

18.12.2015

THE HINDU

Green house cultivation becoming popular



Agriculture is the dominant sector of Indian economy which determines the growth and sustainability. About 65 per cent of the population still relies on agriculture for employment and livelihood. The increasing population coupled with growing income has increased the demand for food grains, and non-food grain crops.

Therefore, agriculture has to achieve a higher growth rate targeted at 4 per cent per annum on a sustainable basis.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Salem, organised a seminar on ‘Opportunities in Green House Cultivation for cut flowers, capsicum, and cucumber,’ in the city on Thursday.

The event was designed to focus on the requirements of the farmers, entrepreneurs, agri-preneurs.

Robert de Bos, an expert from The Netherlands, and at present attached to Bangalore Plants First Private Limited, spoke in detail on green house cultivation, global perspectives, and export opportunities. He said that

virtually all commercial flowers can be grown somewhere, year around across the country.

Many new types of flowers can be cultivated too.

There is a market, a buyer, for everything. Getting to these groups and these market segments was the challenge. A professional approach was required. P. Murugesaboopathi, former Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, inaugurated the seminar. K. Janagan, former Joint Director of Agriculture, delivered the keynote address.

S. Srividhya from TNAU, and N. Jothi Basu an official of the State Horticultural Department, spoke. S. Rajkumar, farmer from Salem, and D. Balasivaprasad, farmer from Hosur shared their experiences of green house cultivation.

The men who grew forests



City fetes Jadav Payeng and Abdul Kareem — men who built forests from scratch.

Leaders of nations the world over devote a large part of their time, money and policy framework to the growth of the economy. But if they held their breath for a minute, they would realise it is life-sustaining oxygen that needs their urgent attention.

At the recently-concluded Paris climate change conference, Jadav “Molai” Payeng, 52, known as the ‘Forest Man of India’ asked a simple question in his speech. “There were about 20,000 people at the conference and 150

speakers. I asked them, ‘We meet for the sake of economy, but what are we doing for oxygen? Only trees can give you oxygen.’”

Speaking to *The Hindu* on Thursday, eve of the South Indian Education Society’s three-day Vana Mahotsavam festival, where he was awarded for his green initiative, he said he pinned his hopes on children to build a green tomorrow.

“There is no point in telling adults. We should teach children to plant trees from the primary school level. They should be given practical training. Schools should plant a sapling with every child they admit and increase this number gradually by the year. In 10 years, you will see a green India. Jungle is my life. It is your life too. People build temples, but no one has seen god. Nature is god,” he said.

He faulted World Environment Day celebrations for being mere photo ops. “We have been celebrating it since 1970. People plant saplings and then forget about it. The next year they come to the same spot and plant again.”

Mr. Payeng lives in a self-created forested island in Majuli — a vast sandbar on the banks of the Brahmaputra. A stretch of 1,360 acres, abounding in flora and fauna, the thick forest is impermeable to sound. His hut, where he stays with his family, is the only dwelling, with no human life for nearly seven kilometres. It took 36 long years for Mr. Payeng to build the forest. President Pranab Mukherjee presented Mr. Payeng the Padma Shri for his contribution to the environment on April 8 this year. The green journey of the forest man began in 1978, when floods ravaged his village in Jorhat.

“The floods washed away homes leaving behind sand. My parents migrated to another village, but I stayed behind. I went to school in the next village, where an agricultural scientist taught us to plant areca nut.”

A lot of snakes came into the open in the wake of the floods, but they died owing to the heat on the sandbar. “I thought the village too would die like the snakes,” said Mr. Payeng.

The idea to plant trees came following his interactions with the Deori community, which donated him 25 saplings to begin his afforestation mission. Over the years, he collected different types of seeds from adivasi groups and transported them on bullock carts and boats.

He sold milk to earn a living, but the forest sustained his needs. He only buys kerosene to burn the lamp, and salt and rice from the market. The jungle provides the rest of his supplies — papaya leaves, jackfruit, grass, a variety of roots, and ingredients to prepare ‘rice beer’. “Today, there are 120 varieties of trees and medicinal plants on the wetland, grassland and highland. The forest is home to Bengal tigers, rhinoceros, elephants, deer and rabbits,” said Jitu Kalita, a local journalist. Mr. Kalita was the one who first discovered the forest man in 2007 when first stumbled upon a lone hut in the forest. But Mr. Payeng tried to chase him away, thinking he was a poacher. Many environment enthusiasts the world over pay visits to study Mr. Payeng’s forest. Mr. Kalita’s made the first-ever documentary on Mr. Payeng — *‘Forest Man of India’*. Later, another documentary *‘Forest Man’* by William Douglas McMaster won the best documentary award at The American Pavilion at the Cannes Film Festival last year.

Abdul Kareem, a former businessman, was another green champion who was feted on Thursday. The 68-year-old forest man converted 32 acres of barren laterite rock hillside in Puliyaikulam in Kasargod, Kerala.

As a young man, Mr. Kareem drove a taxi in Mumbai in the late sixties, when the Bal Thackeray-led agitation against south Indians drove him back to Kerala. He returned to start a travel business, which made him a frequent flyer. “So I decided to purchase some land and build a house for rest and relaxation. I did not intend to build a forest initially,” he said.

The five acres he bought in 1977 had no water, no trees, no birds. In the next few years, he shut down his business and bought more land. He gave the work of planting trees to adivasis in the area, also giving them place to build their homes, creating a colony of 60 huts. “The adivasis know the trees. I am just an ordinary man,” he said.

Natural water reserves

Using soil and water conservation methods of digging rainwater catchpits, he built large reserves of pure natural water. “Trees hold water. My forest has four wells and three ponds. We have lakhs of litres of pure water. Bottled water has an expiry date. We have kept ours for years,” he said. Among the fauna are peacocks, forest hens, and wild pigs. Amidst soaring temperatures, Mr. Kareem’s oasis offers solace. “When it’s 40 degrees in

Kochi, it is 20 degrees in my forest. If you offer me a White House or a Rashtrapati Bhavan, I will reject it,” he declared.

