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THE HINDU

6,550 hectares of paddy under SRI



Collector S. Jayandhi inspecting a paddy field at a village near Karur on Tuesday.

As many as 6,550 hectares of paddy crop will be brought under the System Rice Intensification (SRI) method in the current season, according to Collector S. Jayandhi.

She was inspecting the progress of bringing paddy fields under SRI at Muthaladampatti near here on Tuesday.

She said samba crop had been raised on 9,362 hectares in the district. Of them, SRI had been followed on 6,554 hectares of land. Since the mechanised transplantation had good potential to produce high yield, it had been decided to bring as many hectares as possible. Target had been fixed to bring 2,120 hectares under mechanised transplantation.

Stating that samba plantation work had been progressing work in the district, mechanised transplantations were completed on 1,505 hectares of land. It would help farmers raise the crop with minimum overhead cost.

The shortage of labour could be overcome well.

Ms. Jayandhi said the government was extending subsidy to the tune of Rs. 3,000 a hectare for promoting mechanised paddy transplantation. A sum of Rs. 63.60 lakh had been earmarked for it.

She said the district had so far received 538 mm of rain as against the annual average of 652 mm. It was expected that the district would surpass the average rainfall this year. Instructions had been given to the agricultural officials to maintain sufficient stock of fertilisers.

Control room set up to monitor damage to paddy

The Agriculture Department has set up a control room to check any possible damage to the standing samba and thaladi crops during the current monsoon. The setting up of the control room has been necessitated in the wake of the forewarning by the Meteorological Department that the behaviour of the northeast monsoon was likely to be above its normal phenomenon, said K. Madhiyazhagan, Additional Director of Agriculture.

Explaining the arrangements made by the Agriculture Department to prevent any loss to the standing crop, particularly because of marooning of fields, he said that those in need of any assistance could immediately contact the Agriculture officials by calling 04368-230179 or 231879.

Mr. Madhiyazhagan said that cultivation of paddy had been completed on 2,400 hectares of land – 1,200 hectares of land through direct sowing method and 1,200 hectares of land through transplanting of nurseries. The area would increase by an additional 1,600 hectares where farmers had raised the nurseries in anticipation of the timely onset of the monsoon.

The Agriculture Department officials had been keeping a close follow-up on the cultivation practices adopted by farmers.

Red caterpillar attack in groundnut under control

Farmers of Aruppukottai, M. Reddiyapatti and Narikudi areas in Virudhunagar district have been advised to raise minor millets and pulses as alternate crops in view of red caterpillar attack in groundnut.

In a press release, the Collector, V. Rajaraman, said that the caterpillar attack reported in these areas had been brought under control through use of pesticides as advised by officials of the Department of Agriculture. A team of Agriculture officials and scientists from the Regional Research Station of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University inspected the groundnut crop and suggested remedial measures to farmers, which included use of both organic pesticides and chemicals.

In Kurinjakulam, Sempatti, M. Thottiyankulam and Poyyankulam villages around Aruppukottai, incidence of red caterpillar attack was found in 173.25 hectares of groundnut crop, out of a total area of 313 hectares.

“Use pesticides as advised by officials”

Farmers of the district who have plans to cultivate paddy, sugarcane and pulses have been urged to get proper advice from the officials of the Department of Agriculture on the quantity of pesticides to be used in their lands in case of pest attack and diseases in standing crops.

In a statement, L. Perumal, Joint Director of Agriculture, said that paddy, millets, pulses, oilseeds, cotton, sugarcane and other crops were being cultivated during the ‘pisanam’ season as northeast monsoon had become active. The prevailing climate was conducive for pest attack and consequent disease outbreak in crops.

When pest or disease attack was noticed, farmers should consult the Deputy Agricultural Officers, Agricultural Officers or Assistant Directors of Agriculture to get appropriate control measures and the right quantum of pesticides.

“Farmers can also consult the Assistant Agricultural Officers who visit their villages periodically and get correct recommendation,” he said.

“If it was done, the farmers can reduce plant protection expenses and pest or disease will be controlled without any resurgence,” Mr. Perumal said.

He also instructed pesticide dealers to give proper bills to the farmers after getting signatures of the farmers in the bills being given for sale of pesticide or fertilizer. A separate information board for pesticides should also be displayed in front of each shop, he said.

The information board should contain updated stock position of pesticides and correct prices. The level of toxicity of pesticides should also be mentioned in the bills. The pesticides should not be sold beyond the maximum retail price. Pesticides, which had crossed the expiry date, should not be sold or kept in the shop.

The details of pesticides banned should also be explained to the farmers while selling the pesticides.

“Anyone violating these instructions will have to face stringent action under the Insecticides Act, 1968,” Mr. Perumal warned.

Paddy plantation begins with aid of machine in Tuticorin

Crop likely to cover 17,500 hectares

Paddy farmers engaged in mechanised planting at Keela Vallanadu in Tuticorin district on Tuesday.

With the Northeast monsoon bringing copious rains, pisanam paddy cultivation has started to pick up in Tuticorin district. Paddy cultivation is expected on 17,500 hectares across the district this year, according to Joint Director of Agriculture V. Jeyakumar.

Paddy crop was raised mainly in Karungulam, Srivaikundam, Alwarthirunagari and Tiruchendur areas. Besides, some areas around Tuticorin were also conducive to paddy crop.



