sale progressed. Moreover, active participation of vendors such as AVT, Kerala State Civil Supplies, Tata Global pushed up prices, the auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said.

In sale no 31, the quantity on offer in CTC grades was 9,94,000 kg. Upcountry buyers and Kerala Loose Tea Traders lent fair support.

Arrivals in orthodox grades were also low at 14,500 kg, with primaries remained steady. Others were irregular and lower and witnessed many withdrawals. A small quantity of Orthodox dust sold was absorbed by exporters and upcountry buyers.

In Cochin CTC dust quotation, Good grades quoted ₹90-126, mediums fetched ₹62-90 and plain varieties stood at ₹50-63.

In Orthodox leaf, the quantity on offer was 189,500 kg and the market for Nilgiri Broken was firm to dearer. Whole leaf remained steady and sometimes tended to ease. There was a fair demand from CIS countries and other exporters.

With 75,500 kg on offer in CTC leaf, the select best broken was dearer. All other grades were lower by ₹3-5 and sometimes more.

### **Oilseeds, pulses to be bought directly from farmers to slash imports**



India is to buy oilseeds and pulses directly from farmers for the first time this year, in addition to its existing purchases of wheat and rice, to boost production and close a supply gap that has driven its annual import bill up to \$12 billion.

India is the world's biggest consumer of edible oils and Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to make it self-sufficient in five years. He has identified price support and guaranteed purchases as the best ways to achieve that goal, senior Government sources told Reuters.

He faces a huge challenge: consumption of vegetable oils has trebled over the last 20 years while production has increased by less than a third. As a result, imports have risen twelve times to 14.4 million tonnes.

"In our country we have big shortages of pulses and oilseeds," Modi said in a monthly radio address last Sunday, thanking farmers for growing more of the crops this year. "The poor want pulses, and some oil to cook vegetables."

The state-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) has amassed huge stocks of rice and wheat — often double the level it says is needed to ensure security of supply — by ratcheting up its minimum support prices (MSPs).

Critics say its buying encourages overproduction and the policy has led to disputes in the World Trade Organisation, with some member states accusing India of subsidising grain output and subverting international trade norms.

Output of oilseeds and pulses has, however, lagged demand by some distance, forcing India to turn to Indonesia and Malaysia to buy \$10 billion of oils per year, and to Austria, Canada and Myanmar for \$2 billion of pulses. Edible oil is India's third-biggest import item after crude oil and gold.

"Rice and wheat are two of our success stories, which illustrate that reasonably higher MSPs and a guarantee to buy produce will encourage farmers to raise production," said one of the sources. "That's what we've now decided to do for pulses and oilseeds."

The FCI will start buying in October, the sources said, with bigger purchases in March when farmers start harvesting winter-sown crops.

#### FOLLOWING THE MONEY

India introduced a price support mechanism for wheat in the late 1960s after crops failed. Support for rice soon followed and India has since become the world's top rice exporter and a steady shipper of wheat.

The Government announces MSPs for 25 crops, but its prices for rice and wheat have increased more than for other crops in the past decade. In addition, the FCI only buys rice and wheat.

Mostly marginal and risk-averse Indian farmers — 260 million of them tilling plots smaller than 2 hectares (5 acres) — take their cue from the MSPs.

The pricing policy is seeing a shift now. For the current season, Modi raised rice prices moderately but gave a hefty lift to pulses.

An over-reliance on protein-poor grain and shortages of richer foods such as pulses have been blamed for the deaths of 1.3 million malnourished children a year in India, data from the Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization show.

"Our idea was to first ensure supplies of staples such as rice and wheat because countries like India and China can't afford to import basic foodstuffs," Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan told Reuters.

"The world has surplus pulses and oilseeds for us but the world doesn't have rice and wheat for countries with more than a billion people. Having gained self-sufficiency in rice and wheat, we'll also pay attention to malnutrition."

The country spends \$20 billion a year to supply cheap rice and wheat to the poor, but 15 per cent of its 1.25 billion people still go hungry because up to half the subsidised food gets stolen and is sold on the black market, according to research groups.

There is a risk that thefts will rise if the FCI starts to buy oilseeds and pulses that need to be processed further to be sold, said Tajinder Narang, a farm policy expert.

"I've my doubts about the success of the plan as FCI doesn't have the expertise to handle pulses and oilseeds," Narang said. "And before entering new areas, the Government should first crack down on theft."

## Business Standard

### **Kharif sowing up 9%, enters final phase**



With the southwest monsoon ending the first half of the 2015 season with a deficit of five per cent, kharif sowing entered its final phase with a nine per cent uptick in area compared to the corresponding period last year.

According to the latest data from the department of agriculture, kharif crops have been planted in 76 million hectares till Friday, which is nine



per cent more than the year-ago period. Sowing is complete in 72 per cent of the usual area under kharif crops, which is 105 million hectares.

With the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasting the monsoon intensity to continue over north and central India in the first 10-15 days of August as well, there is a possibility that the sowing of most crops, except paddy, will be over by the end of next month.

Among other crops, pulses have been planted in eight million hectares till Friday, which is more than the seven million sown during the corresponding period last year.

Normally, pulses is sown in 11 million hectares during the kharif season.

Oilseeds have been sown in 15 million hectares till Friday, up from 14 million sown during the corresponding period last year. Rice, the main foodgrain grown during the kharif season, has so far been planted in 23 million hectares, down from 24 million sown during the corresponding period last year. The normal rice area during the kharif season is 39 million hectares.

Last week, the Centre had fixed a target of purchasing 30 million tonnes of rice from farmers in 2015-16 season, which will start in October.

The southwest monsoon was 21 per cent more than normal during the week ended on July 29, its best weekly performance so far in 2015 season due to copious rains in Gujarat and south Rajasthan.

According to IMD, the strong revival in rains not only lowered the overall deficit to five per cent below normal from a high of seven per cent during the start of July, but also narrowed the monthly shortfall.

The rains are expected to be good in the first half of August. Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology in its forecast said rains are expected to be above normal till August 10-15, after which the monsoon might take a break for a few days.

Private weather forecasting agency Skymet in its latest weather update

said the good run of southwest monsoon is likely to continue till the first week of August.

For August, Skymet said rains would be 92 per cent of the 50-year long period average (LPA) and for September, it would be 112 per cent of LPA. These forecasts are with a model error of plus and minus nine per cent. Skymet said in August that rains would take a break between 15 and 20 and revive after that.

Delhi is expected to get good rains around the first week of August, which would give the much-needed respite from the sultry conditions, Skymet said.

For the full-season, though, the private weather agency has lowered its forecast to 98 per cent of the LPA - down from 102 forecast in April in view of the initial lull in rains in early July.

However, despite the strong revival, there have been pockets mostly in Maharashtra, north interior Karnataka, Bihar, and Rayalaseema and Telangana, where the monsoon is still 50 per cent less than normal.

It is in these pockets that the possibility of a drought looms large, unless there is significant revival in August.