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# THE HINDU

## **‘We’re looking forward to a full farm package from Centre’**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is looking forward to a comprehensive package from the Union government to provide succour to farmers in distress and strengthen the hands of both the sugarcane growers and the sugar industry. At the same time, he berated the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party at the Centre as “sectarian”.

He said that it was not possible for any “sectarian” party to think of welfare of all sections of society, but did not elaborate on it further. Yet, without naming any party, he said that there were a few political parties with “secular” tags but they too had joined hands with communal forces. One such party was also in the State but the Congress would never compromise on its commitment to secularism at any point of time, he reassured.

Speaking at a function organised to lay the foundation stone for the construction of the Congress’ building here on Tuesday, he said that the Union government is expected to announce a package to save the sugar industry as problems faced by sugarcane growers was almost common in all sugarcane growing States. He, however, stressed that the Union government enhance import duty on sugar, silk and all agricultural commodities to protect the interests of the domestic agriculture sector.

The prices of sugar had crashed and there was no buyer for exports in the international market. As much as 31 lakh quintals of sugar stock had piled up in the State. Also, if import duty on silk was not increased, it would only pave way for China silk into the country at the expense of domestic silk producers. Though agriculture was a State subject, both the Union and State governments had joint responsibility in addressing the issues involved, he said.

## **Appeal**

The Chief Minister repeatedly appealed to the farmers against committing suicide. “Think of your dependents, including your mother, father, grandparents, brothers, sisters, wife and children, once and you will never think of ending your life; face the problems with courage as suicide can never be a solution to any crisis in life,” he said.

Nearly three lakh farmers have committed suicide in India, he rued.

### 3-day flower show in Kolar

The district administration, zilla panchayat and Horticulture Department are jointly organising a three-day long flower and vegetable show as part of the Independence Day celebrations.

The show will be held at the District Horticulture Nursery from August 15 to 17, Deputy Commissioner K.V. Thrilokchandra announced on Tuesday. Health and District in-charge Minister U.T. Khader will inaugurate the show. A sculpture of Kolamma Devi in sand and a floral replication of the Antharagange temple will be the special attractions of the show this year.

### Towards toxic-free food culture



Terrace gardens bring multiple benefits to residents with roof gardens using kitchen waste, garbage reaching compost yards will reduce

**GREEN AND HEALTHY**

- ➔ Terrace garden keeps rooms cool
- ➔ Easy, low-cost option to cultivate toxic-free produce
- ➔ Kitchen waste can be used as manure
- ➔ It will attract birds; keep children engaged

ake the best use of open spaces, especially terraces, the government seems to be telling residents. Following an encouraging response to the terrace garden and herbal farm on the terrace of a local body office in the suburbs, the Directorate

of Town Panchayats has now stepped up its efforts to encourage kitchen and terrace gardens.

The Chitlapakkam town panchayat, near Tambaram, has followed the Perungalathur model in creating a model roof garden using waste materials, nourished with organic manure generated from its solid waste management plant. “Most houses do not have a space to grow a garden and so we can make use of the available space as a way to ensure greenery,” says J. Shyamsundar of Institute of Social Education, a non-governmental organisation.

He suggests that compost can be prepared from kitchen waste. “Food that we consume every day has high toxic content while vegetables grown in our own garden is chemical-free,” he says. Joint director of town panchayats (schemes) Malaiaman Thirumudikari, who inaugurated the roof garden, says these programmes are part of a long-term process in ensuring green spaces in urban areas.

“Many local bodies struggle to find space to segregate and dispose of waste, and these methods could come in handy. When more people create roof gardens using kitchen waste, garbage reaching the compost yards will reduce,” he says.

M. Manimegalai JD, (administration), said 77 town panchayats in Tamil Nadu were provided with compost-processing sheds. In 2015-16, another 214 town panchayats will see improvements in infrastructure and proposals are being prepared to carry out improvement work in the remaining town panchayats. Town panchayat president R. Mohan was present at the launch of the roof garden.

*with roof gardens using kitchen waste, garbage reaching compost yards will reduce*

### **‘Government plans to generate 20,000 mw solar power’**

*Roof top solar panels to be encouraged on the lines of Germany*



M. Manickam, Chairman of Dr.Mahalingam College of Engineering and Technology, Pollachi, speaks at the inauguration of the international conference on 'Renewable Energy and Sustainable Development' held on the premises of the college on Tuesday.

The Union Government has drawn up plans to facilitate the setting up of 26 solar power plants at 26 locations in the country and increase the installed power generation capacity by 20,000 mw, said Tarun Kapoor, Joint Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy Resources, at the international conference on 'Renewable Energy and Sustainable Environment' held at the Dr. Mahalingam College of Engineering and Technology in Pollachi on Tuesday.

A release from the college quoting him said that the move would make India a leading country in solar energy production. The Government was drawing up plans to set up solar energy plants atop buildings and on vacant lands, taking a cue from Germany.

In Tamil Nadu, there would be a move to install a 600 mw solar power plant, the release said.

The College had organised the conference in collaboration with the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, IEEE and the Cape Breton University, Canada.

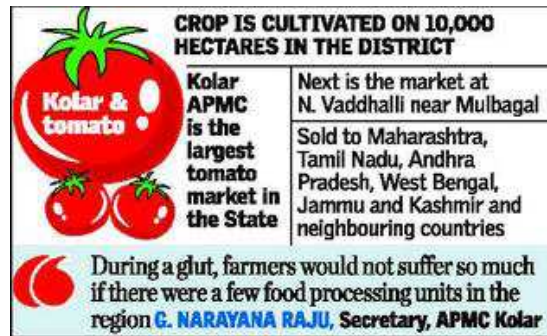
The objective was to provide a platform for scientists and engineers from industries, non-government organisations and education institutions from around the world to exchange ideas on the topic.

The organisers had received 200 papers and chose 90 of those based on peer reviews. The release added that M. Manickam, Chairman of the College, C. Ramasamy, Secretary of NIA institutions, Ibrahim Alladin, International Advisor to the College, and others spoke at the inauguration. *The Hindu* is the media partner for the conference.

## **No cheer for tomato farmers**

*Price crashes in Kolar; cultivators facing huge loss*

Tomato cultivators of Kolar are back in a familiar situation as a steep fall in prices is forcing some to abandon the harvest. In the APMC market on Monday, a kilo of tomato was going for as low as Rs. 2 as against around Rs. 10 a week ago. The best quality of tomato is fetching a farmer a mere Rs. 8 a kilo.