Mr. Kareem’s next project involves building cottages for those who wish to study the environment. To combat the impoverished environment of Mumbai and other cities, he said, “The solution is planting trees. Trees are the solution.”

Fillip to cultivation of horticulture crops

Rs.2.62 crore to be provided as subsidy to farmers during this financial year



Collector K S Palanisamy inspecting a farm at Kottapalayam. —Photo: M. Srinath

Raising of horticulture crops under controlled cultivation is being given a push even as the district has been allotted Rs.2.62 crore for being extended as subsidy to horticulture farmers during the current financial year under the National Mission on Integrated Development of Horticulture.

Under the scheme, subsidy is extended for various components including area expansion, promotion of cultivation controlled conditions using shade net and poly green houses, mulching, pollination support, mechanisation, micro irrigation and training on best practices for farmers, according officials of the Horticulture Department.

The department has planned to promote green houses in about 7,000 square metres and shade net in 14,000 square metres. According to officials, shade

net is ideal for raising quality greens, flowers and tomato, cucumber and brinjal during summer. A variety of crops and vegetables could be raised under poly green houses. Officials said farmers could get a return of as much as Rs.9 lakhs an acre by raising vegetables or flowers under controlled conditions.

Cultivation of horticulture crops under the poly green houses would enable farmers to raise the crops even during off season and double yield, said Collector K.S.Palanisamy who recently inspected some of the poly green houses in Uppiliyapuram area.

One of the beneficiaries of the project, Ashok Kumar of Kottapalayam, said he had availed subsidy under the National Horticulture Mission during 2014-15 for raising various crops under a poly green house; he had spent Rs.19.40 lakhs for setting up the structure in an area of 2,000 square metres. Of this, he got Rs.8.90 lakhs as subsidy. He was raising marigold and vegetables. Ashok Kumar was selling the flowers at the Srirangam and Namakkal markets and he was getting good returns.

Farmers could get a return of as much as Rs.9 lakhs an acre by raising vegetables or flowers under controlled conditions

25,000 saplings planted in reserve forest area

Saplings being planted in the reserve forest area in M.R. Palayam near Tiruchi.— Photo: B.Velankanni Raj

Recent rain has come as a blessing for proper growth of the saplings

The Forest Department has planted a large number of saplings in the Reserve Forest area in M.R. Palayam on the Tiruchi-Chennai National Highway near Tiruchi and the recent rain has come as a blessing for proper growth of the saplings.

As many as 25,000 saplings have been planted and all of them have survived indicating the timely planting and proper nurturing of the saplings. The

saplings were got from a nursery unit at Edhumalai and were planted in August and September this year. “We had to take extra care during the initial period and separate pits were set up for each sapling,” says Forest Department sources.



Application of adequate bio-manure was taken up in the initial phase for growth of root of the saplings till the onset of the North-East monsoon. The bio manure, among other things, included neem cake and ground nut oil cake. The saplings mainly included shade-giving species such as ‘aavi’, ‘pungan’ and neem.

After a lull in the monsoon, weeds are bound to pose a menace. “We have been keeping a close monitoring of each and every sapling and we will water it during the summer,” the source said.

Centre contemplating launch of insurance scheme for farmers

‘Agriculture sector is facing a lot of challenges due to recurrent droughts and floods’

The Centre is contemplating bringing in a viable insurance scheme for farmers given that the agriculture sector is facing a lot of challenges due to recurrent droughts, floods and other weather-related changes, Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Radha Mohan Singh said on Thursday.

Speaking at a national dialogue on ‘Innovative Extension System for Farmers Empowerment and Welfare’ here, Mr. Singh said: “India is having a pluralistic extension system which is dominated by the public extension system which has two approaches: field extension pursued by the development departments and frontline extension pursued by the ICAR and agricultural universities through Krishi Vigyan Kendras. Our focus is on strengthening both these arms of extension.”

The Minister said the government policies of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi SinchaiYojana, the Soil Health Card Scheme, the Paramparagat Krishi VikasYojana and the proposed National Agricultural Market Scheme will revolutionise agriculture in the years to come.

Mr. Singh said besides food security, nutritional security has been a concern and this has to be dealt with appropriately. “At present, one third of global production is lost or wasted annually which is enough to feed two billion people for a year. Most food loss takes place in post-production, harvesting, transportation and storage. This is a huge loss on account of economy, environmental and societal significance. Around 800 million people in the world suffer from hunger and under-nutrition remains widespread with some two billion people lacking essential nutrients like iron, zinc and vitamin A,” he added.

Mr. Singh said according to a U.N.’s Food and Agriculture Organisation estimate, world food production must rise 60 per cent to keep pace with the demographic change. Whereas the International Panel on Climate Change predicts that crop yields may decline by 10-20 per cent by 2050.

“As the holdings are getting smaller, the farmers need models which could ensure food security as well as regular flow of income from their land...all these issues are the main concerns of extension for future,” he added.

KVASU to establish Global animal house

Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU) is gearing up to set up a laboratory for animal research and production centre at the

proposed life science park at Kazhakuttam in Thiruvananthapuram in association with Kerala State Industrial Development Cooperation (KSIDC). The Rs.30-crore project envisages an internationally accredited and Current Good Manufacturing Practice (CGMP) compliant animal production house, state-of-the-art referral laboratory on par with international standards to diagnose emerging diseases, including zoonotic and contagious diseases, and an international training centre for capacity building, Vice Chancellor B. Ashok told *The Hindu* .

The varsity had signed a memorandum of understanding with KSIDC for the purpose recently, Dr. Ashok said.

The Directorate of Entrepreneurship of the university had been assigned the task of identifying appropriate projects based on market feasibility, Dr. Ashok said.

