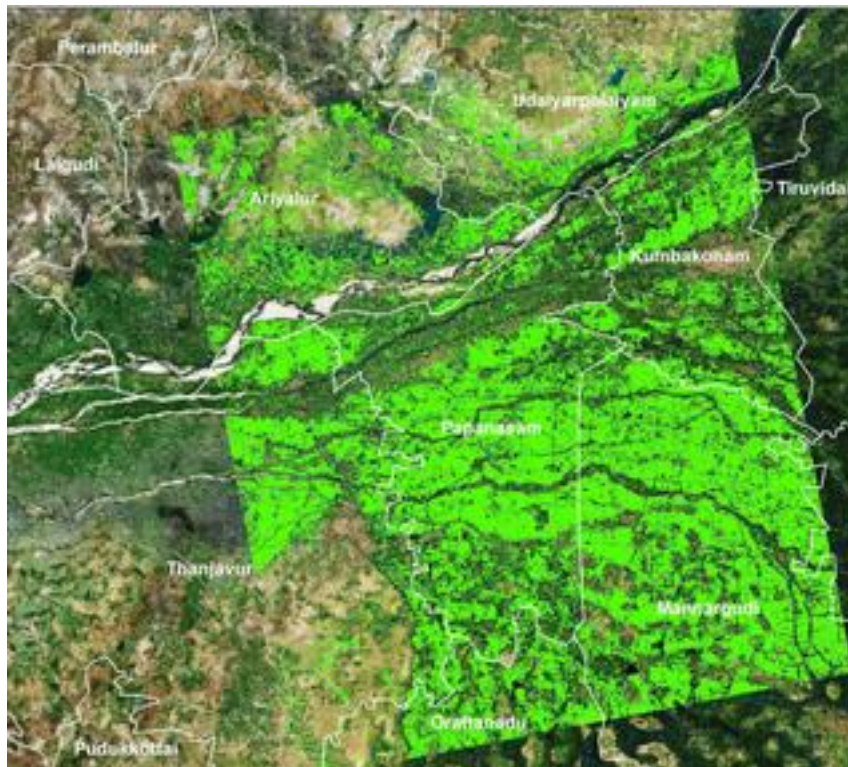


16-12-2015

# THE HINDU

## Satellite images help in crop management



A map of paddy cultivated area in Thanjavur prepared using images from the Sentinel 1A satellite.

Soon after the recent rains hit hard the costal districts, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore, calculated how much cultivated area was inundated. It also estimated the loss of paddy in Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Cuddalore and other districts.

The University's quick assessment and communication to the State Government is the result of the work it has been doing for four years now using images obtained from European Space Agency's Sentinel 1A satellite.

The University's access to the satellite images follows a tie-up under the 'Remote Sensing Information for Insurance on Crops in Emerging Economies' project with the Swedish Developmental Council, International Rice Research Institute and Sarmap of Switzerland.

The engagement with the European Space Agency is for accessing the satellite images and with the other two agencies for technology (software) to process the images and develop yield model, says S. Pazhanivelan, professor, Department of Remote Sensing and GIS, TNAU.

The University uses the images to identify crops, estimate area of cultivation, prepare seasonability map (track the start, end and progress of agriculture seasons), phenology map (various stages of crop) and yield map (estimate the yield). The images, and the data deciphered there from will help the State Government frame policies and farmers get precise inputs and also quick disbursement of crop insurance, says Vice-Chancellor K. Ramasamy.

### **Help to govt.**

By studying the progress in cultivation from the satellite images, the government will be in a better position to decide the area that needs fertilizers and inputs on a priority basis, Mr. Pazhanivelan explains.

Again, by estimating the yield, the government will be in a position to decide how many paddy procurement centres it should open.

As for farmers, the process of availing of crop insurance will be easy as the satellite images will serve as proof of crop damage. Until now, the farmers will get compensation only if there is crop loss in the entire *firka*, he points out.

### **Soil conditions, nutrients**

The farmers will also get to learn about soil conditions and nutrients needed.

The Vice-Chancellor adds: in the event of monsoon or drought, the satellite images will help the government with the extent of damages. This will ensure that the government take decision without delay.

## **WTO chief calls for a Paris-style deal**

*Persisting deep differences between developed & developing countries will make job of ministers difficult in arriving at consensus.*

The World Trade Organisation's (WTO) first Ministerial Conference in Africa began here on Tuesday with leaders from the continent and the WTO chief Roberto Azevedo exhorting the 162 member countries to be inspired by 195 nations recently inking the 'historic' Paris agreement on measures to curb global warming, and reach a similarly ambitious pact in a few days to liberalise world trade for lifting millions of people out of poverty.



The ministerial conference (the WTO's highest decision-making body) is taking place in the Kenyan capital at a time when the global trade body is celebrating its 20th anniversary, but in the backdrop of sluggish world trade and tepid global economic growth.

However, persisting deep differences between the developed and the developing world on market opening commitments and their entrenched positions are expected to make the job of the Ministers difficult in reaching a consensus, especially to remove the distortions in world trade.

Developed countries, citing the slow progress of the ongoing Doha Round negotiations (which began in 2001), want the Round to be either brought to an end during this ministerial conference, or its ambit to be expanded by including 'new' issues of their interest and what they call are the latest challenges facing global trade. These include global value chains, e-commerce, labour, environment, competition policies, investment pacts and state-owned enterprises.

However, developing countries including India want elements of their interest — including protection of the interests of poor farmers and a permanent solution for the issue of public stock-holding for food security purposes — to be addressed on a priority basis.

They do not want any dilution of the 'development' dimension of the Doha Round through incorporation of 'new' issues of interest to the rich world, and want all the

elements of the Doha Development Agenda to be addressed before the conclusion of the Round.

They want developed countries to drastically reduce their huge trade distorting farm subsidies, something the rich countries are not keen on addressing unless they get in return more market access in the agriculture sector in the developing world through reduced duties.

Mr. Azevedo talked about the power of trade to change people's lives for the better and said the Paris Agreement has shown that seemingly unbridgeable gaps could be closed if there was political will.

The WTO member countries should be inspired by the Paris Agreement, lift their sights and aim higher to reach an agreement during this conference, he said.

However, he indicated that the final agreement on the Doha Round talks may not be as ambitious as it was set out to be when the talks began.

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said countries this year (2015) had displayed unparalleled cooperation in addressing some of the most pressing problems facing humanity, and therefore the same spirit of cooperation should be present to achieve a successful conclusion of the Nairobi Ministerial Conference.

### **WTO talks: Kenya backs food security, farmers' interests**

*This shows that the concerns of developing economies and least developed countries are linked," said Commerce minister Nirmala Sitharaman*

India said it was significant that Kenya, the country hosting the WTO Ministerial Conference, backed issues of interest to the developing countries, including on food security rights and ensuring the protection of poor farmers from the heavily subsidised agricultural imports from the rich world.

Referring to the speech given by Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta during the official opening of the WTO's Ministerial Conference at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre here, commerce minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, "The Kenyan president spoke what many of us have felt. He spoke about the need to address the Doha Development Agenda in its entirety and the need for this ministerial to deliver a successful outcome. It was heartening to know that the emphasis is on agriculture and protection of the livelihoods of poor farmers."

“This shows that the concerns of emerging and developing economies as well as the least developed countries (many of which are in Africa) are linked,” the minister told reporters on Tuesday.

The Kenyan President said the WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2013, was the first under the ongoing Doha Round of talks of the WTO (for a deal to open up world trade) that succeeded in concluding negotiations in a limited number of areas including the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

It was important to build on the Bali Ministerial Declaration, and agree on tangible outcomes in Nairobi to give credibility to the WTO as a rule-based organization, he added. The agriculture negotiations in the Doha Round are the ones from which developing countries can derive most gains, Kenyatta said. Agriculture is particularly important for Africa considering that majority of the population depends on it for food, livelihood, and employment, he added.

However, distortions in this sector have continued to prevent Africa from realizing its full potential, he pointed out, adding that Africa’s farmers cannot compete against heavily subsidized farmers in developed countries.