In the wake of monsoon rains, mat nurseries had been raised and machine transplantation was in progress in Alwarthirunagari and Karungulam blocks. Transplanting in Srivaikundam and Tiruchendur blocks would be taken up in a few days, the Joint Director told *The Hindu* here on Tuesday.

During the previous year, paddy was raised on 16,265 hectares, mainly as a wetland crop.

To cope with increasing farm labour scarcity, the Department of Agriculture was popularising machine transplantation in paddy fields under National Agriculture Development Programme (NADP)-Paddy Mission.

Of the targeted area of 1,900 hectares under machine transplantation, 600 hectares each in Srivaikundam and Alwarthirunagari, 450 hectares in Karungulam and 250 hectares in Tiruchendur would be covered.

A subsidy Rs. 3,000 per hectare would be given to farmers under this mission on completion of machine transplantation. Campaigns to popularise the use of machinery were conducted among farmers at several villages, Mr. Jeyakumar said.

Citing its advantages, he said, “Use of machinery ensures uniform spacing and depth. Young seedlings can be transplanted and intercultural operations like weeding, and fertilizer and pesticide application can be carried out easily. Machine planting is cost-effective and results in good yield due to plant population maintenance.”

Deputy Director of Agriculture M. Kanagaraj and Assistant Director of Agriculture S. Mathiazhagan (Quality Control) took stock of machine transplantation on paddy fields at Keela Vallanadu.

Yellow mosaic virus a pest for urad dhal farmers in Tirunelveli

For urad dhal farmers of Tirunelveli district, the yellow mosaic virus is a deadly enemy. One rain is enough to spoil 50 per cent of their crop as it brings the virus that turns the leaves yellow and eats up the stalk.

The State Agriculture Department has approached the Baba Atomic Research Centre (BARC) for virus-resistant seeds.

It conducted a field trial of the BARC Trombay Urdbean (TU-94-2) variety in its Palayamkottai seed farm recently.

“The BARC variety was tested at the farm along with the regular variety of urad, and the former was indeed a resistant to the virus. We have placed orders for more seeds for supply to farmers in the next season,” said a source in the department.

“We saw both varieties grow next to each other. The BARC one was not affected by the virus. Farmers in our area are happy. But we are waiting for another trial before trying it in our farms. The leaves are not as broad as that of Vamban- 3 or 4 or 5 or Aduthurai -3 varieties that we grow,” said Balakrishnan, a farmer of Karaiyiruppu village in Tirunelveli who visited the farm during the field trial.

“Pulses are usually sown as paddy fallow crops. The seeds are sown on the fields directly after harvest. The crop grows using moisture from the mist in the air during January-February. But one rain is enough to inflict damage to the crop and farmers,” said Nalliah, another farmer.

Short duration

BARC senior scientist J. Daniel Chellappa said that the duration of the TU-94-2 variety was short compared to other varieties. “It is only 60-65 days. Apart from being resistant to the virus, it has a high yield. Farmers in other parts of the country have been cultivating and reaping the benefits of this crop for more than ten years now,” he said.

Rain a boon to rabi crops

Sowing fixed at 60,500 hectares; more than half of the area covered

The recent rain is expected to help crops such as jowar and ragi in Mysuru district.

The incessant rains that are lashing the district for the last couple of days has come as a boon for the drought-stricken farmers.

The rainfall has improved the crops, particularly ragi and jowar, according to the Agriculture Department. The rain has also improved the condition of horse gram and 'avare kalu' (field beans), whose season starts this month.



Speaking to *The Hindu*, Joint Director of Agriculture Mahanteshappa said the target for sowing in rabi season had been fixed at 60,500 hectares. So far, sowing has been done in 36,300 hectares, he said, adding that sowing of minor crops had intensified and is expected to cover the remaining area.

During the rabi season, ragi alone had been cultivated on over 10,000 hectares. This is highest sowing of ragi during the rabi season in the recent years. Perhaps, the reason for increase in ragi cultivation was supportive price which the government had been giving to ragi growers, he said.

A quintal of ragi is purchased at Rs. 2,000 at the procurement centres opened by the government, he said. Mr. Mahanteshappa said the area under rabi cultivation had been less this year because the crops had been sown till late kharif during to deficient rainfall in monsoon.

There was still scope for sowing crops such as jowar and horse gram, he said.

Pulses yield sees rise in Mysuru

Even as the rising prices of pulses had led the governments to intervene and take stock of the situation, there has been a substantial increase in the cultivation of pulses in the district this year.

In fact, the target fixed for pulses cultivation exceeded noticeably and the district agriculture authorities claim that drought had minimal impact on pulses as far as Mysuru is concerned.

Joint Director of Agriculture Mahanteshappa told *The Hindu* on Tuesday that 75 per cent of the production, primarily black gram, cowpea and green gram, had been achieved this year.

Pre-monsoon showers

The reasonably good production had been attributed to satisfactory pre-monsoon showers, as a large number of farmers had sown pulses after summer showers lashed the farmlands, he explained.

This year, the department had set a target of 65,780 hectares (both rain-fed and irrigated lands) for the cultivation of pulses. However, pulses had been cultivated on 1,13,087 hectares.