This centre would offer open online courses under technology-enabled mode in association with the University of Guelph, Canada; University of Connecticut, USA; University of Bristol, U.K.; and University of Western Australia, T.P. Sethumadhavan, Director of Entrepreneurship, KVASU, said. Since there was no national level animal disease referral diagnostic laboratory facility in South India, it would help the State to diagnose emerging diseases, including Avian Influenza and Kysanur Forest Disease at a fast pace, Dr. Sethumadhavan said.

Cornell University, U.S., would assist KVASU in setting up the animal house.

It is expecting that the project would be commissioned in one-and-a-half years, he said. “If KVASU can able to supply laboratory animal across southeast Asian region as part of ASEAN agreement, it is a huge market which can fetch nearly Rs.25 crore a year,” Dr. Sethumadhavan said.

The university has signed a memorandum of understanding with KSIDC for the purpose.

Banana, sesame growers launch company

“District administration to provide necessary support to the company”

One more farmers’ producer company has been launched in Karur district.

As many as 240 members representing 12 Farmers Interest Groups have joined as members of the company based at Kulithalai. It has been christened as Kulithalai Banana and Sesame Farmers Producer Company. Farmers of Kulithalai, Krishnarayapuram, and Thogamalai blocks have joined as shareholders.

This is the third farmers’ producer company (FPC) in Karur district. Similar companies had been launched at Nachalur and Nadayanur and both of them are doing well. The new FPC had been promoted by NABARD under the scheme of “Producer Organisation Promoting Institution”.

Collector S. Jayandhi, who inaugurated the new company on Wednesday, said that chances were bright for its success as Kulithalai was a centre of agricultural activities with cultivation of banana on hundreds of acres of land. The district administration would provide necessary support to the company.

Rajeswari, director of the company, said besides supplying inputs for cultivation of banana and sesame at reasonable rate, it would take steps to get good price for the produce of members. It would explore the possibility of producing valued-added products to enhance the profitability.

J. Draviam, Senior Scientist and Head, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Karur, said the directors, founding members and new members had been taken to Nachalur and Nadayanur to provide on the spot inputs on functioning of farmer producer companies. The process of registration of company had been started.

A. Parthiban, Assistant General Manager, National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), said the number of members would be

increased to 500 for facilitating assistance for its Equity Grant Support and Credit Guarantee support under the Small Farmers Agriculture Business Consortium through NABARD.

Padmanaban, Director, National Banana Research Centre, Tiruchi, Madanagopal, Joint Director of Agriculture, Karur, and I. Chandrasekar, Lead District Manager, spoke.

Collector shares field wisdom with farmers



Collector S. Malarvizhi addressing the farmers at Muthupatti on Wednesday. Collector S. Malarvizhi, an agriculture graduate, donned the robes of an agriculture expert when she addressed farmers at a farm school and made field inspections, exhorting farmers to focus on mechanised farming to reap more benefits.

Ms. Malarvizhi, who had served as Joint Commissioner (Administration), Commercial Taxes, before assuming office as Collector in June, stunned the farmers and officials as she spoke extensively about bund cropping, mechanised farming and pest management system while addressing the farmers at Muthupatti on Wednesday.

She advised the farmers to take up bund cropping not only to earn additional income but also to enhance soil fertility. The farmers could grow flower crops and pulses on field bunds, which would go a long way in controlling pests and diseases attacking paddy crop, she said.

Ms. Malarvizhi, who inspected paddy fields at Samiyarpatti, advocated mechanised planting to address the growing labour problem and reduce the cost of farming. The farmers could make use of 100 per cent back-ended subsidy provided for mechanised planting, she said.

The Collector, who visited a System of Rice Intensification (SRI) field at Thoovangal village, advised the farmers to use Cono weeder between the rows and convert weeds into manure. The uprooted weeds under this method would get incorporated in the field, decompose and turn into green manure, she said.

R. Gurumoorthy, Joint Director of Agriculture, said that the district had witnessed widespread rainfall during the northeast monsoon and farmers had raised paddy crops on about 64,000 hectares. With the availability of Vaigai water, another 4,000 hectares were being brought under cultivation, he said. Farmers had also raised millets and pulses on about 4,600 hectares and sugarcane on about 4,000 hectares, he said.

R. Sudarshan, Personal Assistant to Collector (Agriculture), accompanied the Collector during the field inspection.

Farmers advised to take up bund cropping not only to earn additional income but also to enhance soil fertility

“Apply for relief”

The incessant rain during the North East monsoon has damaged standing crops on 4,253 hectares in the district. A majority of the crop was paddy followed by banana and horticultural crops, said K. Madhiyazhagan, Additional Director of Agriculture, here on Thursday. Applications for relief

are being issued at the Farmers Help Centres across the district. The last date for submission of applications is December 31.

EDIBLE OIL DISTRIBUTED

M. Chandrakasu, Minister for Agriculture inaugurated the distribution of edible oil to the card-holders here on Thursday. The supply of edible oil replaces the distribution of wheat to the card-holders, a release said.

MEETING

The periodical meeting of consumer welfare associations and councils will be held at 4.45 p.m. at the Collector's Office here on December 21. In a release issued here on Thursday, S. Ganesh, Collector, said discussion on augmenting public distribution, ways and means for strengthening consumer protection and measures for checking the sale of outdated food products will be taken up.

Collector inspects demo farms

The Collector, V. Rajaraman, on Thursday inspected several demonstration farms in Virudhunagar district where various schemes are being tested by the Department of Agriculture.

At Mettukundu village, where Kuthiraivali had been raised in 50 acres under the Param Paragat Krishi Vikas Yojana, Mr. Rajaraman advised 50 farmers to join a farmers' producer company. At M. Reddiyapatti, the Collector inspected a 50-acre farm where integrated fertilizer management is demonstrated in groundnut.

He also inspected a farm where pulses have been raised in Puliyankulam village and a cotton farm in Udayanenthal, besides going around an oil palm farm in Chettikurichi, according to an official press release.