With market prices far less than the cost of production, farmers have either stopped harvesting or dumping their crop on the roadside. Tomato farmers from Kolar often find themselves in this situation during a glut. “Large scale cultivation in various parts of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh has resulted in a drop in demand for our produce leading to a crash in the price,” APMC secretary G. Narayana Raju told *The Hindu* on Monday. “Traders have almost stopped coming to the Kolar market as the vegetable is available in other nearby States.” A weak monsoon is one of the reasons for farmers in other States turning to tomato since the crop can be grown in low rainfall conditions, he added.

The fall in prices has pushed the farmers to the brink. “We are not able to recover the production cost,” said N.N. Sriram, a cultivator from Nukkanahalli in Kolar district.

### **Delta farmers pray to Cauvery at Mayanur**

Members of the Cauvery Delta Farmers’ Welfare Association welcomed and thanked the Cauvery offering flowers at the new barrage across the river at Mayanur in Karur district on Tuesday.

Association working president Mahadanapuram V. Rajaram, secretary Gandhipithan, vice-president S.A. Sukumar, and executive committee members offered flowers to the Cauvery at the barrage and prayed for copious rains for kuruvai and samba crops.

Mr. Rajaram said the barrage had helped recharge the groundwater on both the south bank and north bank of the river benefiting thousands of acres in Karur and Tiruchi districts where both food and cash crops were being raised.

The association urged Chief Minister Jayalalithaa to impress on Prime Minister Narendra Modi to counsel Karnataka to release the sanctioned quantum of water for the next few months besides setting up the Cauvery Management Board for proper sharing of available water among the riparian States.



The association planned to launch a signature campaign in the State to highlight the plight of the delta farmers with the Centre and get the board constituted at the earliest, according to Mr. Rajaram.

Incidentally, the water realisation at Mayanur Barrage was around 12,000 cusecs by Tuesday evening with the hiked discharge from Mettur Dam having arrived late on Monday night.

### **Sales plummet in vegetable markets**

*Though prices have come down it has little impact on customers*



Dull business: Vendors say compared to last week, prices have come down by at least Rs. 10 in Vellore.

Rates of many vegetables have dwindled but markets in Vellore are facing a dull season with poor consumer patronage. Traders say that the prices have slowly declined in the last two weeks.

When compared to last week, the prices of some vegetables have come down by at least Rs. 10, said A. Balu, president of Vellore Town Nethaji Market Kaikari Vyabarigal Sangam,.

But the drop in rates has had little impact as inflow of customers has been low, he said. "Business is very dull. Sales have been slowly dwindling for the last two weeks. We are seeing that the purchasing power of people has also come down. There are no occasions too," he said.

Nevertheless, regular supply of vegetables has led to dip in rates. The cost of tomatoes has dropped from Rs. 20 to Rs. 10 this week. "In fact, 'avarakkai' was priced at Rs. 40 last week but now, it is sold at Rs. 15 per kg. This is because the supply is fresh from V. Kota. Overall, supply of vegetables is good now, though it is much less than last year," Mr. Balu added.

Onions are priced at Rs. 25 to Rs. 45 depending on the quality and size, while potatoes cost Rs. 15 per kilo. Small onions cost Rs. 40 to Rs. 45 and cabbage is Rs. 15. The local variety of brinjal (thorny) costs Rs. 30, while the regular ones are priced at Rs. 15.

He said cauliflower and peas were scarce as it was not the season for both. Drumstick costs Rs. 15, while carrot is Rs. 35 (Ooty variety) and Rs. 25 to Rs. 30 (local) and lady's finger is Rs. 15 to Rs. 20. The prices of other vegetables are : radish – Rs. 12 to Rs. 15, snake gourd – Rs. 15, bitter gourd – Rs. 20, beetroot – Rs. 20, green chillies – Rs. 25 to Rs. 30, ginger – Rs. 30 to Rs. 40 for new ginger and Rs. 60 for old and a bunch of coriander leaves cost Rs. 10 to Rs. 20.

### **‘Agri zone’ proposed to protect lakes**

In the wake of the earlier “regional park” regulations failing to protect water bodies, the Hubballi Dharwad Urban Development Authority (HDUDA) has now proposed to identify “agri zones” around lakes to protect them in the revised Comprehensive Development Plan.

HDUDA Commissioner Shivanand Kapashi told presspersons here on Tuesday that although “regional park” regulations were in place to prevent development of residential or commercial spaces around Unkal Lake, court orders and government orders had sometimes stopped the development authority from taking action. “But, if we declare the available space around the lakes or any other water body as ‘agri zone’, it will be possible to prevent any sort of development activities there,” he said.

The five-year limit for the “regional park” regulations often results in development activities invariably taking place after the time limit, he said and added that identification of “agri zones” would be helpful in preserving lakes and also their catchment area.

### **Satish Ninasam to help farmers**

Actor Satish Ninasam of ‘Lucia’ fame has decided to help the families of farmers who committed suicide in Mandya district.

The actor, who is also from Mandya district, told presspersons here on Tuesday that he has planned to give away 10 per cent of the profit generated from his upcoming film ‘Rocket’ to the kin of those who ended their lives owing to crop loss and indebtedness.

Mr. Satish said that he would produce a film by name 'Baarukolu' to highlight the importance/plight of farmers shortly.

### **Focus on green technology to process garbage**

*Udupi CMC plans to set up a vermicompost plant and a biomethanation plant*

The Udupi City Municipal Council (CMC) is giving importance to green technology to process the garbage produced in the city.

The CMC is planning to have a vermicompost plant and a biomethanation plant to process biodegradable or green waste. The vermicompost plant will be able to process three tonnes daily.

The city generates about 60 tonnes of garbage per day, which is now being processed at the Solid Waste Management Plant on 22 acres of land in Alevoor village near here.

The vermicompost plant will come up in a portion of land at the Alevoor Solid Waste Management Plant.

B.S. Raghavendra, CMC Environment Engineer, said that the vermicompost plant will have two sheds, each having about 20 pits. Three tonnes of biodegradable waste would be put in one pit daily. The biodegradable waste would require 40 days to 60 days to get processed.

