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THE HINDU

From farm to the front door



Kochi-based Akash Mathew and Jim George, along with their team, have created Farming Colors, a portal that allows users to purchase fresh organic produce straight from the growers

Technology entrepreneurs have changed the way people shop for clothing, finding vacation deals, gadgets and now they are shaking up the way you buy vegetables and fruits.

Cied (Conquering Imagination Expectation and Dreams) Technologies, a bunch of young engineering graduates (with an average age of 24 years) based out of Nasscom Startup Warehouse in the city, who are into branding, coding, marketing, electronics, industrial automation and video production, are ready to launch Farming Colors, an online vegetables-fruit shopping service.

The company, co-founded by cousins Akash Mathew and Jim George, was incorporated in 2011 while they were in college. Like most young techies they went into web and mobile apps development.

In just two years, even before their company went full steam, they managed to raise an angel investment of Rs. 70 lakh through ELOP, the Express Love App. “That became trending at top ten social apps in the country. We called it the secure private platform to convey love. ELOP was a way to express your love anonymously to your secret crush; an opportunity to interact with your special one by sending hints and song dedications. But we have discontinued with the app,” says Akash with a mischievous smile.

And they have their reasons for doing so. “That was when we had started off. We soon had developed a fabulous team of young, innovative minds. All of them were either known to me or Jim. From the dream of turning into a Mark Zuckerberg we thought of doing something more serious; something for the society around. That’s how we struck upon Farming Colors, a SaaS (software as a service) product. Cied Labs was launched last year; we did a lot of work and we will be launching the service in December 2015.”

From Kannur, both Akash and Jim were born and brought up in families with an agriculture background. Akash graduated from Rajagiri School of Engineering and Technology, Kochi, while Jim completed his degree from University College of Engineering, Thodupuzha. Even as they raised investment, created machines, mobile apps and designed websites; their heart was in the green fields, the rubber estates and the burgeoning fruit trees of their villages.

“My father (Mathew Sebastian) was the inspiration and key mentor for Farming Colors. He was an agricultural officer and knew the problems in this field inside out. He is also the co-founder and executive director of INDOCERT, an indigenous certification body that offers organic certification, among other things. So he had a strong connect with organic farmers, which was of great help when we embarked on this venture,” says Akash.

A couple of trends worked in their favour. Of late there is growing awareness of buying organic produce and consumers are looking for easy, efficient ways to acquire them. And then there is this growing demand for online services even if it means shopping for vegetables. Akash, Jim and their team decided to cash in on these trends.

“We have identified a group of farmers in Coonoor, Wayand and Munnar who have more than 10 years experience in organic cultivation. They are also certified with India’s leading organic certification bodies that ensure quality of each of the farms and its yield. We provide a link between these farmers and the consumer.”

In the first phase the service will be made available only in Kochi. “We will deliver eight boxes every month based on the subscription pack the consumer chooses. There are four packs available right now: small box (Rs. 2,000), medium (Rs. 2,500), large (Rs. 3,000) and extra large (Rs. 3,500). Two days prior to the delivery, consumers will get a menu on their WhatsApp from where they can choose the week’s vegetables and fruits. Of course, the supply will be according to availability for most of them are seasonal. Our transportation and packaging system will see that the fresh farm produce reaches the consumer’s doorstep safely.”

The boxes come with a QR Code that helps the consumer track the produce to the farm from where it originates. “The attempt is to give the consumers access to more information. They can trace the vegetables and fruits to the growers, which in a way is a sort of interface with their end consumers. It will also help them identify the certification of the farmers. The boxes will also have recipes.”

A primary challenge that the team envisages is scaling the service to meet the customer demand. “For the time being we are looking at 150 members, just sufficient as a pilot case. In the next two or three years we hope to have 3,000 to 4,000 members. For this we need to work on more farmers, higher production, effective planning, and logistics management. In the next phase we want to include spices and semi-perishable goods too and then we’ll get

in poultry. One thing is for certain we are into this for the next 25 years at least.”

What is good about Akash, Jim and their team is that they have their feet firmly on the ground, they realise that there is so much more for them to do than simply dream about creating another Silicon Valley.

Farming Colors can be contacted at www.farmingcolors.com or 9745250949.

Jackpot system to go off tomato market in Chittoor

Agriculture Minister P. Pulla Rao on Thursday said that the government was seriously contemplating to do away with the existing ‘jackpot’ system at the tomato markets in Madanapalle, Punganur and Gurrampkonda mandals, and introduce a farmers’ friendly marketing system with affordable commission rates.

For record, Jackpot system has been prevalent in Chittoor district since the last three decades in which tomato farmers bring ten boxes of produce of 30 kg each and are paid for nine boxes while the tenth box is taken away by the trader for free.

This is in addition to the extra commission to the traders. Madanapalle revenue division in Chittoor district supplies more than 5,000 tonnes of tomatoes daily during the peak season, with exports made to North India, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and coastal AP.

Speaking the media at Madanapalle, Mr. Pulla Rao said the Joint Director (Marketing) and MLAs of Madanapalle and Punganur would soon chalk out an action plan in this regard. “Steps will be taken to modernise the Madanapalle tomato market,” he said.

Earlier, the Minister inspected Kadiramma Cheruvu, 5 km away from Madanapalle, and observed that the tank was brimming.

He asked the officials to take immediate steps to prevent breaching and strengthen the tank bund. He maintained that in view of another cyclone prediction next week, all the revenue officials were cautioned to be alert.