Cowpea had been cultivated on 48,000 hectares; green gram on 14,000 hectares; black gram on 21,000 hectares and horse gram on 16,000 hectares. Mysuru is not a major producer of toor dal and therefore it was cultivated on over 2,500 hectares.

After Maharashtra, Karnataka is the second largest producer of pulses, and the contribution from the district had been on the rise.

Double cropping

Many farmers, who grew pulses after pre-monsoon showers, harvested the crop after three months and cultivated ragi and maize as second crop during the onset of monsoon. However, the monsoon was deficient this year.

Another interesting development is that more irrigated lands had come under pulses cultivation. After harvesting pulses, the farmers of irrigated lands cultivated standard irrigated crops such as paddy and sugarcane. “This way, they got two crops a season,” Mr. Mahanteshappa said.

He attributed the increase in the area of cultivation of pulses to good prices the crops were fetching in the recent years. “Besides great returns, crop rotation and enrichment of soil fertility are the other reasons,” he said.

Claiming that drought did not have a major impact on pulse crops, he said, “Based on the reports collected, about 75 per cent of production had been achieved. The major loss occurred to crops such as cotton, maize and tobacco during the kharif season due to drought.”

‘Market toddy tapped from Palmyra palm’

The State Government should take steps to explore the possibilities of producing neera and toddy from palmyra palm and market the same in bottles as well as packs, according to Tamil Nadu Toddy Movement field coordinator C. Nallasamy.

Potential

He pointed out that why should anyone waste the immense potential offered by the palmyra palm trees which were grown in the State without any inorganic fertilizers or inputs.

“Of the eight crore palmyra palms grown in the country, five crore trees are in Tamil Nadu. Neera and toddy produced from such organic trees will be of extremely good quality so that it could easily find market in foreign

countries. Moreover, toddy and neera are considered to be health drinks,” he said.

The Movement members were of the view that if Indian Made Foreign Liquors that contain 42.8 per cent alcohol could be sold, why toddy, which contain only 4.5 per cent alcohol and termed as ‘health drink’, could not be promoted.

Mr. Nallasamy said that the State Government should train women to climb trees like the coaching given in Kerala.

“This will help generate employment to women in agricultural sector,” he added.

Erode Spice Development Agency starts functioning

Spice Development Agency formed in Erode by the Union Commerce Ministry to promote turmeric processing and export has started functioning. A Deputy Director has been posted for it.

The SDA covering the entire State will also promote processing and export of chilli, pepper, small cardamom, tamarind, clove, nutmeg and coriander. Headed by the Chief Secretary, the SDA consist of members representing the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, State Government, Ministry of Agriculture, Spices Board, ICAR and other related Central and State organisations besides industry stake-holders.

Red gram acreage forecasts further price spiral

With the Government barely able to rein in the prices of red gram at Rs.145 per kg, figures tumbling out of the Chief Minister’s review of the matter on Tuesday indicate that the staple pulse is likely to become much dearer in the months ahead.

Officials told Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu during the review meeting that the red gram area sown this year is down to 2.14 lakh hectares. That is 43 per cent down from the 3.71 lakh hectares sown last year, which yielded a production of 1.65 lakh tonnes. The acreage of red gram has been sharply declining every year since 2010-11, and alongside it production levels too. This trend nationwide has produced the present price spiral in the commodity, with some markets reporting prices upwards of Rs 200 per kg. The retail price of red gram has soared by 88 per cent in Andhra Pradesh in the last 12 months.



This year's acreage of 2.14 lakh hectares is certain to bring home-grown production further down and that's dire for the consumer. Given the declining acreage, there is every probability of the price shooting up further once the interventionist skids applied by the government for now.

During the review on Tuesday, the Chief Minister prodded his staff to try to increase the yield by 50 per cent over the last year's level, which is impossible.

All this week, after the Amaravati ceremonies, the Chief Minister has been squaring up to bad news, mainly on the agriculture front. Mr Naidu told his staff to include more mandals in the drought-hit list, in addition to the 196

already so listed, by November 7. That will bring on collateral decisions on loan rescheduling, employment generation through NREGA and payment of input subsidy arrears.

The Chief Minister said already Rs.3000 crore has been spent on the employment generation scheme so far and another Rs.3000 crore would be spent over the next five months. This apart, Rs.1000 crore would accrue from the Central Government and all these funds would go towards providing 150 days of work to landless labourers in drought-hit mandals.

Mr. Naidu also set a deadline of Nov. 6, Friday, for payment of input subsidy dues to horticulture farmers.

The rest of the review meeting went towards more nip and tuck measures, such as fine tuning the cotton procurement process and lobbying the Centre to come to the rescue of oil palm farmers who are being undercut by cheaper imports from Malaysia.

Small tea growers seek international agency



An international agency has been proposed to help represent the small tea growers' sector, which currently contributes about 70 per cent of the world tea crop. Efforts are also on to find ways to directly market small tea growers' produce.

The recent inter-session meeting of the Inter-governmental Group of FAO in Italy discussed the plan. Representatives from India, Sri Lanka, Kenya, China, Japan, Malawi, the U.S., Turkey, Argentina, Italy, the U.K., Indonesia and Canada were present.