The processed waste would then be removed from each pit after 40-60 days. This vermicompost generated would be used for gardening in the parks of the city.

The vermicompost plant is estimated to cost Rs. 25 lakh and is expected to come up in a couple of months. It would require six workers to look after the plant. "We are thinking of training our civic workers to take care of the plant," Mr. Raghavendra said.

Nearly 1.5 tonne green waste is generated from the vegetable and fruit markets daily and the CMC plans to use this for the vermicompost plant.

### **Biomethanation**

The biomethanation plant will come up in five cents of land at Beedinagudde here at an estimated cost of Rs. 34 lakh. It will process two tonnes of biodegradable garbage daily. Here, the garbage would first be converted into slurry. This slurry would then be fed into the digester of the plant.



The waste would decompose in two days and start giving out methane. This methane would be passed into a generator, which will produce 10 kW of power per day. A power line will be drawn from this generator and the power generated would be used to light 40-60 street lamps, helping the CMC to save on its electricity bills.

The construction of the biomethanation plant will take about six months and its commissioning will take another two months.

Now, there is no segregation of waste at source in the city.

“If segregation of waste is done at source, we will have about 24 tonnes of biodegradable waste daily,” Mr. Raghavendra said.

### *Udupi CMC plans to set up vermicompost plant and biomethanation plant*

#### **KVK launches programme on coconut**

Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Kochi has joined hands with National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning, regional centre, Bengaluru; Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kasaragod and Indian Institute of Spices Research, Kozhikode, for a farmer-participatory research-cum-demonstration project on coconut at Mookkannur, Angalamy.

The project, funded by Kerala State Planning Board, is aimed at increasing coconut productivity in Kerala.

A press release from KVK said that coconut production in Tamil Nadu was 16,000 per hectare and in Karnataka it was 10,000 nuts.

But in Kerala productivity was 8,000 tonnes.

The major culprit in this is the poor soil condition in the State.

#### **New frog species identified in Ghats**



The new species of frog 'Fejervarya gomantaki'.

A team of zoologists, including those from the Kozhikode Regional Centre of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), has identified a new species of frog in the Western Ghat region of Belgaum and Goa.

The new species has been named 'Fejervarya gomantaki,' indicating its connection to Goa. They are usually found in low lying water-logged areas of Goa and adjoining hill ranges of Belgaum, said B.H. Chennakeshavamurthy of ZSI Kozhikode centre and one of the team members.

According to the team members, the lowland areas of Western Ghats in Goa and in the hilly regions of Belgaum, it is quite common to hear the chorus call from mud pools, paddy fields, and local water bodies in the monsoon during late evening.

Many of these were terrestrial frogs sitting next to water bodies making calls to attract females for mating, they said. These frogs belong to the genus Fejervarya of the family Dicroglossidae and are commonly known as either 'cricket frogs' or 'Fejervaryan frogs.'

They range in size from small (19 mm) to large (56 mm) and are distributed throughout Asia. "Most Fejervaryan frogs are morphologically very similar and difficult to identify on the basis of external characters alone, creating taxonomic uncertainty in terms of names, identification and systematics," said Mr. Chennakeshavamurthy. The identification process, including through genetic sequencing, was completed in a year and the discovery was an encouraging biological indicator to the health of the region's ecosystem, he said.

The team was led by K.P. Dinesh, S.P. Vijayakumar, Varun Torsekar, and Kartik Shanker of the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. Nirmal Kulkarni of Mhadei Research Centre, Goa, is the other member of the team.

The scientists have used a combination of morphology, geographic distribution range, and molecular methods to describe the new species. The finding has been published in the recent edition of the international taxonomic journal Zootaxa.

### **Seminar on coconut today**

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in association with the Indian Institute of Spices Research, Kozhikode, and the ICAR-Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Peruvannamuzhi, will conduct an agricultural seminar on coconut,

“Enhancing the economic viability of coconut-based land-use systems for Kerala” at Naduvannur in the district on Wednesday.

Jameela Kanathil, president, Kozhikode district panchayat, would inaugurate the programme. Eminent scientists from ICAR-IISR, Kozhikode, ICAR, Kasaragod, and ICAR, Bengaluru would attend the programme, said a release here.

A large number of farmers and other stakeholders from different parts of the State were expected to attend the programme.

### **Jackfruit processing centre at KVK**

Kerala’s own jackfruit is beneficial to our health and it’s high time we included this in our diet, said Agriculture Minister, K.P. Mohanan.

The Minister was inaugurating the jackfruit processing unit and incubation centre at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra at Thelliyoor near Tiruvalla on Monday.

He said the scope for value addition was immense and Kerala should tap the market potential of the fruit in India and abroad.

Delivering the keynote address, Shree Padre, editor of the Kannada agricultural magazine, *Adike Patrika*, said Kerala was blessed with a natural wealth of jackfruit trees.

### **Technology products**

Chairman of the Plantation Corporation Kerala Limited, Varghese George, released the technology products under the brand names, Eudora12 and Pollux7, developed by the KVK from jackfruit on the occasion.

Issac Mar Philexinos Episcopa, chairman of Christian Agency for Rural Development, presided over the function.

Raju Abraham, MLA; C.P. Robert, KVK programme co-ordinator; Saji Chacko, District Panchayat member; P.V. Balachandran of Kerala Agricultural University, and C.V. Sairam, scientist attached to Bharatiya Agriculture Research Council, also spoke.

### **Financial assistance**

The Rs 52.5 lakh centre has been set up with financial assistance from the State Agriculture Department.

The processing centre has got facility for grading of jackfruit, categorisation, processing, preparation of various value-added products, drying yard, waste treatment mechanism, exhibition of various products, etc, the Minister said.

## **Sale of vegetables**

### *Hortcorp, VFPCCK to open 600 special outlets*

The government has initiated measures to step up the procurement of vegetables from domestic farmers to match the hike in demand during the Onam festival season.

Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan told mediapersons here on Tuesday that 76 per cent of the demand for vegetables in Kerala was currently met by farmers in the State. “The domestic procurement for the festival season is expected to go up by four to five per cent this year.”

Trashing reports about the failure of the government’s procurement machinery, he said steps had been taken to procure the entire yield from Kanthallur and Vattavada, the two major vegetable production hubs in Kerala. The government, he said, had succeeded in thwarting middlemen.