In this connection, the Doha Round of negotiations in agriculture provides the best opportunity to address the distortions and align global trade with Africa's development goals, he said.

Kenyatta asked all WTO member countries to accelerate toward a positive end to the long journey (of Doha Round talks, which began in 2001) to establish a fair and market-oriented trade in agriculture. He said Africa is ready to do all it can to ensure the success of the Nairobi Ministerial Conference.

Sitharaman said she felt encouraged from Kenyatta's statement, adding that African nations are likely to stand by India in its fight to secure the interests of the developing and the poor world.

### **India to help on contentious issues**

Meanwhile, India is part of a newly constituted smaller group of countries which will steer the talks on different contentious issues, and then take them to the larger group for consensus building, sources said.

The WTO director general Roberto Azevedo and Amina Mohamed, the chair of the Nairobi ministerial conference and Cabinet Secretary in Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Trade, will coordinate on critical issues which need political will and inputs to ensure a successful outcome to the Ministerial Conference, they said.



India has also made it clear that protection of poor farmers' interests and its food security programmes are not up for any bargain at the negotiations.

### Commodity prices

*Prices of tur and urad dal have eased significantly in the last one month. In Chennai, tur dal is down about 12 per cent to ₹150 a kg from ₹170 a month earlier. Urad dal is sold at ₹170, down 10 per cent from the levels of ₹190 last month. But these two dal varieties have risen the most, when compared to others.*

Here are the prices of various commodities in Chennai.

Price scale is given as Rs./kg

Commodity	Quantity	Now	Year ago
Rice	1 kg	30	30
Wheat	1 kg	34	32
Atta	1 kg	32	34
Gram Dal	1 kg	75	49
Tur Dal	1 kg	150	86
Urad Dal	1 kg	170	86
Moong Dal	1 kg	125	111
Masoor Dal	1 kg	100	80

<b>Commodity</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Now</b>	<b>Year ago</b>
Sugar	1 kg	32	34
Milk	1 ltr	37	37
Ground Nut Oil	1 ltr	129	101
Sun flower Oil	1 ltr	93	85
Gur (Jaggery)	1 kg	50	57
Tea	1 kg	220	220
Salt	1 kg	18	17
Lime	1 kg	60	60
Apple	1 kg	140	140
Papaya	1 kg	28	25
Pineapple	1 kg	40	40
Pomegranate	1 kg	120	120
Sapota	1 kg	40	40
Banana	1 kg	30	32

Commodity	Quantity	Now	Year ago
Bitter Gourd	1 kg	54	40
Brinjal	1 kg	80	32
Cabbage	1 kg	24	30
Cauli Flower	1 kg	80	32
Garlic	1 kg	240	120
Ginger	1 kg	80	120
Chilly	1 kg	40	32
Onion	1 kg	32	17
Potato	1 kg	32	34
Tomato	1 kg	30	28

### **Karavetti sanctuary draws more and more birds**

Arrival of winged visitors to the bird sanctuary at Karaivetti from different parts has been on the rise thanks to the availability of copious water in the sanctuary. It is in October, coinciding with the onset of North East monsoon, that birds arrive here in large numbers. The flock of birds has been on the rise in the past few days, according to Forest Department officials.



The birds which arrive here include Little Grebe, Little Cormorant, Darter, Grey Pelican, Little Egret, Large Egret, Pond Heron, Grey Heron, Open Bill Stork, painted Stork, Wood Sandpiper etc.

The sanctuary spread over 454.11 hectares is free from noise pollution facilitating a large number of birds including migratory birds to come over here and stay here for a few months till February. Karaivetti has been a paradise for bird lovers.

The Forest Department has created new infrastructure in coordination with individuals and institutions in the district to encourage nature-lovers. It has taken steps for construction of watch towers and a telescope tower at a height of 50 feet to facilitate bird watchers get a glimpse of all birds spread over the sanctuary.

An interpretation centre has been constructed to give information about important birds visiting the sanctuary regularly. "The civil work has been completed while painting and other electrical work will be taken up in course of time," sources told *The Hindu* on Monday.

### **Farmers continue free distribution of bananas**

Several hybrid banana growers in Chinnamanur and Uthamapalayam unions intensified free distribution of banana to people residing near their farms and at villages for the second day on Tuesday.

Banana growers who had own transport facilities brought the bananas from their farms and distributed them to villagers for free. Those, who did not have own transport facilities and could not afford to pay freight charges, allowed farm workers to pluck as many fruits as possible and distribute them to their neighbours free of cost. The workers were also asked to distribute the fruits to the people crossing their farms and in nearby areas in order to clear the farms.

Already, the fruits which crossed cent per cent maturity level have started falling from the trees, attracting dogs, pigs and cattle into the farms. The surface soil is also polluted owing to the falling fruits. The farmers said the entire farms would be affected if they failed to clear the farms immediately.

Meanwhile, traders too sent truckloads of bananas to flood-affected areas free of cost. A section of banana growers at Pannaipuram near Uthamapalayam were the first to start free distribution of bananas to the public as procurement price of hybrid variety of bananas crashed to Re 1 a kg. They travelled in vans and distributed bananas to the people on streets.

Bananas cultivated on more than 5,000 acres in the district had started perishing, the farmers claimed.

Banana is cultivated on 6,500 hectares in the district in view of the demand in Chennai and other northern districts, which were ravaged by rain and floods recently.

### **Heavy rain in Tiruvarur, Thanjavur**

Heavy rain lashed Tiruvarur on Monday raising concern among farmers over inundation of paddy fields. The town received 119.4 mm of rainfall during the 24-hour period ending at 8.30 a.m. on Tuesday. The following is the chief amount of rainfall recorded in other parts of the district during the same period (in mm): Thiruthuraipoondi 76, Nannilam 43.2, Mannargudi 13, Pandavaiyaru 10.6, Muthupettai and Needamangalam 10 each.

Thanjavur district too received widespread and moderate rainfall on Monday with Neivasal Thenpathi in the district recording the maximum rainfall of 31.80 mm during the 24-hour period ending at 8.30 a.m. on Tuesday.

The following is the chief amount of rainfall recorded in other parts of the district during the same period (in mm): Manjalaru 26.80, Madukkur 16.60, Tiruvaiyaru 10 and Orathanadu 8.90. The district received an average of 6.30 mm of rainfall during the period.

### **SPECIAL MEETING FOR LPG CONSUMERS**

A special meeting to redress grievances of LPG consumers would be held at the office of the Revenue Divisional Officer, Mayiladuthurai at 3 p.m. on December 30, Collector S.Palanisamy said. Complaints relating to delay in distribution of LPG cylinders and other issues would be taken up at the meeting, he said.

### **‘Low rainfall did not affect migration trend’**

Crop loss due to low rainfall this year does not seem to have any major impact on trend of migration of labour force from Ganjam, the most migration-prone district of Odisha.

This hints at the uniqueness of migrant workers of Ganjam district. According to social activists working with migrant workers, from this the government and the administration can sense that problem of migration of workers from Ganjam district cannot be sorted out by considering it in relation with agriculture. Migration of workers from Ganjam district is skill related, as most of them work in textile industries or ship-breaking industries in Gujarat, said Kanhu Charan Badatya of Sanakhemundi, a migrant worker-turned-social activist.

Data regarding trend is evident from information documented by 30 units of Prabasi Shramik Suchana Kendra (PSSK) established by social organisation ARUNA in different parts of Ganjam district. The PSSK units register migrant labourers at panchayat level and make them aware of HIV infection and AIDS before they migrate. According to ARUNA director Lokanath Mishra, information from PSSK has hinted that despite crop loss due to low rainfall this year, there has been no noticeable increase in number of persons migrating from rural areas of the district. He added that Phailin cyclone of 2013 also did not have any impact on migration of labour force from interior areas of Ganjam district. Devastation caused by the cyclone had only increased migration of labourers from coastal pockets of the district. Following Phailin cyclone, most migrant workers had returned to their homes to provide financial and physical support in restoration work.