Cotton crop in Perambalur district nearly lost

Many farmers say they have spent about Rs. 20,000 an acre



A farmer applying urea in his cotton field at Therani trying to save the standing crop.— Photo: B.Velankanni RaJ

Cotton crop has suffered extensive damage following heavy rainfall in the last fortnight, resulting in almost zero yield or yield with the poorest quality in the produce.

What is more distressing is the efforts of the cotton cultivators of Perambalur district in either salvaging the harvested cotton by drying the produce in the sunlight or in saving the standing crop by applying some fertiliser, urea or spraying insecticide or pesticide, pinning hopes on restoring strength and sheen to the standing crop.

Cotton, mostly B-2 variety, has been grown on an area of 20,320 hectares, with Veppanthattai block accounting for a majority of more than 50 per cent of the crop. The average normal yield per acre is 10 quintals but this season not even one quintal could be realised, according to an official estimate. Farmers incur a huge expenditure of up to Rs. 20,000 an acre and get an equal sum as revenue after marketing it at an average rate of Rs. 4,000 a quintal.

“We have incurred a huge loss just a month ahead of the harvest. Last year, we could sell the produce at Rs. 50 a kg but we do not hope to sell it even for Rs. 10 this year,” says K. Selvam and his wife Dhanalakshmi of Kaarai village who had immediately harvested the crop after a let up in the rain.

“We salvage the available cotton so that it can be readily marketed. However, the quality is inferior,” they admit, pleading for adequate compensation from the State government.

Fertiliser everywhere

Visit any interior village in the cotton cluster of Veppanthattai or Irur block you can see a large number of farmers and agricultural labourers either transporting or applying some fertiliser, chemical, urea or pesticide in their fields.

“Based on our experience, we try to protect the crop at least for the next few weeks so that it could regain its sheen,” says Kunjithapatham, a cotton grower of Kolkkanaththam in Irur block. Navarathinam, another farmer of Therani, said he was applying urea to save the standing crop.

Farmers should desist from applying fertiliser or urea at this crucial stage and, instead apply cobalt chloride solution using one gram in 100 litres for an acre, says R. Kavimani, Professor and Head, Cotton Research Station, Veppanthattai, who has been visiting various rain-affected fields across the district for the past one week. He said that cotton could withstand drought condition and hence the continued stagnation of rain water in the fields had done more harm.

“Roots suffocation has resulted in the poor nutrient intake. Further, it has caused in the formation of a toxic substance ethylene which further aggravated the growth and sheen of the cotton,” he said.

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Making last ditch effort to save crops

With bore-wells drying up and water level in Manoor mandal decreasing, farmers face difficult times



A farmer checking the motor that pumps water to his field, on Manjeera riverbed, at Pulkurthi in Medak on Thursday.– PHOTO: Mohd Arif

A village in Manoor mandal, 100 km away from the district headquarters, is facing groundwater crisis. With bore-wells drying up and decreasing water level in these areas, farmers are finding it difficult to continue with agriculture.

Mosin, who cultivates one acre of his land and also works under a landlord, has grown sugarcane this year. With the water level going down, he anticipates his crop might wither away and so goes to the Manjeera riverbed with other farmers every day to see whether the water is being pumped properly to his field.

To get water to their fields, Mosin and his landlord laid pipes for about two km and has an electric wire connected to the motor for the same distance.

They are cautious to the extent that they use kerosene bottles to fix the broken pipes to check leakages. The stories of other farmers and landlords are not different. At this stretch, more than 10 motors are seen pumping water for fields. “About 200 motors are being run along the Manjeera river bed in the surrounding villages. The farmers, who have cultivated crops like sugarcane, have no alternative but to get water wherever it is available. That explains the high number of pipes laid in the area,” said Jagadeeswar Reddy, another farmer from this village. Impact of the drought is so severe that

some of the fields that used to be submerged in water are now seem fished out. The villagers said they have never dealt with such a severe drought in the past three decades.

All set for Agri expo at Lam

The Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS) at Lam in Guntur district will host a three – day South Zone Agri Expo – 2015 from December 19.

It will feature small farmer - friendly agriculture technologies innovated across south India, said C. Sambasiva Rao, Member of Board of Directors of National Horticulture Board.

Mr. Sambasiva Rao said on Thursday that it was being jointly organised by A.P Agri-Horticulture Society, Natural Organic Farmers' Association, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Federation and Krishna Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition Society.

Pests may wipe out paddy harvest in Delta

Unusually long spell of heavy rain makes it difficult to control pests

Yet to recover from the torrent spells that inundated samba and thalady paddy crop on thousands of hectares across Cauvery delta districts, farmers now fear pest attacks might sweep away whatever they could try to salvage from their devastated fields. Though crops in this season are prone to pest attacks, the rains have accentuated the problem.

Pests and insects have a field day during the current season. Samba and thalady paddy usually comes under attack but farmers repulse them with pesticides and chemical insecticides, albeit at a cost.

But this time the heavy rains and the continued waterlogging for a sustained period have rendered the crops vulnerable to pest attacks.

“Several fields in Budalur, Thirukkattuppalli, Manathidal, and Konerirajapuram have been afflicted with leaf roller while some have even come under the stem borer malaise. Farmers are required to fight the insects even as they concentrate mostly in draining the fields of excess waterlogging. Manpower and money is pinching the paddy growers,” says vice-president of Tamilaga Vivasaya Thozhilalar Sangam V. Jeevakumar of Budalur in Thanjavur district.

GPS mapping of sacred groves begins

Statewide project initiated by biodiversity board

Mapping of sacred groves by means of GPS is under way in Alappuzha as part of a Statewide project initiated by State Biodiversity Board. A software developed for the purpose is being employed by the board. The ongoing survey will give a correct picture of the sacred groves in the State.

The sacred groves would be protected by erecting fences with aid from Kerala State Biodiversity Board, K.S. Unnithan, district coordinator of the board told *The Hindu*. Funds won't be a constraint as the Union government had allocated over Rs.1,000 crore for the biodiversity projects, Mr. Unnithan said.