As many as 600 fruit and vegetable outlets would be opened by the Kerala State Horticultural Products Development Corporation (Hortcorp) and Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Keralam (VFPCCK) across the State during the festival season.

### *18.7 lakh farmers to benefit*

As many as 18.77 lakh registered farmers in Kerala will soon be issued agri cards, enabling easier access to agricultural credit, technical support, and financial assistance under welfare and crop insurance schemes. Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan told mediapersons here on Tuesday said agri cards would be issued by the Kerala Gramin Bank to all members of the farmers’ database. Moves were on to facilitate direct transfer of subsidies under various agricultural schemes to the bank accounts of farmers under the e-payment system.

The distribution of cards would be inaugurated at the State farm day celebrations to be held at the police ground, Kannur, from August 16. Union Minister of State for Agriculture Sanjeev Kumar Bilya is scheduled to inaugurate the 11-day event, including a South Indian Agrifest. The highlights of the celebrations include seminars, cultural events, sports competitions, and a farm exhibition.

## **Food processing units in Tiruvuru, Mylavaram soon**

Tiruvuru and Mylavaram Assembly segments in the Krishna district will soon witness a flurry of activity with investors coming forward to set up food processing units in this stretch. Efforts are also on to encourage bamboo investors to set up their units here.

As part of a joint venture between a US-based company and a reputed local firm, a mango pulp processing unit is coming up in an area of 10 acres near Gollamandala village, which was adopted by Vijayawada MP Kesineni Nani.

The Rs. 20-crore unit is expected to provide employment to 400 local people. The authorities are said to be talking to a few other food processing companies to set up units in these Assembly segments which are known to grow abundant stocks of mangoes exported to countries like Dubai, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Sources said the units would be equipped with new technology which has vast market potential in US and European countries. The proposed unit at Gollamandala may start functioning in six months.

Officials in the district feel that processed food sector is poised for growth, mainly through exports. If current infrastructure-related problems are minimised and product and packaging quality are significantly improved, Krishna district can become a potential exporter of processed food, they feel.

Meanwhile, to encourage farmers to take to bamboo cultivation, the authorities recently sent 100-odd farmers from Vijayawada Parliamentary constituency to Karnataka and Maharashtra to study the cultivation patterns.

### **Bamboo cultivation**

Vijayawada will soon host a bamboo manufacturing investors' meeting, a platform to attract international firms like IKEA, a multinational group of companies that designs and sells ready-to-assemble furniture, appliances, small motor vehicles and home accessories. The event will be jointly organised by Tata Trust, National Bamboo Council and the Forest Department.

The meet aims to bring together all stakeholders, identify potential investors specific to the bamboo sector and identify specific projects and areas where investors have a scope of investment. It would also serve as a platform to chalk out action plan for area extension under bamboo cultivation, skill upgradation of traditional bamboo artisans and setting up of bamboo-based industries.



*As part of a joint venture between a US-based company and a reputed local firm, a mango pulp processing unit is coming up near Gollamandala*

### **New software for farmers on trial**

A senior technocrat and software engineer have come up with unique software that aims at supporting online agriculture extension services in the State.

Named as Bharat Leaf application software, it facilitates bringing together the farmers and government agencies engaged in promotion of agriculture and allied fields. Speaking to *The Hindu*, one of the pioneers K Narender, a senior technocrat said that the software supports sending messages in local language with audio or photo or even video attachment.

It works with smart phone, tablet, personal computer, laptop having 2G and 3G internet connectivity.

### **Unique features**

Explaining the unique features of the software, he said the Web-based Kisan Call Centre handles farmers queries and sends replies. It has messaging service functionality which helps farmer-related departments to send messages to farmers and monitoring government schemes up to mandal-level and monitoring university extension services.

The software was demonstrated for the benefit of the senior officers of the Telangana State government who have agreed to adopt it on an experimental basis.

Mr Narender said the government had issued orders to departments to provide them with data to feed into the software. Senior agricultural scientist R Uma Reddy who was associated with the software development said the usage of smart phones increased in rural areas and many farmers were familiar with the technology. “

## Students market Devgad Alphonso mangoes online, win global contest



Saumil Tripathi, Shreeyash Dharmadhikari, Prof. Sawant, Agastya Sanjai, Jelam Bhatt and Jainam Talsani of NMIMS University's Mukesh Patel School of Technology, Management and Engineering

Devgad Alphonso mangoes travelled to Delhi, Chennai and even Rajkot, Indore and Coimbatore this year, courtesy a marketing campaign designed by five students from Mumbai.

The campaign, declared by Google as the best entry in its global online marketing challenge, helped boost sales of the mangoes. The students, who came out on top among 1,700 teams, are now looking forward to their prize, a seven-day all-expense paid trip to the search engine's US office, besides computing goodies.

Saumil Tripathi, Shreeyash Dharmadhikari, Jainam Talsania, Jelam Bhatt and Agastya Sanjai are in the second of a five-year course at Mukesh Patel School of Technology, Management and Engineering (Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies University) and were mentored by their teacher, Shilpa Sawant. The group triumphed over 10,000 students from nearly 50 countries.

As part of the challenge, Google provides the teams advertising credits which they had to use to design online marketing campaigns for any brand, company or non-profit organization. The group toiled on the 19-day campaign for more than three months, applying strategies like focusing on the "most searched words online". It helped boost the sales of the Devgad Alphonso mango to nearly 4,200 dozen in April, up almost 15%, compared to last year. In terms of revenue, the mango-growers' cooperative in Devgad, Sindhudurg district,

earned almost Rs 42 lakh in a month, registering a 25% boost over the same period in 2014.

The students chose the Devgad Taluka Mango Growers Society Ltd, a cooperative society of 700 farmers for their campaign, as they wanted to market a seasonal product. Sanjai, the team's coder and detailer, said, "We realized that farmers can benefit hugely from e-commerce and we chose devgadmango.com, an early adopter among farmers to choose e-commerce."

Bhatt, who handled the content, said, "The advertisements had to be relevant and had to reach the right audience to increase traffic on the product's website. Based on 1,055 keyword searches, we made 101 ads for the product. We also worked on the user interface of the cooperative's website to convert site visits into sales. We learnt special tools for the competition, while juggling it with regular classes."