The 11-member Indian delegation was led by Santosh Kumar Sarengi, chairman, Tea Board India. It also included a member representing the interests of India's small tea growers. The need for an international body for small tea growers was brought to the fore by quite a few tea-growing countries including India, Sri Lanka, Kenya and Indonesia. These countries have among them a small tea holders' group with representatives of the respective governments and the industry. The contribution from this segment of the tea industry is highest in Sri Lanka and Kenya.

Industry sources said that price realisation, quality and cost of production were among the core issues affecting this segment. Large industry and trade were insisting on certification from the growers to ensure fulfilment of statutory regulations and safety norms but there were no ways of addressing the small growers' core issues. It was felt that having an international organisation may help in that direction.

Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty, President, Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers Associations said that the issue was expected to take a final shape at the 23rd meeting of FAO in Kenya in May 2016.

Cotton production expected to decline

Cotton production for the 2015-2016 (October to September) season is estimated to be 365 lakh bales, which is about 15 lakh bales less than the previous season.

According to a press release from the Office of the Textile Commissioner, area of the crop has come down in States such as Karnataka and Maharashtra and production is expected to be lower in some States.

The first meeting of the Cotton Advisory Board for the current season was held in Mumbai on Tuesday. According to the provisional estimate, the opening stock for the current season is estimated to be 52 lakh bales and imports to be 12 lakh bales. Consumption by textile mills is expected to be 312 lakh bales (non-SSI and SSI sectors). During the previous season (October 2014 to September 2015), consumption by the mills was 305 lakh bales. Exports this year are likely to be higher at 68 lakh bales. It was 57.72 lakh bales last season.



M. Senthil Kumar, Chairman of Southern India Mills' Association, said that cotton consumption by the domestic mills was stagnant at about 25 lakh bales for the last seven to eight months because of the drop in demand for yarn.

However, there are indications of improvement in yarn import by China. Export of yarn and fabric is expected to pick up in the coming months. Prices of yarn is also stable in the recent weeks. Hence, the demand and consumption by mills will go up in the coming months.

K. N. Viswanathan, Vice-President of Indian Cotton Federation, said the CAB estimate of lower production and improvement in textile mill consumption for the current season will not impact cotton prices as the mills are not buying much now.

Floriculture farmers' withering prospects



In the absence of a market, farmers of Tutikuntla, Chirunomula and other villages in Khammam district are forced to take their produce to the flower market in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

The small and marginal farmers are unable to access the subsidies being offered by the government for raising floriculture crops. A farmer from Tutikuntla

he long-felt need for a flower market in the town remains unfulfilled even as floriculture farmers continue to bear the brunt of escalating input cost and highly fluctuating prices of their produce, particularly marigold.

Several enthusiastic farmers those switched over to floriculture from conventional farming are reeling under a sense of uncertainty in the absence of institutionalised marketing mechanism.

They earn a reasonable income when the demand for flowers peaks during the festival season and sell their produce at throwaway price during most part of the year.

Most of the floriculture farmers are facing a piquant situation with the sharp rise in input cost and exorbitant transportation charges in shifting the produce to markets in big cities that's eating into their income.

According to sources in the Horticulture Department, floriculture crops, predominantly marigold, *crossandra infundibuliformis* (kanakambralu) and jasmine, are being grown in over 400 hectares in the district.

The floriculture crops are mainly concentrated in Raghunadhapalem, Madhira, Bonakal, Sattupalli, Yerrupalem, Aswaraopeta and a few other mandals in the district.

The department has drawn up plans to encourage farmers to take up cultivation of floriculture crops under polyhouse as part of the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), sources added.

The small and marginal farmers are unable to access the subsidies being offered by the government for raising floriculture crops, deplores Ramnarsaiah, a farmer from Tutikuntla in Bonakal mandal.

In the absence of flower market in the district, the floriculture farmers of Tutikuntla, Chirunomula and other villages are compelled to take their produce to the flower market in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

They are not only incurring financial burden in transporting the produce to distant places, but also suffering losses in the process due to the highly perishable nature of the flowers, he points out. The Telangana government should set up a flower market in Khammam town and arrange a market tie-up with major temples like Bhadradri shrine and other flower consumers to help the floriculture farmers, insists Mohan, a marigold grower from Raghunadhapalem mandal.

A proposal envisaging setting up of a flower market in Khammam has been incorporated in the vision document meant for promotion of floriculture, says K. Suryanarayana, Assistant Director, Horticulture II, Khammam.

***The small and marginal farmers are unable to access the subsidies being offered by the government for raising floriculture crops
Ramnarsaiah A farmer from Tutikuntla***

Farmers tap Pattiseema water to save withering paddy

Godavari water lifted from the Pattiseema lift irrigation project is serving to save the standing paddy crop on 20,000 acres in Denduluru in West Godavari district in the absence of water being released into the Krishna-Eluru canal from the Krishna river. Denduluru farmers are drawing water from Pattiseema near the Janampeta aqueduct using natural gravity.

With the local MLA Chintamaneni Prabhakar obtaining permission from the State Government to utilise the Pattiseema water to save the standing crop in his constituency, officials of the Irrigation Department have been releasing 100 cusecs a day into minor irrigation canals for the last three days. ,” said Srinivasa Yadav, SE .