Sops to boost food processing units

Guidelines issued for implementation of various schemes under new policy

FISCAL INCENTIVES

- Special Purpose Vehicle to be set up under the Companies Act
- For new units **100 p.c.** cent reimbursement of **NALA tax, stamp duty and transfer duty**
- Micro enterprises get **100 p.c.** reimbursement of **VAT/CST or SGST for 5 years**
- For small units **75 p.c. VAT/CST or SGST for 7 years**
- Medium and large industries to get **50 p.c VAT/CST or SGST for 7 years**

Andhra Pradesh government on Thursday issued guidelines for implementation of the schemes under AP Food Processing Policy 2015-2020, offering various incentives/ benefits to food processing enterprises being set up in the State.

The scheme seeks to facilitate setting up of integrated food parks, mega food parks, ultra mega food parks, cold chains for agri/ horti/ dairy, meat production, modernisation of abattoirs and units to process waste produced in food processing units in identified clusters. The Andhra Pradesh Food Processing Society will be the nodal agency to implement the policy.

Under the Integrated Food Parks (IFP) scheme, each project may have around 10 food processing units with a collective investment of around

Rs.100 crore, that would eventually lead to an annual turnover of about Rs.200 crore, besides creating direct and indirect employment to about 5,000 people. Capital grant at the rate of 50 per cent of the eligible project cost, subject to a maximum of Rs.20 crore per project would be provided under IFP. The responsibility of execution, ownership and management of the IFP would vest with a Special Purpose Vehicle registered under the Companies Act.

The scheme of Mega Food Parks aims to facilitate establishment of a strong food processing industry backed by an efficient supply chain, which would include collection centres, primary processing centres, and cold chain infrastructure. The food processing units, under the scheme, would be located at a Central Processing Centre with need-based common infrastructure required for processing, packaging, environmental protection systems and quality control labs, among others.

Under MFP scheme, each project may have around 20 food processing units with a collective investment of around Rs.250 crore that would eventually lead to an annual turnover of about Rs.500 crore and create direct and indirect employment for about 30,000 people.

The fiscal incentives to be provided for new food processing units, include 100 per cent reimbursement of Non-Agriculture Land Assessment (NALA) tax, stamp duty and transfer duty paid by the industry. In case of micro-enterprises, 100 per cent VAT/ CST or State Goods and Services Tax (SGST) will be reimbursed for five years. For small enterprises, 75 per cent VAT/CST or SGST will be reimbursed for seven years and in case of Medium Enterprises and Large Industries, 50 per cent VAT/ CST or SGST will be reimbursed for seven years.

Project to promote coffee plantation

A forester showing one of the coffee plants raised on Pachamalai Hills.

In the first phase, it has been planned to develop coffee plantation on 20 acres. Based on its success, it will be expanded to a larger area.

The Forest Department and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development have taken up an innovative project to promote coffee plantation on Pachamalai Hills.



The pilot programme is implemented under the NABARD's Tribal Development Project (WADI) for the uplift of tribal farmers at an estimate of Rs. 6.99 crore including a grant of Rs. 5.85 crore and a loan of Rs. 1.14 crore.

“We came across a few farmers taking to coffee plantation and we came up with a comprehensive plan under our orchard development project of WADI to promote coffee plantation in an organised manner,” said S. Suresh Kumar, District Development Manager, NABARD, Tiruchi, explaining the provisions of WADI being implemented in Tiruchi and Salem districts of Pachamalai hills by a Kancheepuram-based non-governmental organisation, Hand in Hand.

Ideal for coffee

Mr. Suresh Kumar said that Pachamalai was found to be ideal place for developing coffee plantation.

The soil, the shady-area in orchards and other fields are ideally suitable.

Moreover, the NABARD, under its WADI project, planned to bring about a change in the cropping pattern of tribal farmers who largely depended on tapioca cultivation.

“Although tapioca crop fetched assured returns to the farmers, coffee plantation would bring more revenue to them,” he also said.

Work on developing coffee plantations commenced on August 15 and seedlings of ‘Selection 9’ coffee variety had been brought from the Government Orchard at Padasolai in Kolli Hills.

The seedlings are being distributed to farmers of Kundakadi, Puthur, Solamaththi, Nachilipatti, Boothakaal, Keezhakarai and Thaneerpallam (all in Tiruchi district of Pachamalai) and Periyapakkalam, Chinnapakkalam, Chinnamangalam and Nallamaththi (all in the Salem district of the hills). C. Karunanidhi, Forester of Pachamalai, said that the hill was best suitable for raising coffee.

First phase

In the first phase, it has been planned to develop coffee plantation on 20 acres. Based on its success, it will be expanded to a larger area, said Mr. Suresh Kumar.

In all, 32 villages on Pachamalai, including 20 in Salem and 12 in Tiruchi district, have been covered so far under the coffee plantation scheme under WADI. It has been estimated that the annual income per acre would be Rs. 2 lakhs from the third year of its growth.

Exposure tour

Tribal farmers from Pachamalai were taken on an exposure tour of coffee plantation units in Kolli Hills, Only 20 villages have been identified so far because shade-giving trees were available only in these clusters.

In the first phase, it has been planned to develop coffee plantation on 20 acres. Based on its success, it will be expanded to a larger area.

Farmers step up vigil for crop protection

Farmers living on the fringes of the Bandipur-Nagarahole forests are bracing up for crop raiding by elephants in the ensuing weeks.