Biodiversity clubs

Biodiversity clubs have been formed in over 150 schools and colleges in Alappuzha district.

Medicinal plants and flowering plants are grown in 10 to 15 cents at the educational institutions under the *Santhi sthal* project.

A larger area has been selected at Kanjikkuzhy where a *grama vanam*, an expanded version of *Santhi sthal*, has been established. A garden where flowering plants attract butterflies, thus making space for a butterfly park, is part of the project. Seedlings have been distributed free of cost for both the

projects from Ayurveda Research Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, and State Medicinal Board, Thrissur

Inland fish conservation in rivers is another project being taken up by the board. A pilot project has been initiated in the Pampa. Natural breeding of rare species of fishes was done in ponds and the fry let out into the river.

Tuber crops

A tuber crop conservation programme has been taken up by the board in Onattukara. Groups of farmers have been enrolled in the scheme and the crops are getting ready for harvest. The farmers in the group are expected to supply the seeds from their farms to new groups of farmers so that the cultivated area of the crop increases gradually.

Biodiversity Management Committees are to be set up in the newly formed local self-governments (LSGs) as per provisions of Central Biodiversity Act, 2002. The formation of the BMS would strengthen the ongoing activities in biodiversity segment, he said.

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- *Centre allocates Rs.1,000 crore for eco projects*
 - *Project for inland fish conservation being taken up*
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Outstation processors keep pineapple farmers afloat

Large-scale procurement by processors from Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka has helped pineapple farmers keep their heads above water in the middle of a long spell of price-fall.

According to market sources, processors from the neighbouring States have procured around 6,000 tonnes of pineapple from Kerala markets, most of it from Vazhakkulam, over the last 45 days. The processors have been sourcing between six and seven loads of pineapple per day during the short period.

The large-scale procurement has helped prop up prices though farmers are hardly getting a remunerative price, said Baby John, a pineapple farmer in Muvattupuzha.

The price of fruit has averaged Rs. 10 a kg now. The cost of cultivation is around Rs. 17, he said and pointed out that the best grade fruits fetched up to Rs. 14 a kg.

Pineapple price has moved in tandem with the price of other fruits. The price of orange in Kerala this season has hovered between Rs. 20 and 25 a kg, a factor that has helped also to push down the price of pineapple. The price of nendran and other variety of bananas too has dropped significantly.

Higher production too has contributed to the fall in the price of fruit. Production could be up substantially during the four months starting September. It means that the total production in the State could go up to about 3.5 lakh tonnes, up from the previous figures of 3.25 lakh tonnes.

The acreage under the crop has held steady at around 13,000 hectares. But the spell of intermittent, copious rains and bright sunshine in the intervening periods have helped increase the yield.

‘Souharda banks can help farmers to come out of the clutches of moneylenders’

Gurunath Jyantikar, Chairman of the Karnataka Rajya Souharda Samyukta Sahakari, has said that the Souharda Sahakari banks are a way for farmers to end their exploitation at the hands of money-lending sharks in rural areas, and save the farming sector from the present crisis.

Speaking after inaugurating the annual meeting of the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of the Souharda Sahakari banks in Kalaburagi city on Thursday, Mr. Jyantikar said that while the farmers who availed crop loans from the nationalised and private banks at hefty interest rates were struggling to repay their loans, the Souharda Sahakari banks offered loans at low interest rates.

He said the majority of Souharda banks were functioning in rural areas, meeting the credit requirements of the farming community. The total investment of these banks was more than Rs. 12,000 crore and they have extended loans to the tune of Rs 11,000 crore so far. Besides providing loans to the farming sector, the Souharda banks also extended its functioning in animal husbandry, tourism, marketing and other fields. Nearly 39,000 self-help groups were linked to the Souharda banks for financial assistance.

Farmers give bananas for free in schools



Anguished by the sudden crash in the prices of banana, farmers from different parts of the banana belt of Davangere district distributed the fruit to students of schools and colleges besides the public, for free.

Training on pest management

A free training programme on integrated and pest and disease management in small onions would be held at Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Veterinary College and Research Institute premises here on December 21.

A press release from B. Mohan, Programme Coordinator, said that farmers, members of self-help groups, among others can participate.

For details contact phone: 04286 266345, 266244 and 266650, according to a press release.

Sanghas to boost sericulture sector

Five to be constituted on a pilot basis



Three sanghas will be set up in south Karnataka districts, and two in north Karnataka to give a fillip to sericulture movement in the State.

To create a bridge between sericulture farmers and all other stakeholders and introduce the latest skills and rearing technologies in sericulture farming, the State government has decided to help in the formation of Sericulture Farmers Produce Sanghas under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) from this year.

Official sources told *The Hindu* in Kalaburagi city on Thursday that on a pilot basis five such sanghas would be constituted to give a fillip to the sericulture movement, increase the quality production of silk in the State and improve the marketing avenues for sericulture farmers.

The government will provide a financial assistance of Rs. 14 lakh to each of the five sanghas.

Three sanghas will be in South Karnataka districts, and two in North Karnataka. T

he sanghas would establish linkages between sericulture farmers and other stakeholders including warehouses, cooperatives, silk weavers and traders to provide better marketing facilities; recommend the correct mixture of fertilizers and pesticides in case of pest attacks; help in the mechanisation of sericulture farming; introduce improved silk weaving methodologies; and extend loan facilities to the member-farmers.

Each sangha would have 50 groups and each group would have at least 25 members. Every month the sanghas would convene a meeting of the groups and discuss the sericulture activities in their respective region.

The sanghas would also prepare a list of farmers to be trained for upscaling their skills.

Trust to market tender jackfruit in Sirsi

The Kadamba Marketing Trust has decided to procure tender jackfruits from this year.

It signed an agreement with Pune-based Vaish Vick Foods Pvt. Ltd. on Tuesday for the purpose, Rahul Palange, joint managing director, told *The Hindu* .