Tripathi, who led the group, said, "We are excited being the global winners in our first attempt. We came to know about online marketing in our classes and wanted to test ourselves on making the best use of the tool. We are confident of doing online marketing for any business," he said.

The learning from this campaign can set an example for online marketing of agriculture produce, said Omkar Sapre, the founder of devgadmango.com, who mentored the team on the brand aspects.

### **The achievements**

Nine times return on the amount spent (\$250)

Twenty-five times jump in the number of visits to the website

Orders placed by customers in over 20 new cities outside Maharashtra

### **The online ad campaign included**

- \* Display ads
- \* Product listing ads
- \* Video ads
- \* Infographics
- \* Social media tools

## **'Our produce at farm gates is free from pesticide residue'**

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University vice-chancellor Dr K Ramasamy, who is also a member of the Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission, does not mince words. Considered a doyen in biosciences and agriculture policies, Ramasamy is set to retire in a few days after a 35-year stint in the university in various capacities. TOI reporter Pratiksha Ramkumar catches up with him:

**Recently, vegetables and fruits from Tamil Nadu were under the scanner by Kerala government for high pesticide levels. How safe are our vegetables?**

Our vegetables and fruits at the farm gates are safe for multiple reasons. First, majority of pesticides are not residual in nature and so don't remain for more than 15 days. Second, farmers spray pesticides only during the flowering stage. Third, majority of farmers consume their produce, so they are unlikely to poison themselves. Sometimes our vegetables are found with chemicals. Such produce could be coming from the warehouse of traders. They lace the produce with chemicals to preserve it till it gets sold

**Most farmers say that pesticides and levels of usage prescribed by agricultural experts are not effective. Why does this happen?**

Farmers want immediate solutions, the way many of us take antibiotics for instant relief. They sometimes spray pesticides or insecticides above prescribed levels. Many fertilizer and pesticide retailers prescribe higher levels and combinations of pesticides. We are fighting this situation, by placing well-qualified agriculture under-grads to manage pesticide shops.

**How far has TNAU come in developing truly pest resistant varieties of crops and how effective have they been?**

We have developed 100% pest resistant varieties of rice, millet and pulses. The pest resistant varieties are successful only when one crop is cultivated across a vast area. For example, a pest resistant rice variety is resistant only to pests that commonly attack rice. If rice is cultivated close to sugarcane or vegetable farms, pests from those farms may easily attack the rice crop.

**TNAU has a central government funded pesticide residue checking laboratory. Has it helped in bringing down pesticide residue levels in food?**

We test at least 29 samples a week and a maximum of 700 samples a month. The number of samples tested has gone up multi-fold after the pesticide residue controversy. These laboratories are vital in identifying pesticides that needs to be banned.

**What has TNAU's department of sustainable and organic agriculture done to promote organic farming?**

The key project to demonstrate benefits of organic farming to state farmers has been undertaken. We have consolidated literature on earliest forms of chemical - free farming. TNAU is helping revive traditional systems of cultivating crops like mangoes in Theni, Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri.

**Does the state government do enough to encourage organic farming like neighboring Kerala does?**

Tamil Nadu government is shouldering TNAU on the project to promote organic farming. The government is also working on formulating an organic farming policy that will offer subsidies for organic manure and pesticides.

**How has the government's funding for research been?**

Government funds are adequate only for our salaries. So we tap other sources like private institutions to fund our research. Invariably, private institutions sponsor research that benefits only them. We are trying to change this situation.

**Do you see scope for agricultural growth in the future?**

Definitely. We get students with cut-offs as high as 198 out of 200. People have started realizing the need for agriculture to achieve food security. Agriculture also has great export potential, given the products are standardized. We can export 30% to 40% of our agriculture and horticulture products to the Middle-East and south-east Asian countries which are largely becoming landlocked.



### **So what are your plans after retirement?**

I would pursue research of microbes which can be used to create new varieties of antibiotics.

### **State forest dept set to shift Bheem to Mysore to undergo more training**

The state forest department is likely to shift Bheem the elephant to Mysore on Tuesday for further training. Three elephants were captured near Mangaon village in Sindhudurg tehsil in February this year. The other two had died during training sessions.

MK Rao, chief conservator of forest, territorial, Kolhapur circle said, "The domestication process was halted when we lost the second elephant a month ago. Elephant being a social animal, it becomes difficult for us to train him alone."

A team of forest officials from Karnataka has arrived in Sindhudurg on Monday. The officials will make their first attempt on Tuesday morning to put the 40-year-old Bheem on a truck. If the elephant climbs on the vehicle, it will be immediately taken on the over 900km journey.

One of the three elephants died soon after capture. Another one, named Samarth, had received some injuries and succumbed to it in July.

The elephants were kept inside the kraal during their training. Samarth had received injuries as he was standing inside the kraal most of the time. Being an active animal it was difficult for Samarth to be in restricted area. The officials even brought a domesticated elephant, Laxmi, from Akot in Melghat for the training purpose. But Samarth could not sustain for a long time and died last month.

Rao said, "As we realized that the elephant should be shifted immediately to Mysore, I took up the matter with the both the governments and initiated the procedure."

Bheem is expected to stay in Mysore for eight months. The Maharashtra government will pay Rs 60,000 per month for its expenditure and medication.

The government has already deposited Rs 1.5 lakh with the Karnataka forest officials as advance, Rao said. His office was spending Rs 2,000 daily for Bheem's fodder only. The other expenses were also high and result was comparatively moderate, he added.

Maharashtra is not a habitat of elephants, but with growing incidents of elephants straying into state forests, and agricultural land, Rao had built a kraal at Mangaon to domesticate the animal.

The state government had invited a 25-member team from the Karnataka forest department for domestication and training purpose. But after the death of Samarth, officials decided to shift Bheem to Karnataka as it cannot be trained alone, Rao said.

## THE HINDU BusinessLine

### **Mixed opinion on timely start of cane crushing operations**

Banks' willingness to lend, pricing issue in Maharashtra seen hampering operations



With the price gap between sugarcane and domestic sugar at a 30-year high, there appears to be a mixed opinion within the domestic sugar industry as to whether mills will begin crushing on time for the 2015-16 season (October-September).

### **Mounting arrears**

As of mid-July, mills owed dues worth Rs. 14,700 crore to cane farmers across key-producing States such as Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Private mills in UP owed almost half the amount with arrears of Rs. 7,200 crore.