Tutendra Sahu of Aska area of Ganjam district said that as migrant workers of Ganjam district migrate for skill-based livelihood mostly in textile industry or ship breaking industry that are not available here in Odisha, they do not have any major link with agriculture at their own villages. “Workers who have started migrating in their teens to start working in textile units in Surat cannot feel agriculture to be a major source of their livelihood. We feel providing menial work through MGNREGA or other schemes can never check this type of migration.”

Problem of migration of labour force from Ganjam district can only be checked if projects that can utilise their skills are taken up near their homes, said Mr Mishra. Agriculture and MGNREGA-based approach to impede migration can only check a very small chunk of migration in Ganjam district. Till units that utilise the skills of migrant workforce of Ganjam district in textile and ship breaking industries come up in Odisha, these migrant workers would continue to migrate generation after generation, Mr Mishra added.

***Migration of workers from Ganjam district is skill related, say social activists***

## Water level rises in Fort moat

*“Fifty per cent of rainwater has flown from Fort Maidan”*



in abundance: Water level in the moat has risen by 4 - 5 feet

A trip to Vellore cannot be complete without a visit to the Vellore Fort. Now, tourists, and even Vellore residents, who visit the Fort on weekends, have an added reason to visit this archaeological site.

After being close to dry in the last few months, water level has swelled in the Fort moat following heavy rainfall during the month of November. The moat has a total depth of 15 to 18 feet, according to sources in the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

Dry before rains

“Water level has risen by at least four to five feet now due to heavy rain. The moat was almost in a dry state prior to the rain,” an official said. Due to silt formation, the depth of the moat varies from place to place around the Fort, with some places having a depth of eight to 10 feet, he added. The Fort is spread for a radius of around three kilometers.

However, the water has turned green now. “Fifty per cent of the collected is due to flow of rainwater from Fort Maidan. However, the remaining 50 per cent water has reached the moat from the Nicholson canal at the southern side of the fort. The canal carries waste-filled water. There was overflow of water in the canal following rain, and this has entered the moat,” he added.

Every year, the moat receives at least two feet of water following the seasonal rains in November. “This year, the water level is definitely more than previous years by at least three feet,” he said.

Early this year, the ASI had taken up works to reconstruct a portion of the moat wall. Some parts of the moat wall around the fort had collapsed due to aging. The old stones that had collapsed were used in the reconstruction. Officials said the work was completed in September.

### **‘Water supplied to Mohanur safe for consumption’**

Collector V. Dakshinamoorthy assured people that the water supplied through pipelines to Mohanur was safe for consumption.

There were rumours that people fell ill after consuming the water supplied to Mohanur Town Panchayat.

### **Inspected**

Officials from Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, Mohanur Sugar Mills and officials from the town panchayat inspected the well in River Cauvery from where water was being pumped for distribution. It was found that there was discolouration of water, due to stagnation in the river. However, the water drawn from the well was safe and it was being treated before distribution, he said.

Treated sewage from the sugar mill can be used for agriculture activities, he said.

## **New twist to the veg vs. non-veg debate**

A completely vegetarian diet is linked with more greenhouse gas emission, says a study

Contrary to popular assumption — and a talk by Hollywood actor Arnold Schwarzenegger at the United Nations Paris Climate Change Conference — eating a vegetarian diet could contribute more to climate change than eating a non-vegetarian diet, warns a new study.

Schwarzenegger, a former California governor, advised people to go meat-free one or two days a week to help protect the climate.

But the new research found that consuming more fruits, vegetables, dairy and seafood is more harmful to the environment because those foods have relatively high resource uses and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per calorie.

“Eating lettuce is over three times worse in greenhouse gas emissions than eating bacon,” said one of the researchers Paul Fischbeck, professor at Carnegie Mellon University in the US.

“Lots of common vegetables require more resources per calorie than you would think. Eggplant, celery and cucumbers look particularly bad when compared to pork or chicken,” Fischbeck said.

The study measured the changes in energy use, blue water footprint and GHG emissions associated with US food consumption patterns.

The researchers studied the food supply chain to determine how the obesity epidemic in the US is affecting the environment.

Specifically, they examined how growing, processing and transporting food, food sales and service, and household storage and use take a toll on resources in the form of energy use, water use and GHG emissions.

On the one hand, the results showed that getting our weight under control and eating fewer calories, has a positive effect on the environment and reduces energy use, water use and GHG emissions from the food supply chain by approximately nine percent.

However, eating the recommended “healthier” foods — a mix of fruits, vegetables, dairy and seafood — increased the environmental impact in all three categories — energy use went up by 38 percent, water use by 10 percent and GHG emissions by six percent.

### **2016-17 credit plan for Wayanad released**

Wayanad District Collector Kesavendrakumar on Tuesday released the Potential Linked Credit Plan (PLCP) of NBARD for the district during 2016-17.

The PLCP, to the tune of Rs.3,817 crore, was released at a district-level review committee meeting of bankers, chaired by Mr. Kesavendrakumar, here.

N.S. Saji Kumar, district development manager, NABRD, who formulated the credit plan, told *The Hindu* that special emphasis has been given for long-term investment credit, programmes such as area development scheme, promotion of producer companies under produce fund and watershed plus activities.

“These programmes are expected to play a major role in boosting the long-term investment. The annual PLCP is 7 per cent higher than the 2015-16 fiscal,” Mr. Sajikumar said.

According to priority sector norms, a target of 8 per cent of net bank credit has been prescribed for small and marginal farmers.

A sum of Rs.2,905 crore has been identified for crop loan purposes, he said.

The preparation of PLCP was preceded by a detailed consultative process with the implementing departments in the district for identifying critical infrastructural requirements. The PLCP has taken into account the potential available for development in all the sectors as also the infrastructure available for exploiting such potential.

Wayanad can provide an acceptable model of start-up in food and agro processing sectors, Mr. Sajikumar said adding that if the skills of the young people are harnessed, instead considering them as mere wage earners, the enthusiasm of young farmers could be sustained.

Kudumbasree, milk-producing societies, and NGOs can play a lead role in the district, starting from promotion of joint liability groups as well as microenterprises duly ensuring the value addition and value chain, Mr. Sajikumar added.



## **NSS appeals to Centre to save rubber sector**

*Price has fallen to Rs. 100/kg from Rs. 243/kg in 2011*

The Nair Service Society (NSS) has sought immediate intervention from the Central and State governments to hold the plummeting price line of natural rubber. The editorial of the latest issue of NSS mouthpiece *Service* points out that rubber prices had fallen below the Rs.100 mark a kg on Monday from the halcyon days of 2011 April when rubber prices ruled the all-time high rate of Rs.243 a kg.

The editorial wanted the Central government to commence procurement immediately with a price of at least Rs.160 a kg . It asked the authorities either to stop NR import or hike the import duty by another 50 per cent so that import would become unviable. The two-pronged strategy would help revive tapping in the plantations which they have suspended on account of deflating market trend. “This would not only save precious foreign exchange, but also revitalise the production sector,” it said.

The unscientific price stabilisation initiative by the State government had met with little success and though Rs.300 crore was earmarked for the purpose, only Rs.30 crore could be utilised so far, it said. It added that the nation today imports near six lakh tonnes of natural rubber in place of the average two lakh tonnes in earlier times, resulting in a glut in the market, which had pushed down the prices.

A similar situation in 2002 was overcome by the then Central government by limiting the access to Indian market for NR and also stipulating stiff quality control measures.

Time has come for initiating such innovative steps to curtail NR import, the editorial said.

The present economic crisis faced by the State and the government could be traced to the crisis in the NR sector as Kerala accounts for nearly 90 per cent of the total rubber production, it pointed out.

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· ***NSS mouthpiece seeks price of at least Rs. 160/kg***

· *6 lakh tonnes of rubber imported leading to glut*

### **‘Environmental awareness needed’**

There is need to create awareness about the environment and sensitive biodiversity of Western Ghats among our children said science writer Nagesh Hegde in the decennial program of Shriniketana School at Islur in Sirsi taluk held recently, according to a report on Tuesday. In the recent Paris pact, 196 countries of the world have agreed to minimise the use of energy fuels like petrol, diesel, and coal as the production of them would come to a zero by 2050 and it was inevitable to find alternate energy sources then, he said.