The company sells more than 6,000 tonnes of fruits and vegetables with the help of 6,000 farmers every year, Mr. Palange said.

The company has asked the trust to supply of 1,000 tonnes of tender jackfruit this year at the rate of Rs. 5 to Rs. 7 a kg.

Nairobi deadlocked over draft deal on agriculture

Developing nations say text favours rich nations

It is the penultimate day of the Nairobi meet of the WTO, but there is still no deal in sight to liberalise global trade. On Thursday, developing countries including India opposed a draft declaration on agriculture, saying it favoured the rich countries.

The day saw the U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman asking WTO members to move beyond what he called the cynical repetition of positions designed to produce deadlock and instead discuss what is doable for a successful outcome.

Meanwhile, India and other developing countries rejected the language in another draft text on the final Nairobi Ministerial Declaration. Expressing “severe reservations” about the draft declaration on agriculture, India and the developing world have pointed out that it has not taken on board their demands — that they be given an effective tool to protect poor farmers' interests without any conditionality, and that the text mention a short deadline (of December 2016 or latest by December 2017) for arriving at a permanent solution for the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes.

Sources said the G-33 (a coalition of nations, including India and China) will shortly issue a different draft declaration on agriculture.

As per the agriculture draft, the developing nations' demand for an SSM (Special Safeguard Mechanism) would be accepted on the condition that these nations grant greater market access to farm goods through reduced tariffs. The SSM will allow developing countries to temporarily hike duties to counter import surges and price falls of farm products.

Healthy diet leads to healthy life



Parents must MONITOR the food habits of their children

Type 1 diabetes is not only genetically acquired or lifestyle related. There are a host of other factors that can cause it too. According to A. Jaleel Ahmed, Chief Paediatrician and Neonatologist of Sri Ramakrishna Hospital, children as young as six-months are diagnosed with diabetes.

It is not just enough if parents watch out only for infections. They should also watch what they feed their children.

Prevention is always better than cure. The wrong kind of diet can lead not just to diabetes, but to many other health problems.

Pacifying crying kids with junk food and chocolates may work for that moment, but in the long run it may be inviting serious health problems.

Several schools in Coimbatore have begun to pay attention to the nutrition of their students. Apart from annual medical check ups, they also serve nutritious food to the children.

Even if they are not serving children meals at their schools, they check their Tiffin boxes to see that they are having an appropriate diet.

If the child is found to have junk food, the parents are contacted and warned about it.

Santhya Vikram of Yellow Train School said that last year the school introduced millets as main ingredient in lunch served at school, thrice a week.

Organically grown vegetables are also part of their diet.

She said that parents splurge on rich cream cakes to distribute to other children during birthdays . “Now the kids are not allowed to bring cakes or chocolates to distribute on their birthdays,,” she said.

According to her, parents who found it difficult to change the food habits of their children (from junk food to healthy diet) are supportive of the exercise. “Children are now used to the new diet and now they explain the advantages of the healthy diet to the newly enrolled students,” she added.

M.K. Ananth

Paddy procurement process initiated in Gobi taluk

Decentralised paddy procurement scheme for kharif season has been initiated by the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation in the district in the ayacut area of Thadapalli-Arakankottai canals in Gobichettipalayam taluk, with revised rates.

The coarse variety will fetch Rs. 1,460 per quintal, inclusive of incentive of Rs. 50. For the fine variety, the rate is Rs. 15,20 per quintal along with incentive of Rs. 70

After two days of training, the procurement will start at nine centres: N.G. Palayam, T.N. Palayam, Kookalur, Elur (Arakankottai), Pudukkaraipudur, Pudevallampalayam, Kasipalayam, Kallipatti and Athani. According to a

press release issued by the District Collector S. Prabakar, procurement centres in other parts of the district will be opened shortly coinciding with harvest.

Farmers bringing their produce will be required to furnish Chitta, VAO certificate, copy of family card, bank pass book, and phone number. The amount will be remitted in the bank account of the farmers.

‘Focus is on minimally processed vegetables’



The two-day training programme on ‘Minimally processed vegetable and fruits’ organised by the Department of Food Science and Nutrition of Periyar University got underway at the university here on Thursday. P. Sathyamoorthy, technical director of Dr. Yes Aar Team Industry is the resource person.

He explained about fruits and vegetables, maturity identification, harvesting, cleaning, grading, packaging, and branding.

Mr. Sathyamoorthy explained in detail the technology application at farm level to minimise the loss by about 40 per cent, setting up of a model organised integrated block to reduce the loss at market level, and the techniques to prepare ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook vegetables and fruits.

Students enrolled for the B.Voc programme offered by the Department of Food Science and Nutrition attended the programme.

C. Swaminathan, Vice-Chancellor, said that developed countries like the U.S. continued to dominate the international trade of fruits and vegetables and has been ranked number one in both importing and exporting.

The demand for minimally processed fruits and vegetables has increased mainly due to consumers' concern about health, and convenience, particularly during the last decade.

The food industry has responded to these demands, and minimally processed fruits and vegetables have become a major industry, Mr. Swamianthan said.

Poongodi Vijayakumar, Head of the Department of Food Science and Nutrition, V. Krishnakumar, Dean of Sciences, and Lakshmi Manohari, Head of the Department of Textiles and Apparel Design, were present.



RSS seeks bonus for Gujarat cotton farmers who have sold their produce

Gujarat Health Minister had said those farmers who have already sold their cotton will not get the benefit.

RSS farmers' body Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) Thursday said small and marginal farmers, who have already sold their produce, may not benefit from the MSP bonus.

It said that the Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMCs) and the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) await a formal intimation from the government and the farmers will have to wait for some time to avail of the bonus”.

“Had the government made the announcement in the beginning of the season, small and marginal farmers, who have been forced to sell their cotton at a low price, would have benefited. We demand that the government also thinks about such farmers,” Vitthal Dudhatra, general secretary of Gujarat unit of BKS, said in a release.