Elephant herds are increasingly being spotted in villages close to the forests in H.D. Kote, Sargur, Birval and surrounding areas where paddy, sugarcane, plantain and other crops are maturing.

Vivek Cariappa, an organic farmer from Sargur region in H.D. Kote taluk, told *The Hindu* that not a night passes without elephant herds straying into human habitation and it has become quite common since the last few days.

“Elephant herds straying into human landscape and indulging in crop raiding commences post October/November every year and there are visible signs already,” he said. As a result, the local community have started maintaining vigil to protect the crops. Incidentally, multiple barriers, including elephant-proof trenches and solar fences around Bandipur, have helped progressively reduce conflict situations over the years.

From a peak of nearly 8,870 cases of conflicts around Bandipur in 2008-09, it came down to 965 in 2011-12 and 898 cases in 2012-13.

But there are fears that their non-maintenance may increase the frequency with which elephant herds will stray into human landscape. These fears stem from the proposed rail link fence to be completed along critical stretches around national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

But sources said the rail link fence project is yet to gain traction due to technical difficulties in getting the funds released. The State government has cleared the project and announced Rs. 212 crore for the first phase which envisaged laying rail fence for a length of 33 km.

But the funding made available through the Forest Development Tax, can only be used for afforestation and hence the delay.

Elephant herds are increasingly being spotted in villages close to the forests

Punjab to distribute subsidised wheat seeds

With the wheat sowing season beginning in Punjab, the State government has started district-wise programme to distribute certified wheat seeds on subsidised rates to farmers.

An official spokesperson of the Punjab Agriculture Department said on Thursday that under the National Food Security Mission and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna projects a total 5.75 lakh quintal certified wheat seeds would be supplied across the State. He said the subsidy amount would be transferred to the farmers' bank accounts.

“The government is offering a subsidy equal to 50 per cent of the total cost of seeds or to a maximum extent of Rs. 1,000 per quintal, which is directly transferred to the bank account of the farmer,” the spokesperson said.

Government will offer a subsidy equal to 50% of the total cost of seeds

Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University

Entrepreneurship summit on livestock sector

The PREBAV (Poultry- Industry-Researcher- Entrepreneur-Banker Agri Venture) - 2015, an entrepreneurship summit being organised by Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU), will be held in Thiruvananthapuram from November 16 to 18. According to Vice Chancellor B. Ashok, this edition of the summit would give more emphasis on organic farming, ethno-veterinary medicine, health, dairy technology, entrepreneurship, and animal welfare. The meet would set a stage for entrepreneurs, farmers, scientists, and bankers to develop sustainable

agribusiness ventures in the livestock sector, says P. Sethumadhavan, Director of Entrepreneurship, KVASU. The varsity would launch voice-based SMS, a unique programme for livestock farmers of the State, in association with the Reliance Foundation, during the programme. – Staff Reporter

Rain lashes Tamil Nadu; schools, colleges closed



Water has stagnated in various parts of Chennai, leading to traffic jams.

Anna University and University of Madras affiliated colleges have postponed their examinations.

Heavy rainfall brought daily life to a grinding halt across Tamil Nadu, as seven districts announced holidays for schools and colleges.

Tirunelveli, Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kanchipuram, Tiruvannamalai and Vellore districts have announced a day's holiday for schools and colleges, while Kanyakumari's District Collector has announced a holiday for schools.

Anna University and University of Madras affiliated colleges have postponed their examinations.

“The examinations scheduled for Anna University affiliated colleges on November 12, 13 and 14 are rescheduled on December 21, 22 and 24 respectively,” said S. Ganesan, registrar, Anna University.

“All examinations scheduled today in Madras University have been cancelled due to the rain. New dates will be announced later,” said R.Thandavan, vice-chancellor, University of Madras.

Another weather system brewing over the Bay



Chennai and other parts of North Tamil Nadu may have to get ready for another downpour this weekend as another weather system is brewing over the Bay of Bengal. A low pressure area lying over southeast Arabian Sea and adjoining Lakshadweep area brought heavy overnight showers on Thursday. S. R. Ramanan, director, Area Cyclone Warning Centre, said: “The trough of low pressure that persists over south Andaman sea is likely to intensify into a low pressure area and move towards southeast Bay of Bengal by Saturday. We are monitoring the possibility of the system further intensifying into a depression.”

The Meteorological Department predicts that parts of north Tamil Nadu will get scattered rainfall and it would be more widespread in the southern parts of the State.

Wet weekend likely

While only a few areas may get rain or thundershowers on Friday, Chennai will begin to experience moderate to rather heavy rainfall over the weekend.

Helpline for diabetics to be launched

A helpline for persons with diabetes will be launched by Coimbatore Diabetes Center (CDC), on the occasion of World Diabetes Day, on Saturday.

The number '9842253770' will be a one-point contact where the caller can get information on the dos and don'ts for diabetic patients and about suitable diets for them.

Managing Director of the centre V. Sekar said that experienced doctors and dieticians would answer queries raised by callers in English and in Tamil.

The hospital is also organising a health expo for the 18th year at the resort hospital at the foothills of Maruthamalai, from November 14 to 17.

Participants will be given live demonstrations on making mouth watering, healthy and simple-to-cook food for diabetics. "Participants can also taste the recipes free of cost," said Dr. Sekar and added that a buffet for diabetics would also be part of the event.