Senior agronomist M.R. Hegde Shigehalli said that India was the most suitable nation for agriculture and at least one child in the family should be trained in agriculture. Progressive agriculturist K.M. Hegde Bhairumbe presided over the programme.

### **Govt. to take up pisciculture development programme**

*It will be implemented on a pilot basis in four districts*

The State government has decided to take up a comprehensive pisciculture programme on cluster mode in four districts on a pilot basis under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna at a cost of Rs 3.44 crore for two years. A sum of Rs 1.72 crore has been released for 2015-16.

Official sources told *The Hindu* on Tuesday that the programme would be implemented in Nanjangud and T. Narsipur in Mysuru district; Davanagere and Harihar in Davanagere district; Ballari and Siraguppa in Ballari District; and Bilagi and Jamkhandi in Bagalkot district.

### **Potential**

Sources said that Karnataka had a good potential for the comprehensive development of pisciculture on land which was unfit for agriculture.

Farmers willing to take up pisciculture on their land would have to be updated with the latest scientific developments in the field.

As per the information available with the government, farmers have now taken up pisciculture on 1,800 hectares (ha) and in most of the cases the projects had not yielded the desired results due to lack of knowledge among farmers.

Under the proposed programme, the government proposes to train farmers in intensive production, setting up of a cold storage chain, and production of protein rich food for fish in ponds. It will also open up avenues for marketing. The stress would be on constructing fish ponds on land which was unfit for agriculture.

The government would provide 50 per cent subsidy for the construction of fish ponds, whose cost has been fixed at Rs 5 lakh a hectare. The maximum size limit for a fish pond is five hectares. Of the total investment of Rs. 2 lakh for taking up the fish farming in one hectare of land, the government would provide Rs. 1 lakh as subsidy. Fifty per cent of subsidy would be provided for the raising of fingerlings.

To popularise fish farming, the State government has released Rs. 77.81 lakh to the Karnataka Veterinary and Fisheries University in Bidar, and University of Agriculture Sciences in Bengaluru, Dharwad, Raichur and Shivamogga to organise Fish Melas during the annual Krishi Melas. Already some of the universities have organised Fish Melas along with Krishi Melas.

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#### ***Boosting fish production***

- ***The stress will be on constructing fish ponds on land which is unfit for agriculture***
  - ***The government will provide 50 per cent subsidy for the construction of fish ponds***
  - ***Farmers will be trained in intensive production, setting up of cold storage chain, and production of protein rich food for fish in ponds***
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#### **Green space to be created under AMRUT scheme in Salem**

Bushes being cleared in Kanchi Nagar in Salem where the Corporation has proposed to establish a green space.

The City Municipal Corporation has proposed to develop green space at a cost of Rs. 2.14 crore in Kanchi Nagar at Seelanaickenpatti (Ward 60) in the city.

The Corporation is one of the 32 cities/towns selected in the State for implementing schemes under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT). Thrust areas under the scheme include focusing on

water supply, sewerage facilities and septage management, storm water drains, improving transport facilities and enhancing amenity value of the cities by creating and upgrading green spaces, parks and recreation centres, especially for children.



Under this scheme, the existing park will be renovated or new space taken up for creating green space. The park will have all the basic amenities for residents apart from saplings planted to move on a greenery mission.

The Corporation officials said that once the green space was established, local residents would be roped in for maintenance. “The green space will be a model project and the focus in on increasing green cover in the city in five years,” they added.

The space had been identified and a detailed project report would be prepared and submitted to the Commissioner of Municipal Administration for forwarding to the State Level Technical Committee for approval. Once approved, tender process would be initiated and consultant appointed, they added.

This is the first green space expected to be implemented in the city under the AMRUT scheme.

### **A climate more congenial to India**

*The Paris Agreement preserves space for greater energy use, but with the caveat that India's actions will be subject to scrutiny. We should use these mechanisms to hold others to account.*

Is the [Paris Agreement on climate change](#) a good or bad deal for India? The complex text, produced after four years of tortuous negotiations, does not lend itself to a simple answer. But this is the question that matters for India, and is worth trying to answer.



Efforts at international cooperation imply that countries must concede something with the intent of obtaining some greater gain. The [premise of the climate agreement](#) is that by agreeing to some checks on national greenhouse gas emissions, and hence energy use patterns, each country benefits from decreased collective exposure to harmful global climate change. Most Indian analyses of the Paris Agreement have focussed on the concession — [what did India give up?](#) But since India is a country at great risk from climate impacts, a balanced reckoning requires a close look at both sides of the ledger, the loss and the gain.

### **Securing our energy future**

On the loss side, [India's long-standing objective in climate talks](#) is to avoid undue limits on energy options. This is important, as India will require a great deal more energy in the coming decades: for commercial cooking fuels, access to electricity, and power for industries and commerce to provide livelihoods. Although huge, these needs are also uncertain; much depends on how India grows, and on how technology changes.

This uncertainty also makes negotiation difficult, as it is hard to know how much to bargain away without causing harm.

The bedrock of India's approach to ensuring we do not give away our energy future is the principle of “common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities” embedded in the underlying Framework Convention on Climate Change.





Without this safeguard, all countries would have been placed on the same footing. India, despite contributing little to the problem and having limited capacity to address it, would have been placed under undue pressure to prematurely limit emissions. Developed countries have long argued for a dilution of this principle, saying that the world has changed since 1990 when the Convention was negotiated — particularly referring to the rise of China — and that static lists of developed and developing countries fail to capture this dynamic global context.

### **Developed-developing distinction**

This deadlock was broken at Paris by acknowledging that the world has indeed changed, yet not so much that these categories are no longer relevant; **developed and developing country categories are retained** but made more fluid. Moreover, the Agreement usefully specifies what the principle means in practice for key climate policy areas such as mitigation, adaptation, finance, and transparency provisions. In this respect, India demonstrated some nimbleness at Paris, by shifting from arguing for blanket invocation of the principle to seeking its specific application in key areas.

For example, in the core mitigation area, the Agreement states that **developed countries should take the lead** with economy-wide emission reduction targets, while developing countries should aspire to do so over time, recognising that they will need to grow their emissions. This allows some countries to cross categories when it deems fit, as China has done by pledging a “peaking year” for its emissions, while allowing other, like India, to persist with an emissions intensity pledge, which allows emissions to rise. Significantly, it maintains a distinction between developed and developing countries in the provision of climate finance, using the same model of creating a somewhat porous boundary. This distinction retains a key idea for India — expectations of mitigation actions by developing

countries are related to expectations of support from developed countries. Together, retention of categories of countries and their operationalisation in key provisions ensure India's losses at Paris are limited. An important caveat is that what was a relatively impervious boundary has been made permeable, increasing the risk that India will be pressured to 'voluntarily' cross that boundary sooner rather than later.

On this aspect, one dissonant note in the negotiations was a successful last-minute effort by a coalition of countries to introduce the [idea of attempting to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C instead of 2°C](#). While highly desirable in principle, this increase in 'ambition' was not backed by an increase in action, particularly from the developed countries, increasing the risk that India will be asked to prematurely step up to fill the gap.

### **National pledges**

What, then, are the gains for India? Will India gain, and how much, from the Paris Agreement in terms of avoided climate harms? One common line of argument is that the Paris Agreement is relatively toothless, does not bind countries (including India) to actual emission limits, has no mechanisms to enforce actions, and therefore will have little impact. If so, India would have little to gain.

But this description entirely misses the point. It rests on a presumption that international agreements drive domestic actions in countries, even against the run of domestic politics.

The Paris Agreement is built on a different logic: the motive power for change in energy systems will come from domestic politics in country after country, but the international process can amplify and provide leverage for domestic actors. By this logic, the key elements of the Paris Agreement are the national pledges made before Paris, and the mechanism to encourage those pledges to be ratcheted up over time.