While making the announcement on Wednesday, Health Minister Nitin Patel, the spokesperson of the state government, had said those farmers who have already sold their cotton will not get the benefit.

On the other hand, a top officer of Ahmedabad branch of the CCI said it has not received any communique from the state government or the headquarters of the CCI on the bonus payment.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

[Weather SMS to help farmers plan better](#)

The automatic weather monitoring stations established in the district five months ago have begun to do their job. Farmers now receive weather alerts as SMS on their mobile phones. These small weather stations were established in 13 blocks in the district, each station costing Rs6.5 lakh, said district collector L Subramanian to reporters during a press tour on Wednesday.

Situated in agricultural blocks, the weather stations are connected to Agro Climatic Research Centre at Tamil Nadu Agriculture University. They have a range of 20km and generate hourly reports on local weather. Based on the daily report, farmers receive SMS on the weather status. As many as 2,47,050 farmers have registered under this scheme and receive SMS on their mobile phones, collector said.

Agricultural officials said the weather stations study nine parameters- air temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, soil moisture, soil temperature, rainfall, solar radiation, atmospheric pressure and leaf wetness. These are important parameters for farmers.

For instance, when the humidity is high, they can reduce the amount of fertilisers or expect more pest attacks when the air temperature starts to drop, they said.

M Pandian, a farming community leader from the district, said, "The only problem is that the alerts are in English most of the time and our farmers don't understand the language. Weather alert SMS could be sent in Tamil," he said.

District collector also said each block has five assistant agriculture officers who have to take out field visits every week. They have to maintain a travel journal to log their trips, which has to be approved by the joint director of agriculture.

"During their trips, the officials explain the idea of weather alerts and counsel farmers to adopt the best practices. The automatic weather stations and the field visits by officials help the farmers and we hope it will yield rich dividends in coming days," he said.

[Simple ways to reduce waste](#)

a pile of garbage. As conscious citizens, we can take action to reduce our carbon footprint and do our bit for nature. Here are small steps that you can take to reduce waste...

- Carry your own water bottle. That way , you won't buy and waste packaged water bottles
 - Carry your own steel utensils on trips to avoid using thermocol, plastic and Styrofoam
 - - Eat ice cream in a cone so that the only waste product is a tissue paper
 - Say no to chewing gum as it is very difficult to degrade.
 - Use cloth napkins instead of tissue paper for everyday use
 - If you have to buy cold drinks, opt for those in glass bottles instead of plastic ones
 - - Instead of plastic gift wrappers, wrap gifts in newspapers
 - Switch to e-reading platforms to save paper, and therefore trees
 - Use menstrual cups instead of sanitary napkins and tampons
 - Segregate garbage at home

Gujarat bonus seen boosting cotton prices



A day after Gujarat announced a bonus for cotton farmers, the prices of the fibre crop have shown a firming trend with the markets anticipating other states to follow suit.

Traders feel the bonus could further strengthen cotton prices even in a dismal export scenario.

Gujarat has already witnessed cotton being poured-in from neighbouring States including Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. This flooding is expected to further escalate as farmers from other States would get lured by the higher prices.

“Cotton prices have shown firming trend ever since there were talks about a possibility of Gujarat government’s bonus announcement. Market price is already above MSP and is likely to remain firm,” said Bharat Wala, President, Saurashtra Ginners Association (SGA).

Gujarat, on Wednesday, announced bonus of ₹110 per 20 kg for cotton growers in the State.

According to the announcement, cotton farmers will get additional ₹110 on the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of ₹810 per 20 kg when sold to Cotton Corporation of India. Only those farmers, selling cotton at the CCI depots will be entitled for this bonus.

Swelling surplus

However, trade sources believe that firm prices would do more harm than benefit to the overall cotton value chain, especially at a time when export prospects remain bleak amidst higher supplies.

The Cotton Association of India expect total supplies of 46.3 million bales (of 170 kg each) during the current 2015-16 season including a domestic crop of around 37.5 million bales. India's overall domestic consumption is estimated at 32.4 million bales and exports likely to be around 5 million bales.

“We expect surplus of around 8.5 million bales at the close of this season. In this scenario, we do not see higher prices to do any good to the cotton value chain. Already buyers are hesitant at the prevailing prices,” Shirish Shah of Bhaidas Cursondas & Co, a cotton trader from Mumbai.

Meanwhile, the growers in other cotton growing States such as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka see the Gujarat bonus as a big positive and are expected to place a demand for a similar incentive with their respective State governments.

Demand in other States

“We had already urged the Telangana government to announce a bonus of ₹1,400 a quintal recently. Now with Gujarat announcing an incentive, we will renew our demand for declaring a bonus,” said Ravi Kannenganti, an official of the Rythu Swarajya Vedika and Telangana Rythu Joint Action Committee, an umbrella organisation of farmers group.

Kannenganti said the cost of producing cotton in Telangana is estimated at ₹5,500 a quintal and we want the government to declare the differential between the production cost and MSP as bonus.

Further, Kannenganti said that the Cotton Corporation of India should step up the procurement in the State.

In Karnataka, though the prices of the fibre crop have been hovering around support price levels on account of a lower output, it is anticipated that the farmers were likely to demand a bonus on the lines of Gujarat.

“Farmers are obviously going to demand a bonus. We are focused on ensuring that the procurement and payments are done on time,” said TN Prakash Kammaradi, Chairman of the Karnataka Agricultural Prices Commission.

‘Implement thru APMCs’

The spinning mills have also raised doubts about the successful implementation of the bonus scheme in Gujarat under procurement by Cotton Corporation of India (CCI).

Cautioning of a possible speculation and delay in the sale of cotton by CCI, M Senthilkumar, Chairman, Southern India Mills’ Association stated that implementing the cotton bonus system through CCI would hurt the interests of the cotton spinning mills.