He advised an increase in consuming millets, fruits, vegetables and nuts, and cutting down on carbohydrates. Excessive carbs could lead to diabetes. Visitors to the expo would get an idea how to reduce the carbohydrates and follow a healthy diet that could reduce sugar levels by 30 to 40 per cent in a short period and even decrease a patient's dependence on insulin, he said.

Coimbatore Diabetes Center is also organising a health expo from November 14 to 17

Centre starts constituting new Tea Board

The Board constitutes 31 members drawn from parliamentarians, tea-producers, traders, brokers, consumers, and representatives of governments from the principal tea-producing States, and trade unions.

The Union Commerce Ministry has kicked off the process of reconstituting the Tea Board of India after a considerable gap of 19 months.



The term of the last board had expired in March 2014. The notification, appointing the members was issued on November 2, 2015.

The list includes names of ex-officio officials representing the tea-growing states of Assam, West Bengal Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Tripura and Sikkim. It also includes owners' representatives from most of the tea-growing States. The Board constitutes 31 members (including Chairman) drawn from parliamentarians, tea-producers, traders, brokers, consumers, and representatives of governments from the principal tea-producing States, and trade unions. The Board is reconstituted every three years.

While initially the delay was linked to the alleged policy paralysis of the UPA government, hopes of expeditious action with the coming to power of BJP led government too were belied. This led to apprehensions whether the government had some plans of recasting the industry regulator. This fear, as much among the Tea Board officials as the industry, was fed by the gap in naming a full-time Chairman for the Board. Since the resignation of M. G. V. K. Bhanu in December 2013, there has been no full-time Chairman of the Board.

Trade and industry has warmed up to recent initiative, saying the reconstitution could not have begun sooner. While decision-making has not

been held up by the lack of a full board but there is no denying that its functioning will now improve once the full board is put in place.

Farmers demand increase in compensation



Farmers want that the survey for the proposed reservoir be taken up in their land after deciding the amount of compensation by the Government.

Kampe Rajalingu is a farmer of Peddakodur village in Chinnakodur mandal of Medak District. He attempted suicide by consuming pesticide on Monday. He has been demanding higher compensation than what the Government has been offering for the land proposed to be acquired by the Government for the construction of reservoir as part of Pranahita-Chevella project.

He was prevented by some of the policemen present at the place. He wants that the survey for the proposed reservoir be taken up in his land after deciding the amount of compensation by the Government.

More than 150 farmers of Peddakodur and Chandlapur in the mandal are on agitation path for the past one-and-a-half month demanding that the Government pay them market price for the land being acquired from them. While the Government has been offering Rs.6.5 lakh per acre, they are demanding more than Rs.25 lakh an acre.

The officials are claiming that they are paying compensation as per G.O. 123 and the amount fixed was Rs.6.5 lakh per acre where as, under the previous orders, the amount that would be paid to farmers would be around Rs. 3.5 lakh.

While 1,079 acres would be acquired in the first phase, another 1,061 acres would be acquired in the second phase from five villages - Peddakodur, Chandlapur, Chinnakodur, Ramancha and Kochhaguttapalli.

The farmers' objection is that they are being paid a pittance as compensation under land acquisition, where as they can get huge returns if they can wait for another three to four years. The reasons being mentioned by them are two:

One is that there is a proposal under active consideration of the State Government to form Siddipet as separate district by carving out some parts of Medak and Karimnagar.

Once Siddipet is made the district headquarters, the value of village lands, which are just seven kilometres away, will soar. The second reason is that the land rates will increase when the water for irrigation is supplied to their villages.

“The price of the land in the open market will be between Rs.30 lakh to Rs.50 lakh. At some places it will be much more. This is one of the reasons for their agitation. However, the Government has to take the final call,” said an officer involved in the land acquisition.

Some of the farmers have accepted the compensation being offered by the Government.

Farmers watch helplessly as crops decay on fields

Paddy, plantains and sugarcane are among the worst hit



Farmers in the outlying areas of the city have suffered substantial losses after incessant rain and strong gales on Monday caused widespread damage to the standing crops.

While the extent of damage to the crops here is lesser than that in adjoining areas of Tamil Nadu, farmers can only watch helplessly as newly planted paddy crops have begun to decay in the heavily inundated fields. Paddy, plantains and sugarcane are among the worst hit crops.

M.Masilamani, a farmer in Bahour, who lost paddy crops due to the rain, said, “I had planted paddy on five acres just a few days ago. I have spent Rs.10,000 per acre. Rain has inundated the entire field and there is no hope for recovery.”

The farmers attribute the inundation to non-desilting of canals for several years. Over 500 hectares of paddy were damaged due to inundation.

V. Kaliyamurthy, former staff of Agriculture Department said, “Paddy which was transplanted, 10 days ago, in fields located at Irulanchanthal, Kurivinatham, Parikkalpattu, Soriyankuppam, Aranganur, Selimedu and Karikilampakkam, has been lost completely.”

Plain trees, sugarcane and tapioca crops were damaged in Thirukanur, Sompeta, Manalipeta, Kuchipalayam in Mannadipeta Commune and Kalapeta.

A delegation of AIADMK MLAs and other functionaries visited the affected areas and consoled the farmers who were affected due to crop loss. They also urged the government to release compensation immediately to the aggrieved persons.

Similarly crops such as sugarcane, casuarina, manila, plantain trees were damaged due to rain in Kandamangalam Taluk.