The industry is facing a liquidity crunch due to surplus production which has depressed domestic prices.

“It’s difficult to answer at this point and will depend on whether banks provide loans for working capital requirements or not. Mills will be challenged to start on time. For instance, in Maharashtra and north Karnataka, where mills pay an advance for harvesting and transport charges, they are not being able to service these payments,” said Abinash Verma, Director-General, Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA).

He added that maintenance operations were ongoing across mills in UP but budgets would likely be scaled back.

### **Production costs**

According to an independent study by McKinsey released here on Tuesday, the gap between the procurement price of sugarcane – the Centre’s Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of Rs. 220/quintal – and realisation of Rs. 28/kg on average for the 2014-15 season is the highest in 30 years.

Ex-mill prices had slipped to below Rs. 20/kg in Maharashtra before firming over the last few days while in UP it ranged between Rs. 22 and Rs. 22.50/kg. The respective costs of production in the two States are Rs.29-29.50/kg and Rs. 31/kg.

“We are awaiting clarity on the pricing issue in Maharashtra since farmers are the most important part of the supply chain and are owed Rs. 2,800 crore at present. It sends the wrong signal if there’s no clarity,” said Rohit Pawar, CEO, Baramati Agro.

While there have been positive signs emerging from the Centre, Pawar hoped that concrete steps will be taken ahead of the crushing season that begins by October 15 in the State or latest by Diwali (November 11 this year).

“We don’t want a situation to arise where crushing is delayed as it was in parts of Karnataka last year,” he added.

Gaurav Goel, Managing Director, Dhampur Sugar Mills, was optimistic about crushing beginning on time in UP since both the State and Centre had been sensitised about the problems crippling the beleaguered industry.

“I think crushing will begin on time since the issue of pricing should be sorted out earlier. The crop is good due to the plentiful rain in western UP and both Governments are now aware of the problems. A delay would not help either

farmers or mills,” he said. Sugar output touched 28.3 million tonnes (mt) in 2014-15 and mills are likely to produce 28 mt in the upcoming year with consumption pegged at 25.2 mt.

### **Supply-demand mismatch**

The McKinsey report highlighted this supply-demand imbalance and suggested that excess stock of around 5 mt could be cleared through exports over a two-year period or via a government agency mopping up 2.5 mt of the surplus which can be exported over three years with an obligation to cover exporters' losses.

It also suggested the setting up of a price stabilisation fund while advocating the maximisation of revenue from by-products like ethanol by reducing restrictions or increasing blending norms.

### **Export enquiries lift cardamom**

Cardamom prices inched up last week on good buying support from both exporters and upcountry dealers at auctions held in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

At the same time, arrivals continued to show a substantial increase as the harvesting is on full swing. Last week arrivals rose to 651 tonnes from 594 tonnes.

Export buying is estimated at over 100 tonnes, he said. The individual auction average last week was vacillating between Rs. 600 and Rs. 650 a kg. Total arrivals during the season up to August 8 stood at 24,046 tonnes against 22,243 tonnes during the same period last year.

The sales were at 23,415 tonnes and 21,493 tonnes respectively. The auction average as on August 8 was at around Rs. 630 ( Rs. 780) a kg.

Prices of graded varieties ( Rs. /kg): 8mm bold good colour 880-950; 7-8 mm 730-750; 6-7 mm 610-630; below 6 mm: 580-600. Good bulk was being traded at Rs. 650-700 a kg.

### **23% tea unsold at Coonoor sale**

Nearly 23 per cent teas, worth Rs. 2.88 crore, of the 17.61 lakh kg on offer at Sale No: 32 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions remained unsold.

The Pekoe Dust grade of Homedale Estate, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the Dust tea auction and CTC market when Jay Kay Enterprises bought it for Rs. 203 a kg.

Darmona Estate's Super Fine Dust came next at Rs. 190. Homedale Estate topped CTC Leaf tea auction when its Broken Pekoe tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, fetched Rs. 185.

In all, 37 marks got Rs. 125 and more.

Among orthodox teas from corporate sector, Kodanad topped at Rs. 256 a kg. Kairbetta got Rs. 235 a kg, Chamraj Rs. 223 and Havukal Rs. 221.

In all, 45 marks got Rs. 125 and more.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 40-43 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 100-124 for brighter liquoring sorts.

They ranged Rs. 40-50 for plain dusts and Rs. 110-175 for brighter liquoring dusts.

There was some purchase for Pakistan for Rs. 73-110 a kg.

### **Organised milk sector to comply with FSSAI norms**

Key milk co-operatives, unions, producer companies and National Dairy Development Board on Tuesday met with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)'s new chief Ashish Bahuguna to chart out future course of action for enhancing safety, milk and milk products quality, as well as strengthening consumer confidence in co-operative products.

#### **Safe liquid milk**

T Nanda Kumar, Chairman, NDDB, said, "The co-operative milk federations and unions have reiterated their commitment to provide safe and good quality milk. Also all co-operatives have agreed to further strengthen sampling and testing systems to ensure milk sold in the market conforms to FSSAI standards."

He said that the cooperative sector is the single largest producer of safe liquid milk in the organised sector, and is already complying with food safety standards.



He said additional investments have been committed to improve the cold chain as well strengthen testing laboratories. RS Sodhi, MD at Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (Amul), added, “We are now making efforts that testing is done up to the lowest level. We are ensuring that testing mechanism at the village co-operative society level is further strengthened by putting electronic machines to check for adulterants. Efforts have already been made to establish cold chain at the village levels itself so that milk is chilled within a reasonable time after milking at the village level.”

At the same time, milk co-operative industry also raised concerns with FSSAI regarding instances where samples of raw or unprocessed milk were taken and were declared as property of the brand and the results were publicised. The federations have urged the food safety regulator that the sampling and testing methods should prescribe that the samples taken by local authorities are shared with the processor and opportunity be given to them for getting it retested in an accredited lab.

### **Testing, sampling**

S Nagarajan, MD at Mother Dairy added, “We will need to partner with the food safety authorities to ensure testing and sampling and reporting processes are further streamlined. There are issues around testing and sampling processes... that is an area, where we need to work to improve and ensure that testing mechanisms are all the same .We do recognise that when you test in different labs there can be different test results...the process can get cumbersome.”