Dairy business a boon for distressed farmers

Farmers form join hands to form joint liability groups to obtain loans from banks

BUSINESS MADE EASY

- Each JLG gets up to **Rs. 1.5 lakh** as loan from banks
- Milk procurement agencies tasked with repayment
- Amount paid by procurement agencies: **Rs. 32.5** per litre
- Expense on fodder: **Rs. 75** per day

At a time when farmer suicides are on the rise in the State, most ryots from Srikakulam district have turned to dairy farming as a vocation. Interestingly, they have joined hands to form joint liability groups (JLGs) to obtain loans

from banks in a hassle-free manner, thanks patronage of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

Thanks to JLGs, they now earn additional income through milk production. Banks extend up to Rs. 1.5 lakh as loan to each JLG, as the former are assured of repayment by milk procurement agencies, which pay monthly instalments directly and reimburse the remaining amount to the villagers. With the support of NABARD, Andhra Pradesh Gramin Vikas Bank (APGVB) extended Rs. 45 lakh as loan to various JLGs in Gara mandal. The result: more than 40 groups bought 300 cows, each costing between Rs. 25,000 and Rs. 30,000. “Each cow is expected to give eight litres of milk. The procurement agencies pay Rs. 32.5 per litre, which means that each cow helps the villagers earn around Rs. 250 a day. And, the villagers spend around Rs. 75 a day on fodder,” NABARD Srikakulam District Development Manager M.D. Vasudevan and APGVB Srikuarmam branch manager J. Srinivasa Rao said.

A model farm shows the way

Farmers and government agencies flock the farm every year to procure high-quality plants



A worker engaged in amla cleft grafting at the model horticulture farm at Sundaramudaiyan in Ramanathapuram district.

The model horticulture farm at Sundaramudiyan, the district's first horticulture farm established in 1986 under the Drought-Prone Area Development Programme which later became a self-financing farm, continues to be the farmers' best choice as it produces quality varieties of mango, guava, amla and sapota plants.

The farm, which faced the threat of closure after the government withdrew funds in 1996, received a new lease of life after Ramanathapuram District Development Agency (RDDA) took over the farm.

Farmers and government agencies flock the farm every year to procure high-quality amla, mango and sapota grafts and guava plants. Amla grafts are produced under cleft grafting method after procuring scion sticks from the best fruit-bearing amla fields in Theni district.

This year, the farm has already made ready, 50,000 amla grafts and would produce another 30,000 grafts by March, S. Nagarajan, Assistant Director of Horticulture, told *The Hindu*. The farm produced three varieties of amla – NA 7, which was the ruling variety, and Krishna and Kanchan, he said.

The farm also produced eight mango varieties, including export varieties of Himam Pasant and Alphonso, adopting the approach grafting method, and it had already made ready about one lakh grafts of all varieties, he said.

Adopting the same grafting method, the farm produced three varieties of sapota, including PKM 1, the ruling variety. Using the ground-layering method, the farm produced guava plants, giving special focus to the high-yielding Lucknow 49.

Farmers from Virudhunagar, Sivaganga, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Tuticorin districts visited the farm regularly to procure grafts and plants, Mr. Nagarajan said, and attributed the farm's success to the dedication of workers, including about 40 local women.

Thanks to the encouragement from Collector K. Nanthakumar and RDDA Project Director A. Palani, the farm had been producing an average of two lakh grafts and plants every year and was all set to earn a record revenue of Rs. 1 crore this year, he said.

After the government withdrew funding, the RDDA commenced activities with a reserve of Rs. 17 lakh. The farm has a bank balance of Rs. 1.02 crore now. It had earned revenue of Rs. 60 lakh during 2008-09 and registered the highest revenue of Rs. 85.25 lakh during 2014-15.

‘Aavin should adopt better marketing technology’

The Aavin should take effective steps for expanding its marketing activities for augmenting its revenue, said K. Mohammad Ali, general secretary of the Tamil Nadu Paal Urpathiyalargal Sangam.

The Aavin could adopt better marketing technologies and expand its marketing activities to sell the stagnated milk powder and milk products stock, he said while speaking at the district level conference of the Sangam held at Muthukapatti near here on Sunday.

By augmenting its revenue, the Aavin will be able to pay back the pending arrears to the members of the milk producers’ cooperative societies without any further delay and also procure the additional milk being provided by the farmers.

He demanded the State Government to hike the procurement price of milk and also take steps for including milk in the daily menu of the noon meal centres in the state.

A.R. Muthusamy, district president of the Sangam, presided over the meeting.

Workshop on horticulture

The Science City Chennai will organise a day-long free workshop on horticulture and organic manure at the Periyar Science and Technology

Centre campus in Kotturpuram on November 19. According to a press release, the workshop would include tips on using organic manure, soil and water management, managerial practices in horticulture, easy methods on weeds removal, control of insects and pests, terrace gardening, tips on growing mushroom and cultivation of earthworms.

The workshop will provide training for 100 participants on a first-come-first-serve basis. For registration, contact: 44-2445 4054 / 034

Is your chicken meal hurting immunity?



Scientists raise concern over frequent and irresponsible use of antibiotics by animal farm industry

Frequent and irresponsible use of antibiotics by the animal farm industry is leading to difficulties in treating common bacterial infections as well as post-surgery infections, a panel of scientists warned at a meeting organised by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) on antibiotic resistance, on Tuesday.