The meeting of a farmers' association affiliated to DMK party passed a resolution condemning Chief Minister N.Rangasamy for failing visit to the rain affected areas. They claimed that over 10,000 hectares of agricultural crop were lost due to rain in the Union Territory.

***"I have lost the entire paddy crop planted on five acres"**
Masilamani, a farmer in Bahour.*

60,000 Maggi kits sold out in five minutes on Snapdeal

A total of 60,000 welcome kits of Maggi, which was re-launched at the start of this week after being off shelves for five months, were sold in just 5 minutes on the online marketplace Snapdeal on Thursday.

The welcome kit contained 12 packs of Maggi, a 2016 Maggi calendar, a Maggi fridge magnet, Maggi post cards and a 'Welcome Back' letter, for which the registrations started on November 9. The sale on Snapdeal took place on Thursday.

Another batch of Maggi Welcome Kits will be go on sale from November 16.

“Snapdeal sold out the first batch of 60,000 Maggi Welcome Kits within 5 minutes of Maggi Flash Sale going live today. There has been much anticipation for the return of one of the favourite Indian brands and we have

witnessed a phenomenal response to this sale from customers across the country,” Snapdeal Senior Vice President (Partnerships and Strategic initiatives) Tony Navin said.

Food Safety & Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has slapped a nationwide ban on Maggi in June alleging that the snack contained excessive quantities of lead. The Bombay High Court, however, overturned the ruling and ordered fresh tests.

Earlier this month, Nestle said the government-approved laboratory had found samples from the freshly manufactured stocks of Maggi to be safe. As part of the re-launch, the Swiss food giant Nestle had also announced tied up with online marketplace Snapdeal for the sale of its product through a unique ‘flash sale model’.

Flash sales or deal-of-the-day is an e-commerce business model in which a website offers a single product for sale for a limited period of time. Potential customers have to register to avail the deal.

Is diabetes stalking Chennai?

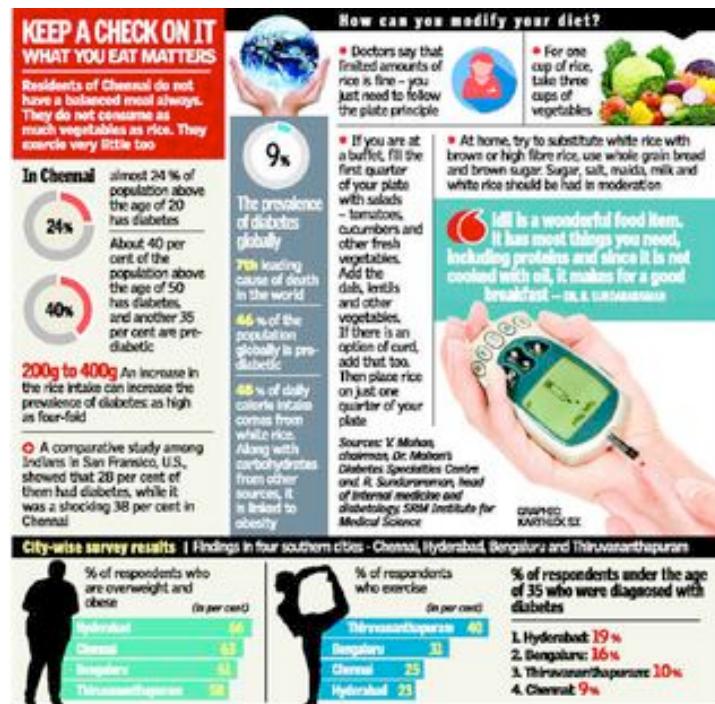
Survey reveals that Chennai has the highest number of diabetics with uncontrolled blood sugar

If you are in Chennai and have diabetes, chances are you may be eating more rice or other carbohydrates than is recommended.

An eight-city survey conducted between June and August this year has revealed that at 84 per cent, Chennai has the maximum number of diabetics who have more than 60 per cent of carbohydrates on their meal plates. The city also has the highest number of diabetics with uncontrolled blood sugar at 87 per cent, according to the survey.

Commissioned by healthcare company Abbot and conducted by market research agency IPSOS, the survey had 4,150 respondents across eight cities,

including Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram, said Shubhranshu Das, executive director (marketing) at IPSOS.



“The survey looked at people between the ages of 36 and 65, who had Type 2 diabetes and had been diagnosed for over 18 months. Sixty per cent of the respondents were women and the rest men,” he said.

So why all the carbs? “India in general has a carbohydrate-heavy diet. We eat carbs three times a day. Our research has shown that 48 per cent of our total daily calorie intake comes from white rice. And rice apart, we have other carbohydrates too – all this is linked to the obesity and diabetes epidemic in the country,” said V. Mohan, chairman, Dr. Mohan’s Diabetes Specialties Centre. This large intake of rice, Dr. Mohan explained, is also linked to higher blood sugar levels – it increases the release of insulin, draining out more from the pancreas and exhausting the organ’s cells.

At 75 per cent of carbohydrates consumed on an average as per the survey, Chennai also seems to have the most imbalanced of meal plates: as per the National Institute of Nutrition’s dietary guidelines for Indians, a balanced diet should provide 50 to 60 per cent of total calories from carbohydrates,

preferably complex carbohydrates, about 10 to 15 per cent from proteins and 20 to 30 per cent from both visible and invisible fat. It should also provide dietary fibre, antioxidants and phytochemicals.