### **Rains over East as ‘low’ pops up in Bay**

As predicted, a low-pressure area has formed in the Bay of Bengal off the Andhra Pradesh-Odisha coasts on Tuesday whose behaviour and lateral movement will be closely watched.

India Met Department expects the system to cross the Andhra Pradesh coast and in fact drive up the monsoon flows for a couple of days (Thursday and Friday).

### **Rains spread**

It would travel north and may weaken over east Madhya Pradesh and southern parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and dissipate over region by the weekend.

The monsoon has been active over Telangana, coastal Karnataka and Kerala during the 24 hours ending on Tuesday morning, a Met Department update said.

South-easterly monsoon winds generated by the 'low' from the Bay of Bengal are fanning into north and northwest India where a western disturbance is checking in from across the border.

Already, the interaction between opposing wind regimes is producing heavy rain over central India, north-west India and east India.

### **Overall deficit**

This will continue in varying intensities over north, north-west and east India until the weekend, according to the US Climate Prediction Centre.

What this means is that large parts of peninsula, which is reeling under a deficit of 21 per cent as of Tuesday, will be bereft of any significant rain although isolated showers are forecast for some.

The overnight rain over Telangana, Kerala and coastal Karnataka has prevented the deficit for the country as a whole from deteriorating from the nine per cent of the previous day.

In fact, the peninsula managed to cut its shortfall by one percentage point to 21 per cent. The deficit in central India is at nine per cent and in east and northeast India, 11 per cent.

### **How natural gas inventories impact prices**

Big stocks, weather conditions in the US likely to exert pressure on prices  
Natural gas accounts for almost a quarter of US energy consumption and is one of the most volatile commodities listed on exchanges. As the volatility comes with big rewards, it is one of the favourites among traders, investors and speculators.

While natural gas trades at different prices all over the US (and the world), speculative trading is concentrated around the Nymex delivery point, Henry Hub. Hence this commodity is immensely popular in the trading arena.

Seasonal patterns and cyclical demand are the most common features of the commodity, deciding the price trajectory. Temperature extremes have a bearing on natural gas demand.

In winter, frigid temperatures increase the demand for the commodity as heating requires natural gas. However, during summer, electricity is required for cooling.

The year 2015 (year to date) has not been good for this commodity as Nymex prices have lost their value by around 3.15 per cent while MCX gas prices have fallen 5.13 per cent in the same time frame.

In contrast, since the start of the summer season in the US (April-till date), Nymex natural gas prices have risen by around 6 per cent and MCX gas prices by around 7.43 per cent.

### **Climatic factors**

Producers of natural gas have ramped up production this summer (April-November) adding 1,436 billion cubic feet of gas. The inventories are 20 per cent higher than the five-year average. However, it is 7.5 per cent lower than last year's record high levels, supporting the price rise. The current natural gas inventory as on July 31 stood at 2912 bcf.

Climatic variations play a key role in the demand for natural gas, and temperatures this year have been warmer than normal, with cooling degree days totalling 755 in the period (April- July 31).

These temperatures were higher than the relatively mild summer last season contributing to increasing consumption of natural gas with a positive impact on prices.

Besides, the power burn has been averaging 27 bcf per day since the beginning of April, which is actually 18.4 per cent higher than last year.

According to the CFTC report (Commodity Futures and Trading Commission), money managers and hedge funds are continuously short on the commodity.

Net shorts at the start of the summer season stood at 2,27,000 contracts and rose continuously, making a high of 2,63,037 contracts as on June 9. As on August 4, money managers were net shorts at 2,13,305 contracts.

The bearish sentiment will continue to exert downside pressure on gas prices.

### **Outlook**

Increasing power burn, as discussed earlier in the report, has been offset by higher production levels, allowing for robust injection of inventories this season. Weather conditions, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, is going to be mild and moderate in the second half of this summer (2015) which will reduce power consumption and make more natural gas available for storage.

Besides, the EIA report states that inventories in all the natural gas producing regions will be higher than the five-year average. It also forecasts that total end-of-October stock levels will reach 3,919 bcf, which will be 3.2 per cent higher than the five-year average.

Big inventories and bearish sentiment is a perfect set up for prices to decline this summer season. So far, it has not been too hot.

The power sector, which plays a more important role this time of the year, relative to other sectors, has kept the price of natural gas at its current low level.

Unless the weather starts to heat up again, the injections will continue to be higher than normal and prices will remain low.

We expect natural gas prices on the NYMEX (CMP: \$2.83/mmBtu) to decline towards \$2.5 by the end of October while MCX gas (CMP: Rs. 181/mmBtu) prices can trend lower towards Rs. 160 in the same time frame.

The writer is Associate Director - Commodities & Currencies, Angel Commodities Broking Pvt Ltd. The views are personal.

## Business Standard

### Sugar prices move up on hopes of rise in exports



*A vendor arranges a price tag over a sack filled with sugar at a wholesale vegetable market in Ahmedabad September 11, 2013. REUTERS*

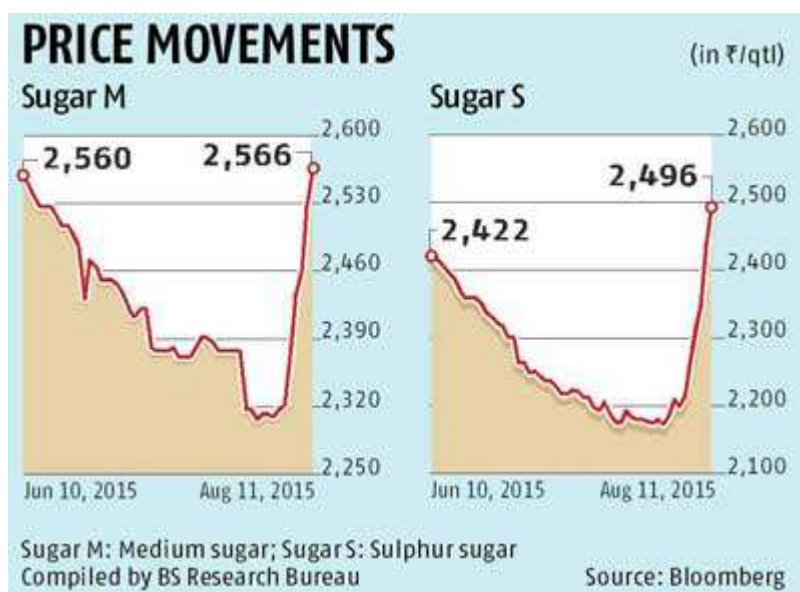
Sugar prices moved up 15 per cent in August due to an overall improvement in trade sentiment following the government's decision to promote exports, despite global surplus.