This mechanism includes: [a mandatory five-yearly update of all pledges](#); a technical review process of both climate actions and financial contributions that is meant to ensure countries take their updates seriously; transparency provisions; and a global 'stocktake' on the aggregate effect of these actions. The idea is that the Paris Agreement will set in place mandatory procedures, which then stimulate an iterative process in country after country, ideally stimulating ever greater shifts to low-carbon trajectories.



The first round of pledges submitted before Paris were conservative and have fallen short of what is required, bridging only about a quarter to a third of the necessary gap between emissions pledged and what is required by science. This is why the update and ratchet mechanism is essential; it is designed to stimulate a virtuous cycle of more ambitious pledges, greater investment in low emissions options, and lower costs and barriers to implementation of those options, leading to yet more ambitious pledges. If this works, and it does result in enhanced collective action to limit climate change, then India will be a substantial gainer.

### **For a robust energy policy**

But will this work? The answer rests, as it probably should, in national political processes in all countries, including India, rather than in the international arena. For India, the imperative now is twofold. First, we should make sure the ratchet mechanism sustains pressure on developed countries to ramp up their efforts. This will require and upgrading our ability to analyse other country contributions and actively shaping the fine print of implementing language for the Paris Agreement in the coming years.

Second, and perhaps more important, we have to build a robust and ongoing national process to examine our energy and climate future, to replace India's current ad hoc, disconnected, process of energy planning and policy. This requires a more cogent system of energy information gathering and analysis. It also requires exploring actions that bring synergies across development and climate outcomes (such as energy efficiency and public transport) and those that come with direct costs to the economy. We also need answers to longer-term questions salient to future pledges, such as: how much additional coal energy do we anticipate needing; and, to what extent can we urbanise while limiting high carbon lock-in?

Looking at both sides of the ledger, India has limited losses because the Agreement preserves space for greater energy use, but with the caveat that we have to better justify our actions through a national process that will also be subject to international scrutiny. Moreover, we can and should use these same mechanisms to hold others to account. On the positive side, there is a plausible, if challenging, pathway to improved global action to limit climate change and its harmful impacts. And, the Paris Agreement offers the not trivial benefit of inducing India to establish a more robust domestic process for energy planning and policy. In my opinion, the balance is, on net, positive.

## Will always stand by you: Jayalalithaa tells flood-hit people



Amidst mounting opposition attack over her government on handling of the northeast monsoon, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa on Tuesday sought to assure the people that she would stand by with them at all times and that there was no need for concern.

Calling herself a “dear sister” of the people, the AIADMK supremo said that her thoughts constantly revolved around them.

“I will be with you at any time; don’t worry,” she said in a party statement. The opposition parties including DMK had been critical of the ruling AIADMK’s handling of the northeast monsoon, particularly training their guns against the government over the discharge of excess water from Chembarambakkam reservoir into Adyar river, claiming it had flooded the city.

They had alleged red-tapism on the issue with DMK knocking the doors of Tamil Nadu Governor K. Rosaiah with a plea for a judicial probe into the matter even as others like CPI (M) and PMK have also been demanding an inquiry commission to probe the matter.

The government had on its part denied any wrongdoing with the Chief Secretary K. Gnanadesikan rejecting “malicious” the allegations by opposition that officers were awaiting Ms. Jayalalithaa’s approval for releasing excess water.

Ms. Jayalalithaa, who thanked all those who were involved in the flood-relief activities with “selfless” dedication, said AIADMK MLAs and MPs will contribute their one month’s salary towards flood relief activities.

The AIADMK has 150 MLAs in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly and 49 MPs in both Houses of Parliament.

Ms. Jayalalithaa described the recent deluge which claimed over 300 lives and left a train of destruction as “rarest of the rare” and also thanked all those who involved themselves in flood-relief activities.

She said that her government was expeditiously carrying out flood-relief activities.

## DECCAN Chronicle

### Jayalalithaa reaches out to victims via WhatsApp



**Chennai:** In an emotionally charged audio message, released in a WhatsApp post, Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa has informed people affected by flood that she will stand by them at the time of their distress and vowed to redress their grievance.

In the post Jayalalithaa begins with a vanakkam and goes on to address herself as everyone's "beloved sister". "You are affected by flood caused by continuous unprecedented rainfall, which was highest in 100 years. I am deeply concerned with the grief and sorrow you are facing. Do not worry. This is your government and you have given me power to face any challenge. I will be with you forever. I assure that soon I will salvage you from the misery and bring back to life," the post reads.

"On my instruction, relief operations have been carried out in a war footing. Ministers, government employees, police, Tamil Nadu fire and rescue service personnel, armed forces, National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Rescue Force and volunteers have jointly worked hard along with you."

"I am carrying all your sorrow on my shoulder. I do not have personal life and no relatives. I am not a selfish person." Referring to the people, she said "You are everything for me."

My house and heart is Tamil Nadu. I will dedicate entire life for you as you are affectionately calling me as 'Amma', over shadowing the name Jayalalithaa, which was christened by my parents."

"This government is known for conquering natural disaster in the past and I will prove it again now. Do not lose hope I will alleviate all the sorrow." The message ends with 'Thank you'.

### **Contributions to Tamil Nadu flood relief cross Rs 100 crore mark**



**Chennai:** The state government has received Rs 111 crore towards the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Public Relief fund till now. On Tuesday, Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa received Rs 12.31 crore for carrying out relief and rehabilitation activities for persons affected by the deluge.

On Tuesday, R. Muthu Kumar, editor and publisher of Makkal Kural, a Tamil daily, gave Rs 6 lakh, MD, NAC Jewellers, Anantha Padmanabhan Rs 25 lakh, MD, Karur Vysya Bank K. Venkatraman Rs 3 crore including Rs 1 crore which is one day's salary of employees of KVB, MD Chettinad Cement, MAMR Muthiah Rs 3 crore, CMD of Lakshmi Machine Works Ltd, Coimbatore, Sanjay Jayavarthanavelu Rs 2 crore, MD, Sakthi Masala Private Ltd, Duraisamy and Director Shanthi Rs 1 crore, directors, GRT Jewellers, GR Anantha Padmanaban and GR Radhakrishnan Rs 1 crore, Nissan Motors India Private Ltd, (Nissan India Operations — President Guillaume Sicard) Rs 1 crore and Govindasamy Naidu and Sons Rs 1 crore.

Meanwhile, AIADMK general secretary and Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa announced that elected representatives, MPs and MLAs from the party, will contribute one month's salary towards flood relief work in the state.



### **Gujarat govt likely to announce relief package for cotton farmers today**

Gujarat Government is likely to declare its decision to provide financial package to cotton farmers of the state on Wednesday. A senior minister in the Cabinet said that the issue was discussed in the meeting of the State Cabinet on Tuesday and a decision in that regard would be announced on Wednesday.

Around a month back, the Central Government had announced the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for cotton crop at Rs 810 per 20 kg. Following the announcement, the market price for cotton, which hovered around Rs 900 per 20 kg, had fallen significantly. This led to a lot of unrest among farmers, who started demanding a financial package for themselves.

[The Indian Express](#) has reported that the state government is likely to announce bonus for cotton farmers of the state in addition to the MSP.

Following the local body elections results recently, the state government had held a number of meetings with farmer leaders and agriculture produce market committees (APMCs) to discuss the issue.

The exercise is being seen as an attempt of the ruling [BJP](#) to win back rural voters as it lost badly to [Congress](#) in the rural areas in the recently concluded elections of local bodies.

Meanwhile, the Gujarat BJP Tuesday made a representation before Chief Minister Anandiben Patel to provide relief to cotton farmers of the state in one or the other way since they were not getting remunerative price for their crop, said an official release from the state BJP president R C Faldu on Tuesday.

Faldu said, “For some time, the rates of cotton crop have been falling and farmers are not getting remunerative prices and the Gujarat BJP is worried about the same.”

Faldu further added that in their representation before the CM, they said that due to elections, the state government could not announce anything, but now when elections were over, the cotton farmers should be given some relief.