“Brown rice, high fibre rice with a low glycemic index and more vegetables and pulses are recommended for those with diabetes. Increase the protein content on your plate: either with chicken, fish and egg whites or with pulses, grams, tofu and mushrooms,” said Dr. Mohan.

In moderation, rice is not bad, said R. Sundararaman, head of internal medicine and diabetology at SRM Institutes for Medical Science. “But follow a ratio of three cups of vegetables for every one cup of rice,” he said. In addition to the amount of carbohydrates Chennaiites consume, the survey also threw up another alarming result: of the 408 respondents from Chennai, 63 per cent were overweight or obese and only 25 per cent stated that they exercised.

“Exercise is a must. I recommend 30 to 45 minutes of walking at least five days a week to burn about 300 to 400 calories. It’s not just diet that’s important, exercise is essential too, which many seem to forget,” said Dr. Sundararaman.

Care for the elderly this monsoon

As the rain continues to pour and the weather turns chilly, geriatricians in the city are seeing a spate in the number of patients.

At Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, the Department of Geriatric Medicine is seeing 30 to 40 more cases a day this month, said its head, S. Sivakumar.

“A majority of patients have urinary tract infections, upper and lower respiratory tract infections, sinusitis and fevers,” he said.

The department was now seeing between 220 and 250 patients a day, and the 40-bed ward was generally full, said Dr. Sivakumar.

“We are stressing personal hygiene, especially hand hygiene, to all of our patients. We are also telling them to cut their finger nails and toe nails regularly as dirt under these could lead to gastrointestinal problems,” he said. Senior geriatrician V.S. Natarajan has seen a 20 per cent increase in the number of his patients.



“What I am most worried about is pneumonia. It can be a killer in old age. I am advising all my patients above the age of 60 to get a pneumonia vaccine and, for those with conditions such as asthma, to get the influenza vaccine too,” he said.

Another common ailment affecting the elderly during the rain is joint pain for those with rheumatoid or osteoarthritis.

“Exercise is a must. Seniors can go for short walks, and those who can afford it, can go for physiotherapy. Conditions such as Parkinson’s and stroke also get aggravated this season, making exercise crucial,” he said. Constipation and dry, itchy skin can be combated with plenty of fluids and mild soaps and lotions, said Dr. Natarajan.

One important thing to keep in mind, said Lakshmipathy Ramesh, geriatrician at Kauvery Hospital, was temperature control. “If an elderly person at your home is sleeping more than usual or not eating properly, check their temperature. And caregivers must remember that in the elderly,

there are subtle rises in temperature during an infection — even 99 or 100 Fahrenheit is high and must be brought down immediately,” he said.

Administration of Paracetamol, cooling the body with a damp cloth and hydration are all necessary, he added.

So this season, try and beat back the sniffles and stay healthy.

What can you do:

Wash your hands frequently, especially before a meal

Drink plenty of fluids

Get vaccinated for pneumonia and influenza

Try and exercise every day

Remember to take your medicines with you when heading out

Avoid crowded areas and try to eat at home as much as possible

Vegetable prices soar on short supply

A shortage of supplies and the Deepavali break by transporters have combined to send vegetable prices soaring and wholesalers are complaining about the poor quality of the produces arriving at the Ernakulam market.



GREEN SHOCK					
ITEM	11-11-2015	09-10-2015	11-11-2014	% variation month	% variation year
Onion Big	44.29	50.93	28.79	-13.04	53.84
Tomato	42.07	24.93	22.36	68.75	88.15
Beans	39.29	43.86	56.21	-10.42	-30.10
Bitterguard	45.14	39.71	44.86	13.67	0.62
Tapioca	18.71	18.93	20.00	-1.16	-6.45
Cabbage	27.00	25.21	25.29	7.10	6.76

**State average price* **Department of Economics and Statistics*

A wholesaler here said that heavy rains in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh was the main reason for the supply shortage. Besides, most of the rain-soaked vegetables are damaged by the time they arrive here.

Supplies have also been hit on account of the transporters taking the Deepavali break and flow of produces from Tamil Nadu is expected to pick up momentum later this week, he said. The change in tomato price has been the most dramatic. The price of best quality produce went up to Rs. 55 a kg in the retail markets here on Thursday. Tomatoes are also the most damaged of the produces arriving here. Arrival of okra and vegetable cowpea has shrunk substantially. Vegetable cowpea was sold at Rs. 54 a kg on Thursday while its wholesale price was Rs 45 a kg. Okra was sold at Rs. 40 a kg in the retail market. The best quality French beans sold for Rs. 45 a kg. Supply came down to two lorry-loads on Thursday in place of the normal four lorry-loads, the wholesaler said.

Data from the Department of Economics and Statistics showed that the price of big onion had gone up 53.84 per cent year-on-year while over a month, the price had come down 13 per cent. The average price of the bulb was Rs. 44.29 a kg on Wednesday while it was Rs. 50.93 a kg last month.

The price of cucumber had appreciated more than 20 per cent over a period of one year while the price of the vegetable had gone up 40 per cent to Rs. 26.71 a kg between October and November this year. Tomato price has changed more dramatically with the average price of the vegetable ruling at Rs. 42.07 a kg on Wednesday.

The price is up 88 per cent year-on-year while over a month, the price went up nearly 69 per cent, the government figures showed.

Poor storage in tanks despite heavy rain

Tiruchi region gets 188.7 mm rainfall between October 1 and November 4

Although the northeast monsoon has been active across the State over the past two weeks, the rain has not brought appreciable inflows to a majority of the rain-fed tanks in Tiruchi district.