“CCI has been historically quoting higher prices than the actual market price and commences sale only after a period of one or two months of procurement. Cotton bonus implementation through CCI would result in speculation, as CCI normally delays the sale of cotton,” Senthilkumar said in a statement, urging the State and Central governments to implement the bonus scheme through Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) instead. SIMA Chairman alleged CCI of adopting indiscriminate cotton trading policies.

“Several hundreds of cotton spinning mills have already become NPAs and most of the stand-alone mills are incurring cash losses. If the scheme is implemented through APMC, private ginners would immediately procure cotton and there will be a regular flow of supply in the market. Gujarat being the largest cotton growing state in the country, if the cycle of sale is disrupted, it would greatly affect the entire textile value chain,” he stated.

According to the latest data from the CCI, progressive procurement by the agency across the country till December 14 stood at 6,75,145 bales against the progressive arrivals of 72,77,100 bales. Majority of the procurement – about 4,84,441 bales – has been done in Telangana.

However, lower output in the drought-affected Karnataka has spelt some troubles for the ginners in the State this year who are seen scrambling for the raw material.

“We are operating at less than 20 per cent of our capacity,” said Ramanuja Das Boob, a ginner in Raichur.

Cotton prices in Raichur are hovering between ₹4,200 and ₹4,450 a quintal.

Spot rubber stays unchanged



Spot rubber closed unchanged on Thursday. RSS 4 finished flat at ₹100 a kg, according to traders. The grade was quoted steady at ₹100.50 and ₹97.50 respectively by the Rubber Board and dealers. January futures improved to ₹103.69 (₹101.24), February to ₹104.60 (₹101.93) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. December futures closed at ¥151.9 (₹82.39) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber rates (₹/kg): RSS-4: 100 (100); RSS-5: 97.50 (97.50); Ungraded: 90 (90); ISNR 20: 82.50 (82.50) and Latex (60% drc): 75 (75).

Sugar output up 13.2% than last year so far: ISMA



A total of 440 sugar mills have produced 47.86 lakh tonnes (lt) of the sweetener till December 15 for the sugar season 2015-16, against 42.29 lt produced by 453 mills in the same period last year, registering an increase of 13.2 per cent.

Also, about 2.5 lt of sugar has been physically exported by mills, and contracts have been entered into for about 5 lt till December 15, the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) said in a release.

However, ISMA said mills across the country were still losing ₹2-3/kg over their cost of production despite a slight increase in domestic ex-mill prices of the sweetener.

Overall, till December 15, sugar production has been higher in most producing States, except in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

State-wise breakup

In Maharashtra, 164 sugar mills that are crushing cane have produced 22.50 lt till December 15, against 166 sugar mills producing 20.73 lt last year.

In Uttar Pradesh, where 105 out of 119 working sugar mills had commenced crushing operations, 8.52 lt of the sweetener has been produced so far, compared with 7.94 lt produced by 114 mills last year.

ISMA said all the 19 sugar mills in Gujarat were in operation, producing 3.25 lt till December 15, against 18 mills producing 2.68 lt in the same period last year.

South scenario

The third largest sugar producing State – Karnataka – has an output of 10.29 lt so far – about 3.23 lt higher than in the same period last year.

In this sugar season, 61 mills in the State are in operation compared to 62 last year.

However, in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, only 18 sugar mills could start crushing till December 15, producing 0.92 lt against 1.35 lt produced by 23 sugar mills last year.

In Tamil Nadu, six mills were in operation and had produced 0.60 lt against 0.35 lt produced by seven mills as on December 15, 2014.

In Bihar, Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh, 11, 16, 14 and 16 sugar mills were in operation respectively, and had produced 0.54 lt, 0.20 lt, 0.40 lt and 0.30 lt, respectively.

Mixed trend in jeera



Jeera price moved up on short covering by traders at the lower level in future. Though, it remained unchanged in spot on subdued demand. On the NCDEX, jeera December contract gained ₹105 to ₹14,540 a quintal, while the January series was up ₹140 to ₹ 14,590. At Unjha mandi of Gujarat, about 4,000 bags arrived and price was quoted at ₹2,350-3,200 per 20 kg, while at Rajkot APMC jeera arrival was registered 500 bags and price stood at ₹2,200-3,300 per 20 kg.

Millers demand cotton bonus implementation through APMCs



A day after the Gujarat government announced bonus for the cotton farmers, spinning millers have raised doubts about the successful implementation of the bonus scheme under procurement by Cotton Corporation of India (CCI).

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"CCI has been historically quoting higher prices than the actual market price and commences sale only after a period of one or two months of procurement. Cotton bonus implementation through CCI would result in speculation, as CCI normally delays the sale of cotton," he said urging the state and Central governments to implement the bonus scheme through Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) instead.

SIMA chairman alleged CCI of adopting indiscriminate cotton trading policies. "Several hundreds of cotton spinning mills have already become NPAs and most of the stand-alone mills are incurring cash losses," said Senthilkumar.

The fall in yarn export has created surplus domestic supply and therefore, large number of mills across the nation is forced to cut down production by 10 to 30 per cent.

The implementation of cotton bonus system for the farmer in Gujarat through CCI has already inflated the cotton price by few hundred rupees.

The Gujarat government on Wednesday had announced Rs. 110 per 20 kg bonus for the cotton growers in the State. As per the announcement, cotton farmers will get additional Rs. 110 per 20 kg on the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Rs. 810 per 20 kg when sold to CCI. Only those farmers, selling cotton at the CCI depots will be entitled to get this bonus.

"If the scheme is implemented through APMC, private ginners would immediately procure cotton and there will be a regular flow of supply in the market. Gujarat being the largest cotton growing state in the country, if the cycle of sale is disrupted, it would greatly affect the entire textile value chain," the SIMA chairman stated.

The knitting and garmenting sectors predominantly depend on Gujarat cotton. Stability in prices (slightly lower than international price) coupled with timely continuous availability is a must to sustain the smooth functioning of these sectors.