Dr. Chand Wattal, senior consultant in the Department of Microbiology at Ganga Ram Hospital said: “The irrational use of antibiotics in humans and animals is going to put us in a huge quandary, and human health in particular is at stake.”

Highlighting growing concern about drug resistance, Dr Wattal said: “We need to preserve the existing antibiotics since we cannot afford the new expensive molecules whenever they come. It is more relevant for us than other nations to preserve the current antibiotics.”

The discussion saw the participation of medical doctors, neonatologists, gastroenterologists, urologist, microbiologists and pharmacologist, veterinarians and those from public health and environmental fields. Issues related to large-scale use of antibiotics in animal farm industry for growth promotion and disease prevention and how the overall consumption of antibiotics in India is growing were discussed.

Pointing out the existence of a dangerous gap in India’s regulatory approach and preparedness to handle the looming public health crisis Prof. N. K. Mahajan of Lala Lajpat Rai University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Hisar, said: “Judicious use of antibiotics will be in the interest of poultry farmers because they themselves are facing the problem.”

“They constantly complain that the antibiotics they use are not working well and hence keep adding on to what is being already given to the birds. Farmers are unaware and need to be educated on bio-security measures. Use of antibiotics in feed can be regulated through the Drugs Control department,” Prof. Mahajan said.

Emphasising on how antibiotic resistant bacteria can change the disease in neonates (new born babies) and affect them for the rest their lives, Dr. Neelam Kler, senior consultant in Neonatology at Ganga Ram Hospital said: “We are changing the whole microbiota by irrational use of antibiotics. “Children are born with resistance to certain antibiotics. This not only affects the treatment of infectious diseases but is also now being linked to other types of non-communicable diseases like obesity later on in life.”

CSE has recommended an urgent drop in the overuse and misuse of antibiotics in humans and animals. “This has been discussed for the past many years. There is an action plan with the government. We need this to be

implemented. In 2010, CSE had done a study on antibiotic residue in honey and in 2014 it tested chicken meat for antibiotics. We have to work towards ensuring the health of our future generations,” said Chandra Bhushan, deputy director general of CSE.

Toor dal traders to shut shop on Friday

PRICEY PULSES		
2.35 lakh tonnes of pulses seized		<p>Licences had always been compulsory. The raids had sent a stringent message and other traders have voluntarily come forward to sell at Rs. 125 per kg</p> <p>Dinesh Gundu Rao, Minister of State for Food and Civil Supplies</p>
1,308 shops raided across the State		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊖ Licences required for all retail and wholesale stores if storage is above 5 quintals ⊖ Not valid for multi-store retail chains ⊖ Traders had applied for licences in April 2010 ⊖ Notification for compulsory licences issued on October 17, 2015 ⊖ Raids began on October 19, 2015 	<p>TRADERS' RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊖ Threaten to shut down 144 APMCs ⊖ Yeshwantpur APMC yard itself has a turnover of Rs. 20 crore 	
		<p>More than 80 per cent of the raided retailers had applied for licences. The government had not acted on this, and now, they can't harass traders assuming they are hoarders</p> <p>Ramesh Chandra Lahoti, president of Bangalore Wholesale Foodgrain and Pulses Merchants' Association</p>
TOOR DAL PRICES		
Retail price Rs. 190 a kg	Wholesale price Rs. 160 a kg	Retail price on October 22: Rs. 200 a kg

The saga of the toor dal, with its skyrocketing prices already pinching wallets, may get worse as traders have threatened to shut shop on Friday protesting against the “harassment” of the State government.

Over the course of a fortnight, the Department of Food and Civil Supplies raided more than 1,300 dealers and seized more than 2.35 lakh tonnes of pulses, including toor dal whose price had touched Rs. 210.

While the department now plans to begin a three-day auction of the seized pulses, the Federation of Karnataka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI) said that nearly 144 Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMC) across the State would remain shut in protest against these “unfair raids”.

“Many of these raided traders had applied for licences in 2010. The government did not act on it for five years, until October 17 when it issued a notice saying licences were compulsory. By October 19, the raids started,” said Ramesh Chandra Lahoti, president of the Bangalore Wholesale Foodgrain and Pulses Merchants Association on Tuesday.

He said toor dal had constituted barely 10 per cent of the seized pulses, most of it being red gram, Bengal gram and others.

‘Stop the raids’

During a meeting with Minister of State for Food and Civil Supplies Dinesh Gundu Rao on Saturday, the FKCCI had demanded that the department stop the raids until licences were given or give 10 days for traders to apply for licences.

However, raids on traders continued in Tumakuru and other places on Tuesday also and it had forced them to resort to the strike, he said.

Talking to *The Hindu*, the Minister said licences had been compulsory all along and that could not be used as an excuse now. “A few may have been denied licences, but it has always been compulsory.,” he said.

With the threat of a strike, Mr. Rao said he would discuss the issue with the traders.



Overweight? Include lots of Vitamin E in your diet

A recent study suggests that obese people need to include diet rich in Vitamin E as they require more than normal levels of the Vitamin but get less of it.

While their weight and other problems cause increased oxidative stress, those same problems actually reduce their effective use of vitamin E, the study pointed out.

This vitamin is found at highest levels in some foods such as nuts, seeds, and olive oil.