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**Column: India must protect its agricultural support**

The World Trade Organization’s (WTO) draft declaration for the ongoing ministerial meeting at Nairobi, Kenya, on December 15-18, 2015, promises to “address all aspects of agriculture reform as a matter of priority”, but does not mention anything about finding a ‘permanent solution’ to India’s concerns on food security. While declaration is just cleverly-worded rhetoric, the fact that India’s concerns remain unresolved is a setback.



But, for any one tracking the events since the 9th ministerial meeting, at Bali in December, 2013, this should not come as surprise. It is abundantly clear that, from day-1, developed countries were never serious about finding a permanent solution. Nor did developing countries, including India, press for one. Let us look at some facts.

At the Bali ministerial, developed countries had agreed to a ‘peace clause’—exemption from penal action for violations of commitments under WTO. If a developing country gives agricultural subsidies in excess of 10% of its agri-GDP, no member will challenge this until 2017, when WTO would look for a permanent solution to address their food security concerns. This meant that while peace clause would go in 2017, there is no guarantee that permanent solution would be in place by then. The peace clause came with a plethora of conditions viz., submission of data on food procurement, stock-holding, distribution and subsidies (including their computation), etc. It also needed establishing that subsidies are not ‘trade distorting’. In other words, even in the interim, any member could challenge if conditions are not met.

The above decision gave no relief whatsoever. It meant that, whereas from 2017—in any case—developing countries would be subject to penal action for exceeding the prescribed subsidy ceiling, in the interim, too, they would be vulnerable, thanks to the conditions appended to the clause. Already, the US has been asking India for all sorts of data, tantamount to a virtual surveillance of our food security system.

The [Narendra Modi](#)-led government started with a clear recognition of fallacies in the Bali agreement. So, at the July 2014 WTO General Council (GC) meeting in Geneva, it insisted on a time-bound action-plan to find a permanent solution before the end of 2014. Prime minister Modi even took it up at his meeting with US president [Barack Obama](#) in September 2014, but, at some point, allowed



things to drift. At the December 2014 GC meeting, the ‘extension of peace clause till such time a permanent solution is put in place’ was approved.

However, the applicability of the peace clause for an indefinite period (albeit till a solution is found) gave only a false sense of comfort to India as the Damocles Sword would still hang because conditions appended to peace clause were not dropped. At the same time, it gave a handle to developed countries not to work for a permanent solution. And, this is precisely what they are doing now by not even including this item in the agenda for Nairobi ministerial.

So, how do we get out of the trap? Pleading ad infinitum that we should to be allowed to protect our millions of poor farmers—a tactic India adopted—under Doha Development Agenda (DDA) won’t work any longer. We need to engage with the US and the EU on rules of the game and a good solution will emerge from only there.

Under the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), developing countries can give agricultural subsidies or aggregate measurement support (AMS) up to 10% of the value of agricultural production. AMS has two components viz., (i) ‘product-specific’, or the excess of price paid to farmers over international price, or ERP (external reference price) multiplied by quantum of produce and; (ii) ‘non-product specific’, i.e., money spent on schemes to supply inputs viz., fertilisers, seed, irrigation, electricity at subsidised rates.

For computing AMS, support on inputs to resource poor farmers was ‘excluded’ under AoA. The rationale was that such support does not have any ‘trade-distorting’ effect, whereas WTO disciplines target only those that have such effect. The same logic applied to product-specific subsidies. However, it was not explicitly incorporated in the agreement as the minimum support price (MSP) given to farmers then was substantially lower than the ERP, resulting in a negative

product-specific AMS. But, India should have anticipated a scenario wherein MSP could be higher than ERP and got 'product-specific' subsidies for resource-poor farmers also excluded from the computation.

Our negotiators also allowed another flaw to creep in. For computing 'product-specific' support, they allowed ERP to be frozen at the level of 1986-88. With this, comparing current MSP with ERP of 3 decades before inevitably results in artificially-inflated subsidy. For instance, at present, wheat MSP, at \$226 per tonne (R1,450/quintal), is \$96 higher than the ERP (1986-88), \$130 per tonne.

At the Nairobi ministerial, India should confront developed countries with both anomalies and get AoA amended to (i) update ERP to current level and (ii) exclude purchases from resource-poor farmers for computing product-specific subsidies. India should insist on getting these changes incorporated in the agreement now.

If, they still dilly dally then, India should insist on unconditional availability of the interim peace clause till such time a permanent solution is found. India should also not allow issues like government procurement, competition policy, link between trade and climate, currency and global value chain, TRIPs, etc, for which developed nations are battling, to get included in the agenda. These were never a part of DDA and must not be allowed to creep in.

### **Over 81% of farmers are aware of MSP: Niti Aayog**

A vast majority of farmers in the country are aware of the minimum support price (MSP) for various agricultural crops, such as rice, wheat, pulses, coarse cereals and oilseeds, announced by the government annually, a study by Niti Aayog has stated.

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“Eighty-one percent of the cultivators are aware of MSP fixed for different crops in various states while 67% of the farmers sold their produces through their own arrangements,” a Niti Aayog study on evaluation of the efficacy of MSP on farmers had stated. The study took the period between 2007-8 and 2010 -11 as reference period.

The study, according to a paper laid in the parliament by food minister Ram Vilas Pawan, had found out that the share of sales by farmers through private and government agencies were 8% and 4%, respectively. However 94% of the farmers covered under the study wanted MSP to continue. The Niti Aayog study also found out that 32.13%, 41.29% and 27.4% of the farmers received their MSP payment through in cash, cheque and in the shape of bank deposit

The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACPC) under the ministry of agriculture usually recommends MSP for kharif and rabi crops, ahead of the sowing season annually. Subsequently, the Union Cabinet approves the quantum of MSPs.

However, the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and state government agencies only purchase rice and wheat from the farmers in mostly grain surplus states such as Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Besides, agencies such as Nafed, Cotton Corporation of India, Small Farmers Agri-Consortium (SFAC) and state government agencies carry out pulses, oilseeds and copra from the farmers from time to time.

Earlier in the year, a high-level committee (HLC) chaired by former food minister Shanta Kumar set up for the restructuring of FCI had stated that only 6% of farmers get benefit of MSPs as majority of farmers are outside purview MSP mechanism. HLC, in its report, had urged the government revisit MSP policy as only few commodities are being purchased by agencies.

“Currently, MSPs are announced for 23 commodities, but effectively price support operates primarily in wheat and rice and that too in selected states. This creates highly skewed incentive structures in favour of wheat and rice,” the HLC had noted. The committee stated that while the country is short of pulses and oilseeds, their prices often go below MSP without any effective price support.

### **Andhra Pradesh allots 623 acres land to Jain Irrigation**

Andhra Pradesh government has allotted over 623 acres of land to Jain Irrigation Systems for setting up an integrated agriculture and horticulture park in Kurnool district of the state.



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Andhra Pradesh government has allotted over 623 acres of land to Jain Irrigation Systems for setting up an integrated agriculture and horticulture park in Kurnool district of the state.

“The government after careful examination of the matter and after due examination of the report submitted by the VC&MD, APIIC... hereby accord permission to APIIC Limited for the allotment of the land of an extent of 623.40 acre Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd at Thangadancha Village, Jupadu Bangalow Mandal, Kurnool district on lease basis for 99 years.

“And for handing over of the same to the project proponent, pending regular alienation, for the establishment of an integrated agriculture and horticulture park duly fixing the cost of the land as per the APIIC extant rules and regulations,” the government order issued yesterday said.

The market value of the land is Rs 4.5 lakh per acre and the total cost of the land is Rs 28 crore.

## THE ECONOMIC TIMES

**Exploring options to pay fertiliser subsidy directly to farmers'**



NEW DELHI: Government is exploring the possibilities of transferring the fertiliser subsidy directly to farmers, Parliament was informed today.

Replying to a question in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers Hansraj Gangaram Ahir said that in 2014-15 urea consumption was 155.90 kg per hectare, DAP was 38.84 kg per hectare, MOP was 14.53 kg per hectare and Complex fertilisers was 42.16 kg per hectare.