In the Vashi market, sulphur sugar (sugar S) prices shot up to Rs 2,496 a quintal on Tuesday from Rs 2,172 a quintal early this month. Similarly, medium sugar (sugar M) prices jumped 11 per cent to Rs 2,312 a quintal from Rs 2,566 a quintal in August.

In futures, however, [sugar prices](#) fell sharply on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) on profit booking on Tuesday after hitting the upper circuit on Monday. Sugar M for delivery in October fell 2.68 per cent or Rs 65 to trade at Rs 2,356 a quintal on Tuesday. Similarly, sugar M for delivery in December fell by 3.15 per cent or Rs 78 to trade at Rs 2,401 a quintal.

“Sugar prices have moved up on improved market sentiment on positive government’s decisions. Proportionate increase has been seen in ex-factory realisation also,” said Abinash Verma, director-general, Indian Sugar Mills Association.

Although the government has been taking a slew of measures to promote the sugar industry, excessive domestic production and large carryover stocks have pushed the initiatives into doldrums.



The government announced Rs 6,000 crore interest-free loan to sugar mills so that they could pay [cane](#) arrears to farmers. The government proposed to bear interest to the tune of up to Rs 600 crore in the first year. But, overburdened sugar mills

could not avail these loans, as they do not want to increase their loan book



further to pay cane arrears, which could hamper their borrowing capacity to raise working capital for the next crushing season.\

Consequently, sugar mills across the country have applied for less than 20 per cent the amount allocated under the interest-free scheme. The government is also in the process of signing a barter deal with importing countries to push four million tonnes of the sweetener out of the country. India has been able to export only 1.26 mt of sugar up to April 2015.

“The barter deal for sugar exports from India may take many months and hence, cannot be stressed upon,” said a senior industry official.

The total sugar production in India is estimated at 28.3 million tonnes in 2014-15 against its annual demand of around 24 million tonnes. With an estimated 10.2 million tonnes of carryover stocks from the current year and 28 million tonnes of output, the total availability of sugar in 2015-16 is forecast to remain at a staggering 38.2 million tonnes.

Meanwhile, the global sugar production this year is estimated to exceed demand by 620,000 tonnes.

“Sugar futures traded on higher note amid talks of exports with the help of subsidies and hopes of rise in demand ahead of festive season like Ganesh Chaturthi and Raksha Bandhan. Sugar prices look to trade upside in short term due to overall bullish sentiments on expectation of rise in exports and domestic demand,” said Navin Nair, an analyst with Emkay Comtrade.

Meanwhile, the government has proposed blending of petrol with 10 per cent ethanol. “The price rise could not sustain. Overall long-term trend looks bearish for sugar,” said Sudha Acharya, senior research analyst, Kotak Commodities.

# THE ECONOMIC TIMES

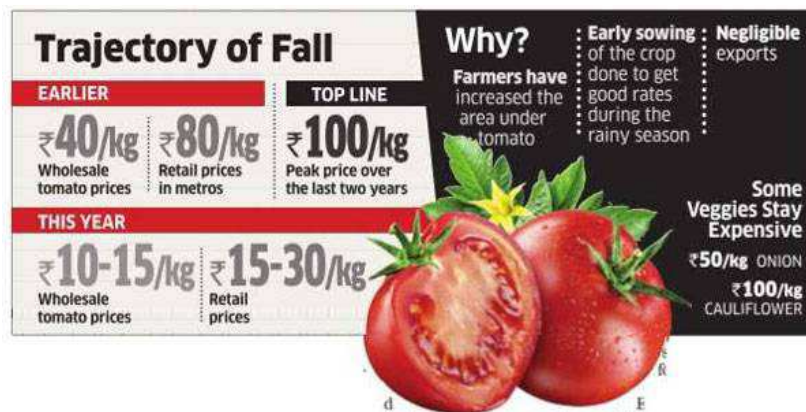
## Tomato prices crash in wholesale markets amid good production



Tomato prices have crashed in the wholesale markets across the country due to good production of the crop after touching almost Rs 100/kg in the past two years, though the trend may not be reflected in some retail markets of metros.

Supplies as well as prices of most vegetables are within the comfort zone except onions, which are being sold for Rs 50/kg, and cauliflower, which has crossed ₹100/kg in retail markets in Delhi due to the seasonal nature of the crop.

Wholesale tomato prices were about Rs 40/kg and above during the past two years in July and August while retail prices had ruled above Rs 80/kg in many metros, but this year they are selling between Rs 10/kg and Rs 15/kg in wholesale and between Rs 15/kg and Rs 30/kg in retail markets at many places.



However, in some cities such as Mumbai and Delhi, they may cost Rs 40/kg in some retail pockets.

"Supplies from the hilly regions of north India have been good, while exports were almost negligible, which led to the decline in tomato prices from mid-July," said Subhah Chugh vice-chairman, Tomato Traders Association, Azadpur.

A recent study by industry body Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham) said that there's a huge gap between wholesale mandi and retail prices; the gap in prices of cabbage, potato, brinjal and tomato could be between 60 per cent and 76 per cent, said the study.

Farmers have increased the area under tomato cultivation across the country due to good prices they fetched in the past two years. They have also gone for early sowing of the crop to get good rates during the rainy season. Nashik market, which has started getting tomatoes about a month earlier than usual, has seen some spike in prices in the last two days.

"Traders from the north have started buying tomatoes for exporting to Pakistan while tomatoes from the Bangalore market are now going to Bangladesh," said Subhash Holkar, commission agent from Pimpalgaon APMC in Nashik district.

But onions and cauliflower continue to pinch the pockets of buyers. "Supplies of some vegetables have been affected due to heavy rains in growing areas such as Himachal Pradesh. Cauliflower prices are high because this is an odd season for the vegetable," said a spokesperson for Safal, the retail outlet of Mother Dairy.

Even though prices of a few vegetables have shot up due to seasonal fluctuations, traders and modern retailers expect supplies to remain normal in the next few months.