Chronic deficiency in vitamin E could compound the wide range of diseases known to be associated with metabolic syndrome, including heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease and cancer, the study pointed out.

Some of the findings of this study are counterintuitive, the researchers said, because vitamin E is a fat soluble micronutrient and, in theory, should be available at increased levels in people who are overweight and eat large amounts of fatty foods.

However, the study found that even though circulating vitamin E in the bloodstream may be high, in obese people this essential micronutrient is not finding its way into tissues where it is most needed.

“Vitamin E is associated with lipids, or the fats found in the blood, but it is mostly just a micronutrient that’s going along for the ride,” said one of the researchers Maret Traber from Oregon State University in the US.

“What we found was that tissues of obese people are rejecting intake of some of these lipids because they already have enough fat,” Traber said.

“In the process they also reject the associated vitamin E,” Traber explained.

In this study, the researchers made their findings with a double-blind study of adults, some of whom were healthy and others with metabolic syndrome.

The authors concluded that its findings support higher dietary requirements of vitamin E for adults with metabolic syndrome.

The findings appeared in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

[Does India need weather-based insurance for crops?](#)

India may be agriculturally diverse and more advanced than many other countries in the world, but when it comes to crop insurance, the scenario is not so rosy. On the contrary, many of the African countries are significantly

ahead of India in implementing the weather-based insurance system, which seems to have become the need of the hour - especially in the backdrop of deficient rainfall this year.

Echoing this during a press interaction on Tuesday, Jaideep Devare, the managing director of Mahindra Insurance Brokers Ltd (MIBL), said, "Weather-based insurance is certainly the need of the hour in India, and all the stakeholders - Union government, Indian Meteorological Department, IRDA and insurance companies are working closely on this. The main challenge lies in getting the correct data, but we are hopeful that in the next few years, we would be able to find a tangible solution to this, and implement it." He further added that some of the African countries (such as Kenya and Ghana) have already started the weather-based insurance, and are getting effective results from it.

"Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (India's insurance regulator) is open to this idea," Devare said, and added that there is also a need for cattle insurance in a country like India. "However, it's the cost effectiveness, which is the main challenge," he further added.

'Farmers must play a role in efficient use of energy'

Energy conservation is the need of the hour, Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) vice-chancellor Dr Baldev Singh Dhillon said while inaugurating a two-day national seminar on 'Upscaling Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Practices in Agriculture Sector' at the varsity campus on Tuesday.

The seminar has been jointly organized by School of Energy Studies for Agriculture, PAU, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA). Delegates, farm engineers from PAU and farmers from various parts of Punjab are participating in the seminar.

Dr Dhillon said proper selection of farm machinery and its appropriate use on custom hiring basis by the farmers can play a key role in efficient use of

energy. Highlighting the priority areas of research like conservation agriculture, paddy straw management, etc. he said University aims at reducing the input costs and enhancing the income of the farmers.

Guest of honour Dr B S Pathak, former United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) consultant, said energy crops such as sugarcane, maize, sweet sorghum, etc. need land, water, fertilizers and can only be grown at the cost of food crops.

Expressing concern over biomass burning, he said focus on energy conservation, diversification and mechanization is essential. He also highlighted the resources, import, export and availability of non-renewable energy sources.

Nilkanth S Ahvad, executive director PCRA, traced the history of his organization and highlighted its achievements. He suggested that 640 Krishi Vigyan Kendras across the country can contribute to the cost-cutting, income enhancement and energy saving by educating the farmers.

Ahvad pointed out that the farm equipment developed by public sector is entirely different from the one developed by private sector. He called upon engineers, students and farmers to contribute collectively to improving engineering.

The technical sessions saw discussions on energy conservation opportunities in farm sector, proper selection and evaluation of farm machinery and equipment, renewable energy technologies in agriculture, and energy efficient farm equipment.

THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

Dismal export scenario takes away jeera's crackle

Amid dismal export scenario coupled with suppressed sentiments in the domestic market, jeera (cumin seed) prices are set to witness a slide in the coming weeks.

On the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Ltd (NCDEX), jeera futures for March 18, 2016 expiry opened at ₹15,500 a quintal – much below ₹16,540 for January expiry contract, both lower than the spot market.

The slackness in the prices is attributed to weak sentiment in the market owing to dismal exports.

Sliding exports

Notably, geo-political trouble in two major exporting countries – Syria and Turkey – seems to have failed to spice up jeera exports from India due to higher domestic price.

Jeera exports from India are likely to decline by about 40-45 per cent to around 85,000-1,00,000 tonnes during 2015-16 compared to an estimated exports of around 1,55,000 tonnes last year. Exports of the spice have been on a decline since 2013-14 from 1,60,000 tonnes in that year.

High domestic prices

The decline is mainly due to high prices in the domestic market. Spot jeera prices at Unjha market have surged more than 30 per cent this year to ₹16,500-17,000 a quintal on October 30 from what was at ₹11,360 a year ago.

“Last year, China was a major buyer. But this time it is not buying because of its own crop. Also, there has been distress selling by traders in Dubai. This hampered the sentiment and in spite of strong fundamental reasons for bullish trend, we are experiencing bearish trend,” said Shailesh Shah, Director, Jabs International Pvt Ltd, one of the spice exporters.

India’s crop size is estimated at around 400,000 tonnes, with 70,000 tonnes considered as carry-over stock.