Only eight of the 112 rain-fed tanks under the control of the Ariyar Division of the Public Works Department in the Tiruchi region have filled up so far.

And most of them, which include the Alathudayanpatti big and small tanks, Jamberi and Pulivalam tanks, have got good inflows as they are located close to the Pachamalai hills.

According to sources in the Ariyar Division, only one other tank — the Peramangalam tank — has a good storage of about 75 per cent of their capacity in the district.

Twelve tanks had 25 to 50 per cent storage and the other 91 tanks had less than 25 per cent storage. Many tanks in Ariyar division have remained dry for nearly three or four years now.

Only the system tanks under the River Conservation Division of the Public Works Department, which get supply from the Cauvery besides the rain flow, have good storage.

The division has about 187 tanks under its control in Tiruchi, Thanjavur, Perambalur, and Karur districts.

Meanwhile, the district has got near normal rainfall under the northeast monsoon so far. But the rain has not been heavy enough to bring inflows to the tank.

According to statistics available in the Chennai Regional Meteorological Centre's website, Tiruchi district has received 188.7 mm of rainfall between October 1 and November 4 against the normal of 197 mm for the period. The district has received widespread and moderate showers over the past week. However, farmers in the non-delta areas of the district are keeping their fingers crossed in view of the poor storage in the tanks.

The Agriculture Department expects samba paddy to be raised on at least 25,000 hectares of land in the non-delta areas of the district this year. While samba paddy cultivation had been brisk in the canal-irrigated delta areas of the district, farmers in the non-delta areas were awaiting the rains.

Order placed for more toor dhal

A view of Chinthamani super market in Tiruchi where dhal is kept for sale.



Overwhelming demand from the customers

The Department of Cooperatives has sought 10 more tonnes of toor dhal to be sold at the special outlets in Tiruchi.

The order has been sent due to overwhelming demand from the customers, who line up in front of 14 outlets in the city to buy toor dhal, which is sold at the rate of Rs.110 a kg as against the market price of Rs.180 to Rs.200.

K.C. Ravichandran, Joint Registrar, Cooperatives, told *The Hindu* that a total of 22,400 kg of toor dhal had so far been sold in Tiruchi since the special sale was started from November 1. It had received 27,800 kg of toor dhal so far. An average of 2 tonnes of dhal is sold a day since the first day.

In order to extend the benefit of “reduced” price, it was instructed that each customer would get one kg of toor dhal. The salesmen were asked to get the name and contact information of customers.

Mr. Ravichandran said the special sale had stabilised the market price of toor dhal to an extent. There were reports that rate of toor dhal in the open market

had down by Rs.30 a kg. It was expected that it would further go down in the forthcoming weeks.



Winter is coming: Just add these food items to your diet

Winter is not just about layering yourself up. It's also about keeping your body warm. But do you really know what to include in your diet? We bring you a list of five items you should swear by.



Ginger and honey are rich in antibacterial properties while nuts are a good source of vitamins and fibre.

Are freezing cold hands and feet your constant companions during winters? Are you constantly struggling to keep yourself warm? Do you fall sick often during this season? If your answer to all of the above is yes, then it's time you took our advice.

Winter is not just about layering yourself up. It's also about keeping your body warm. But do you really know what to include in your diet?

CyberChef food specialist Shilpa Gupta shares a list of five foods you should definitely include in your diet:

Ginger: Ginger reduces high cholesterol level and hence is the best choice to keep the [body fit](#) during winters. With its antibacterial properties, it is also helpful in treating cough and cold that is quite common during this season. It can be chewed raw daily or can be added to soup or any other dishes to enhance the flavour.

Honey: It is instrumental in combating cold, flu or cough during winter. Even if it is sweet, honey doesn't add [calories](#) and is also beneficial in keeping the body warm.

Nuts: A variety of nuts like peanuts, walnuts and almonds is the best source of good cholesterol, vitamins, fibre and Omega-3 fatty acids. They make for essential snacking during winters, as they are naturally hot food items.

Cinnamon: Cinnamon is a wonderful spice to shield you from the dipping temperatures. Add it to any cooked dish or to soup and salad to add flavour or use it while making warm beverages like tea.

Garlic: Its antibacterial properties keep one away from the [common winter diseases](#) like cold, cough and throat irritations. It keeps the cholesterol level

in check, thus aiding good health during winters. One can have three to four garlic cloves daily or add it to cooked dishes for a flavoursome meal.

Nestle's Maggi makes a comeback without major brand ambassadors

Maggi would now be available across the country except in Bihar, Odisha, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, where the company is yet to secure the requisite clearances.



[Maggi](#) had to undergo tests in three government-accredited laboratories in Jaipur, Hyderabad and Mohali, as ordered by the Bombay High Court prior to commencing sales in the market.

Nestle India's popular instant noodles Maggi has made a comeback — five months after the company was banned from selling the product in India for allegedly containing lead beyond permissible levels, but this time around the company will not leverage brand ambassadors [Amitabh Bachchan](#) and [Madhuri Dixit](#) to reconnect with the masses.

Suresh Narayanan, chairman and managing director, Nestle India, said, “Our promotional strategy will be across three platforms. We will use traditional media to reassure our consumers regarding the safety of our product. We will connect digitally with our target group. Besides, there will be a lot of events for brand activation.”