"The Department of Fertilizers is exploring possibilities of transferring the fertilizer subsidy directly to the farmers," Ahir said in the reply.

Sharing data about the subsidy released so far, the minister said that Rs 34,863.97 crore has been paid on account of indigenous urea, Rs 10,158.90 crore on imported urea, Rs 8,998.730 crore on indigenous P&K fertilisers and Rs 6,257.58 crore on imported P&K fertilisers.

Urea is provided to farmers at a statutory price of Rs 5,360 per tonne (plus sales tax and other local taxes wherever levied) plus a maximum of 5 per cent of the statutory price for neem coating urea.

The MRP of urea is much below the actual delivered cost. The difference of delivered price and MRP is paid as subsidy to the urea manufacturer/importer by the government.

The MRP along with the subsidy provided on these fertilizers is printed on each bag of these fertilizers and the farmer, who purchases these fertilizers, gets the benefit of subsidy as the subsidy on fertilizers is provided to farmers irrespective of their landholding and economic status.

### **Explore use of GM seeds with adequate safeguards: Expert panel**

NEW DELHI: An expert panel under NITI Aayog has floated a set of ideas, including exploring use of genetically-modified seeds and minimum crop support price (MSP) reforms, for broader discussion.

"India should explore selective use of transgenic seed varieties with necessary safeguards in areas where conventional technology is not yielding the much-needed gains like pulses and oil seeds," stated a paper based on inputs of an agriculture taskforce set up under NITI Aayog and headed by its Vice-Chairman Arvind Panagariya.





All these options are being explored in order to revive the farm sector growth and the sector's contribution to Indian economy with an ultimate aim to bring India back on a high growth trajectory.

The taskforce has invited comments from various stakeholders like states, the general public, farmers and traders.

According to the paper, the BT cotton in India and many more GM seeds elsewhere in the world proved the potential use of GM technology by giving a boost to productivity in agriculture.

The paper said transgenic seed varieties can also help in addressing adverse effects of pesticides on human health and environment, food safety, abiotic stresses and vitamin and nutrient deficiencies in diets.

On MSP reforms, it said, one possible way to keep a check on prices falling below threshold level is to adopt the system of Price Deficiency Payment (PDP). While MSP may still be used for need-based procurement, the remainder of the produce may be covered under PDP, it suggested.

Under PDP, in case the price of a commodity falls below a threshold level, the government will compensate the farmers up to a certain level like up to 10 per cent of the benchmark cost.

The paper said that to start with, cotton may be adopted as a test crop for a pilot case in select districts of leading states.

Similarly, it also advocated putting in place land leasing laws for use of direct benefit transfer of subsidies to farmers.

Currently, land is tilled by tenants and the government ends up providing subsidy to land owners under the proposed move, an expert explained.

According to the paper, NITI Aayog should prepare "model land leasing Acts" that can be used by various states to reform their existing land lease provisions and Acts keeping in view the differences in existing laws, land tenure systems and special circumstances of hilly states.

The paper also suggested accelerated replacement of seeds and payment of direct fertiliser subsidy to farmers.

## THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

### **Farm varsity warns of pest infestation**

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University here has cautioned farmers in coastal districts of the State of possible pest infestation to the crops in the aftermath of the recent rains. It advised them to adopt crop management practices.

Cloudy days without sun for 3-4 days and prevalence of high humidity can lead to blast incidence in rice, particularly in high yielding varieties and leafhopper incidence – severe in the crops at the vegetative stage, the note said, advising farmers to use light trap to attract the adult moth and spraying tricyclazole (if blast incidence is spotted) without delay.

Brown planthopper, a sucking pest could be a serious problem if drainage is not proper. The insects multiply rapidly and suck the sap from the base of the plants, university sources said and urged farmers to avoid use of resurgence causing and synthetic pyrethroid group of insecticides. Water should be drained from the field and spraying done targeting the base of the stem portion.

### **Pest alert**


Yellow stem borer, earhead bug, caseworm etc, could cause serious problem where drainage problem is severe in rice fields, experts warned.

Experts have not ruled out bollworm incidence in cotton, borer pest in sugarcane, leaf miner, red hairy caterpillar and tobacco caterpillar in groundnut, stem borer and cob borer in maize, whitefly, pod borers and bugs, powdery mildew and root rot in green gram/ blackgram and leaf blight in tomato.

Besides spraying of necessary chemicals to keep the pest infestation under control, the Centre for Plant Protection Studies, TNAU has advised farmers to set up yellow sticky traps to monitor sucking pests at 5 traps/ acre and if needed sparing of neem seed kernel or fish oil rosin soap.

### Board sees 2015-16 coffee output up at 3.5 lakh tonnes

<b>Strong brew*</b>			
	<b>Post Monsoon 2015-16</b>	<b>Post Blossom 2015-16</b>	<b>Final Estimate 2014-15</b>
Arabicas	1,07,800	1,10,300	98,000
Robusta	2,42,200	2,45,300	2,29,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,50,000</b>	<b>3,55,600</b>	<b>3,27,000</b>



Source: Coffee Board \* Coffee output in tonnes

The country is set to harvest a record coffee crop of 3.5 lakh tonnes (lt) for the current crop year 2015-16 that started in October, aided by a favourable weather conditions and timely rains.

This represents a seven per cent increase over the previous season's 3.27 lt, according to the Coffee Board's latest estimates.

### New high

In its post-monsoon estimates released Tuesday, the Coffee Board has pegged the crop size of Arabicas – the mild and premium variety – higher by about a tenth at 1.07 lt, whereas the output of robusta is set to expand by about six per cent at 2.42 lt. The latest post monsoon estimates are lower by about 1.6 per cent over the initial or post-blossom estimates revealed in June this year.

The marginal decline is attributed to the normal fruit drop at different stages of development.

## **Conducive climate**

Attributing the rise in 2015-16 output to favourable climatic conditions, the Board said the extended North-East monsoon rains last year helped in additional cropping wood for the current season.

Coffee growing areas have received timely and adequate blossom and backing showers and well distributed south west monsoon coupled with good crop husbandry practices adopted by growers have resulted in higher output.

## **Crop loss**

However, the Board has not considered the impact of the recent rainfall in November in Karnataka on the output as the post monsoon crop assessment was completed by end-October.

Rains in November that coincided with the harvest of arabicas are reported to have led to fruit drop of varying degrees.

“The crop loss, if any, due to November rains will be accounted at the time of final estimation, which will be carried out after completion of harvest,” Board said.

While the rise in output this year has mainly come from Karnataka and the non-traditional areas of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, the other producing States – Kerala and Tamil Nadu – are seen contributing marginally.

## **Karnataka production**

In Karnataka, the largest coffee producing State, the post monsoon estimate has put the crop size at 253,340 tonnes, higher by 8.62 per cent over previous year’s final output of 233,230 tonnes.

For 2015-16, the arabica output in Karnataka is pegged at 82,460 tonnes, an increase of 10 per cent over last year, while that of the robustas is also expected to rise by 7.8 per cent to 170,880 tonnes.

While the key growing regions of Kodagu and Chikmagaluru have registered an increase in output by 13 per cent and six per cent respectively, another region Hassan has reported a marginal decline over last year.

In Kerala, which mainly produces robusta coffee, the post monsoon forecast has pegged the output at 68,650 tonnes, a marginal increase over last year’s final estimate of 67,700 tonnes.

Similarly, in Tamil Nadu, which mainly produces arabica coffee, the production is marginal higher at 18,125 tonnes against last year’s 17,875 tonnes.

## **Non-traditional areas**

In Andhra and Odisha, the post monsoon forecast has pegged the crop higher by 21 per cent at 9,700 tonnes over last year's 7,975 tonnes.

The higher output in these non-traditional states could be attributed to the increase in bearing area of 4,700 hectares, the Board said.

## **Rubber to be part of Make in India, Modi tells growers**



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assurance to include rubber in the Make in India programme has come as a shot in the arm for the rubber sector, which is passing through an unprecedented crisis due to declining prices.