Crop size

“There was crop damage to the tune of around 30 per cent due to rains. This caused a short-term bullish trend in jeera around May this year. But that did not last long amid lack of exports and higher stock of poor quality.

Therefore, prices fell from its peak and remained stable at around ₹15,000 a quintal in spot market,” said Arvind Patel, a jeera expert from Unjha.

Due to uncertain price and poor monsoon in key growing regions, farmers have decided to turn to alternate crops for the next sowing season, which begins by the end of this year.

“Jeera would require moisture and water for the winter sowing. The monsoon has been weak this year and there is going to be a problem in jeera sowing. We will choose alternate crops such as coriander, chana or mustard, which have given better price and can adjust in the current situation,” said Jayesh Gajera from Makiyala village in Junagadh district of Saurashtra.

Gujarat is the largest cumin seed producer accounting for 75-80 per cent share in the domestic production.

Price of pulses to fall further on arrival of new crop: Jaitley



Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said that price of pulses in the domestic market have started moderating and are expected to further ease as the new crop comes in.

Speaking at a press conference to announce the upcoming International Film Festival of India to be held in Goa from November 20 to 30, Jaitley said that prices have come down due to various efforts taken by the government, and with the new crop, the shortage is expected to be further contained.

“In the past five to seven days, prices in almost all States have started decreasing,” he said while responding to a question on prices. He said that prices of certain products such as pulses, especially *urad daal* and *tur daal*, have seen an increase not only in India but also in other international markets.

The country requires about 22 million tonnes of pulses. He said with increased support price the government had given last time, the production has been about 17 million tonnes and the government has imported pulses to meet the deficit. However, the yield in these countries has been lower than usual, which led to hoarding by traders.

He said two weeks ago, the Centre took the initiatives and several States conducted raids and recovered pulses in large amounts, which will be sold in the market.

HSBC whistleblower

Commenting on media reports on the HSBC whistleblower Herve Falciani asking for protection to reveal more information, Jaitley said the Indian government was in touch with various countries and was making all efforts to get information on black money account holders.

He said the Indian government representatives have also met the whistleblower and even offered a reward for information. He said an informant should give information without putting forth any conditions.

On the allegations made by the Opposition that the present government was encouraging intolerance, Jaitley asked: ‘Where is intolerance? We are the most vibrant democracy.’”

India will never be intolerant and the national situation is absolutely peaceful, he said, adding that political opponents must fight battles on political issues.

He also said when there is peace in the country, there is no justification for film makers to return awards and said the awardees are selected by a jury consisting of members from the film fraternity.

IFFI 2015 will showcase 187 films from 89 countries in world cinema section along with 26 features and 21 non-feature films in Indian Panorama section. While actor Anil Kapoor will be the Chief Guest at the opening ceremony, *The Man Who Knew Infinity*, written and directed by Mathew Brown, will be the opening film at festival.

Fifteen films will compete for the international competition and the jury will be chaired by director and actor Shekhar Kapur.

Review meeting

Later in the day, the Finance Minister Arun Jaitley chaired a meeting to review the prices of essential commodities ahead of the festival season.

“On an average prices, across the country have declined by about ₹20 a kg. With the ongoing market arrivals of Urad dal and arrival of the new crop of Arhar dal expected in early December, the prices would ease further,” the statement added.

Jaitley directed the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture and Food and Consumer Affairs to work closely with the States and take immediate measures, such as stepping up procurement of pulses, to enhance buffer stocks.

Guar industry seeks Centre’s help to deal with crisis

The guar industry has called for the Centre’s help to deal with a crisis situation developing from the impact of a failed South-West monsoon on the guar crop in North-West India.

It has also called for a ban on futures trading to allow the commodity to stabilise to an affordable price level for all segments of end-users.

Farmers broke

The failed monsoon has left many farmers completely broke, says Dilip Soni, Director of the Jodhpur-based Shree Ram Gum and Chemicals, a renowned producer of guar gum and derivatives.

What looked like a bumper crop after the first round of rains fizzled in the heat as rains failed during second half of the monsoon, he told *BusinessLine*. Farmers with irrigation facility salvaged some of the crop but only so much. Guar is primarily grown in Rajasthan, but is also present in Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Rajasthan accounts for over 70 per cent of the total crop in the country.



Guarseed is a raw material for producing guar gum which is used as a thickening agent and additive in food products.

Industry use

Guarseed has industrial applications in the paper and textile sectors, ore flotation, explosives manufacture and fracturing of oil and gas formations.

Guar gum has been in demand for fracking of shale gas, particularly in the US that accounts for 25 per cent of the world trade.

The operation of the fracking technology has a base cost. There are several estimates about the average cost but processes and associated efficiencies vary from service provider to service provider.

With the glut in the oil price and no new investment in the exploration and extraction of oil, service providers have been forced to cut operations, Soni said.

Slack demand

The drop in rig count has been mounting as the US curtailed operations in view of the inability of a poor world economy for absorbing the production. This has had an adverse effect on the local guar industry, as a whole. Over the past year, lack of demand from the oil drilling industry has spelt doom for several investors.

According to Soni, many have sold out, surrendered their electric connections or mothballed their factories. Livelihoods of thousands of workers employed in the industry and ancillary industries have been affected.