Natural rubber prices are as low as ₹102/kg for RSS-4 grade forcing many farmers to stop tapping and switching over to other cash crops.

The Prime Minister, while referring to the financial crisis faced by rubber growers in Kerala at a public meeting in Thrissur, pointed out that the Centre had already restricted import and increased import duty.

He also assured all help to growers, as Kerala accounts for over 90 per cent of the country's rubber production.



## **May raise output**

N Radhakrishnan, Advisor, Cochin Rubber Merchants Association, told *BusinessLine* that the announcement is a welcome move as it would benefit the plantation sector a lot.

It would definitely boost production in the next three years by adding another four lakh tonnes.

Rubber production this year will be in the range of six lakh tonnes. However, the need of the hour is incentives to farmers to encourage production, he said.

## **Duty-free imports**

However, Sibi Monippilli, General Secretary of the Indian Rubber Growers Association, was of the view that Make in India initiative on rubber is only a value-added programme and it would not address the real issues in the sector.

He pointed out that duty free imports are affecting both the prospects of farmers and domestic production in a big way.

The Prime Minister, he said, had not mentioned any measures to curb cheap imports and arrest the price fall. He also emphasised the need to retain the farmers in rubber cultivation to increase production, thereby fetching them the deserved prices for the commodity.

## **MSMEs hit**

Meanwhile, the All India Rubber Industries Association said that a stiff import duty of 25 per cent on rubber, at a time when domestic production is grossly short of consumption, is hurting competitiveness and growth of micro, small and medium rubber units.

There are around 5,000 small and medium scale rubber units in the country manufacturing 35,000 different rubber products.

Not only import duty on rubber in India is amongst the highest in the world, domestic prices are also about 20 per cent higher than international prices. Rubber MSMEs are, therefore, at the receiving end of two extremes, said Mohinder Gupta, President, AIRIA. Rubber industries have also contested the argument by Upasi that imports of rubber were much higher than domestic production deficit.

Quoting Rubber Board data, the industry has stated that against rubber production-consumption gap of 2.85 lakh tonnes in the April-November period of current financial year, 2.88 lakh tonnes of natural rubber has been imported.

## Flour millers take Rs 6-cr hit per month post Maggi woes



Millers suffered a revenue loss of Rs 6 crore per month as flour demand from noodle makers was significantly impacted by the ban on Maggi, an industry body said today.

Roller Flour Millers' Federation of India demanded that the Food Corporation of India (FCI) should certify the quality of wheat procured by it as food regulator FSSAI has imposed strict quality regulations.

“Nestle and other instant noodle manufacturers together consume 5 per cent of the total flour (maida) produced by the industry, which is around 3,000 tonnes per month, roughly valued at Rs 6 crore. So, due to ban and quality issues there was no demand from the noodle manufacturers,” the association’s Senior Vice President V K Bansal said.

The FSSAI had in June this year imposed a ban on Maggi noodles. However, the Bombay High Court quashed the order and asked to go for the fresh tests of the products.

Recently, Nestle has resumed the production of Maggi after getting clean chit from the labs which conduct fresh tests of the instant noodles following the directions of the Bombay High Court.

“These days food regulator FSSAI is imposing strict regulations on flour millers related to the quality of flour. And the FCI being the nodal agency of the Centre for procurement and distribution of foodgrains, it should certify the quality of wheat. Because, the quality of flour will depend on quality of wheat,” the federation’s President Hitesh Chandak told reporters here.



He said flours, be it maida or sooji, are the processed product of wheat and therefore its quality will depend on quality of the raw material.

Bansal also informed that the flour millers have imported so far 4.2 lakh tonnes of wheat mainly from Australia as they required top quality wheat for producing flour for pasta and other high valued added food products.

However, he said, it is unlikely that the traders or millers will import wheat following the increase in import duty on wheat.

### **Groundnut oil up on fresh demand**



Groundnut oil prices increased on the back of fresh demand from brands and stockists. Groundnut oil loose gained ₹15 to ₹920-925 per 10 kg. Jamnagar line telia tin was quoted higher by ₹22 to ₹1,427-1,428 per 15 kg. Groundnut oil new tin increased by ₹10 to ₹1,565-1,570 per 15 kg in Saurashtra while it was traded at ₹1,640-1,650 per 15 kg in rest of Gujarat. About 4-5 tankers of groundnut oil were traded in Saurashtra's mills. Cotton oil marginally declined on slight fall in demand. Washed cotton oil was traded down by ₹3 to ₹557-560 per 10 kg and new tin was quoted ₹1,000-1,020 per 15 kg. About 55-60 tankers of cotton oil were traded here. *Our Correspondent*

### **'Prepare farm projects with focus on El Nino'**

Officers of Agriculture ministries of six countries have underlined the need to study the impact of El Nino while preparing agricultural projects.

“These delegates from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia and Myanmar are attending a programme on agricultural project management sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India,” AVK Iyengar, Director, Kothari Agricultural Management Centre, who led the deliberations, told *BusinessLine*.

“Even at the preparation stage, agricultural projects absorb up to 10 per cent of the total project outlay. So, the projects will have to be prepared keeping in view the current and futuristic developments to recover the sunk the cost. That way, El Nino is the latest happening that can mar agricultural projects if ignored,” Iyengar said.

“Our deliberations noted that the UN has warned that El Nino will upset current winter with excess rainfall likely in South India and South Asia. This threatens floods and debasing farming activities. No agricultural project can ignore El Nino presently,” he detailed.

“The deliberations underlined that the rising of sea temperature would impact global warming and affect the production of food grains and vulnerable millets and vegetables,” he added.

### **‘Nabard needs long-term funds to boost capital formation in agriculture sector’**

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) needs long-term finance to ensure flow of adequate funds to cooperatives and boost capital formation in agriculture.

Full-fledged funding of the National Rural Credit Long-Term Operations Fund and the National Rural Credit Stabilisation Fund are available options, says All-India Nabard Employees Association.

A delegation of the association met Jayant Sinha, Minister for State for Finance, in New Delhi recently and handed over a memorandum listing this and other demands.

In the backdrop of growing agrarian crisis with its attendant problems of dispensation of institutional agri credit, there is need to strengthen the organic relationship between the RBI and Nabard as it existed earlier.

There is a serious need for countries like India to invest more in adaptation and mitigation efforts, given the growing problems connected with climate change and its impact on agriculture.

Nabard is accredited as the first National Implementing Entity of the Green Climate Fund of the UN Framework Convention on Climate change.

### **Climate change**

As much as 28 per cent of Nabard's cumulative disbursements have links with climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts. "The need of the hour is a dedicated low cost Climate Change Management Fund under Nabard with adequate fund support from the Centre," the memorandum said.

In other demands, it said that both Nabard and cooperatives be exempted from payment of income-tax. They were not subjected to income-tax liability earlier.

Nabard is the only financial institution that has not gone for any significant recruitment in the last two decades in spite of hundreds of vacant posts, especially in the workmen cadre.

The average age of the staff is above 50. So there is an urgent need to go in for massive recruitment at all Nabard offices in India. The employee body wants compassionate appointments to be restored and all pending applications cleared favourably without further delay.

### **Jain Irrigation gets land for agri-food park**

Jain Irrigation Systems has been allotted 623 acres in Kurnool district for setting up of an integrated agriculture and horticulture park as an anchor company.

The Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation Ltd (APIIC), the nodal agency for land allocation for industries, had earlier filed the requisitions with the Kurnool district collector for alienation of the Government land and about 4.28 acres of assigned land meant for providing access to the Government land in the district.

Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd had earlier filed a detailed project report for allotment of land in Kurnool district for the park. While the market value of the land is pegged at about Rs. 4.5 lakh per acre and the total cost works out to Rs. 28.05 crore for 623.40 acres, the company would get the land on a long term lease.

Since the APIIC has a facility to allot land on long term lease, it was decided to allot the land on lease for 99 years, according to an order issued by SS Rawat, Secretary to Andhra Pradesh government and Commissioner Industrial Promotion.