When asked about Nestle India’s contracts with brand ambassadors Amitabh Bachchan and Madhuri Dixit for promoting Maggi, Narayanan said, “The earlier contract has lapsed. We have not reached fresh agreements. We are not ruling it out forever but as of now we do not plan to use brand ambassadors for promoting the product.” A court case had been filed against Amitabh Bachchan and Madhuri Dixit in Uttar Pradesh in June when food regulators were testing the product. Narayanan said there will be a “fairly substantial” increase in marketing spends and advertising campaigns to bring back customers in whose minds “a seed of doubt has been planted” due to the crisis.

Nestle India launched Maggi in 100 towns through 300-odd distributors on Monday. The product will be rolled out in many more areas in the coming days. Prior to the ban, the company was selling Maggi through four million outlets in 450 towns.

Maggi would now be available across the country except in Bihar, Odisha, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, where the company is yet to secure the requisite clearances. The company is engaging with these eight states to complete due diligence procedures.

Maggi noodles would now be available only in the masala variant at the same price as of June 2015. The other formats would be introduced gradually. “We have relaunched Maggi. We have been through arguably a very big crisis in the last couple of months. I am glad that we have been able to vindicate once again, the quality, safety and credentials as we reintroduce Maggi selectively...”, said Narayanan.

Narayanan added Nestle India has not changed the contents of Maggi. He informed, “We are giving what consumers have loved for 32 years, the only change is on the package. There is a small set of words that conveys the company’s commitment to quality and goodness that consumers can trust.”

The company is presently manufacturing Maggi noodles at three locations – Nanjangud (Karnataka), Moga (Punjab) and Bicholim (Goa). Two more plants in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, where the instant noodles is still banned, are yet to start. The company is engaging with authorities there in order to start production in those two units at the earliest.

Maggi had to undergo tests in three government-accredited laboratories in Jaipur, Hyderabad and Mohali, as ordered by the Bombay High Court prior to commencing sales in the market.

The Swiss food major has also partnered with online marketplace Snapdeal for selling Maggi.

Post the Maggi crisis, Narayanan said Nestle India will go for product portfolio diversification with focus on dairy, coffee and beverages as well as

chocolates and confectionery in order to avoid over-dependence on a single product.



Do you cut all your veggies without washing knife in between?

Do you use knife or grater in the kitchen to cut different eatables one after another, without washing them in between? You could be playing a role in spreading disease-causing bacteria, warns a study.

Actually, bacteria latch on to the utensils commonly found in consumers' homes and spread to the next item. Researchers have known that poor hygiene in a consumer's home can lead to food-borne illnesses, but considering what practices in the kitchen are more likely to lead to contamination has not been examined extensively.

Lead author Marilyn Erickson from the University of Georgia contaminated many types of fruit and vegetables in her lab -- adding certain pathogens that often can be found on these foods, such as salmonella and E. coli. Using a knife, Erickson would cut into things like tomatoes or cantaloupe and other types of produce to see how easily the bacteria could spread when the knife was continuously used without being cleaned.

Erickson and co-authors did not wash between cutting these different items. They also grated produce, such as carrots, to see how easily the pathogens spread to graters. They found that both knives and graters can cause

additional cross-contamination in the kitchen and that the pathogens were spread from produce to produce if they hadn't washed the utensils.

The study also found that certain fruit and vegetables spread pathogens to knives to different degrees. "For items like tomatoes, we tended to have a higher contamination of the knives than when we cut strawberries," Erickson said.

Erickson found that scrubbing or peeling items like melons, carrots and celery did not eliminate contamination on the produce item but led to contamination of the brush or peeler. The study was published in the journal Food Microbiology.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Seedlings costlier in government nursery than in private ones, say farmers

The state horticulture department's nursery, which is supposed to sell seedlings at subsidized prices, sells them at triple the price charged by private nurseries, allege farmers. They say they end up having to actually shell out more money to avail the government subsidy under the National Horticulture Mission scheme, which makes it redundant.

Farmers from the western region recently wrote to the state agriculture department pointing out the difficulties they face in availing the subsidy

under the scheme. "Under the scheme, if we buy seedlings from the horticulture department's nursery, we are supposed get a subsidy of Rs 16,000 per hectare," said the district secretary of the Tamil Nadu Farmers Association, A Kandasamy. "But we end up spending almost Rs 40,000 to enjoy that subsidy," he said.

According to farmers the seedlings sold at the nursery are three times more expensive than those sold at private nurseries. "In private nurseries the seedlings cost only as much as Rs 0.35 p to 0.45 but in the government nursery it costs as much as Rs 1.50 per seedling," said R Padmanabhan, a chilli farmer from Avinashi. "The other problem is travelling since the nursery is based in Salem," he said. For example farmers in Coimbatore say a majority of them end up spending almost Rs 30,000 to Rs 40,000 in buying seedlings from the nursery and transporting them to their farms. "We spend close to Rs 30,000 when we buy around seedlings worth Rs 20,000 and Rs 10,000 is spent to transport them back to the district," said Kandasamy. "We should be able to enjoy the subsidy and use it for things like fertilizer, labour and pesticides even if we spend only Rs 10,000 on the seedlings," said Padmanabhan.

They suggest reducing the price of the seedlings and setting up nurseries in every district, allowing farmers to use the subsidy better. "We sell only hybrid varieties of seedlings in the nursery. Some of the varieties like ultra-high density mangoes, ultra-high density guavas, tissue culture bananas besides chilly and coriander, are not available in private nurseries," said a deputy director of horticulture. They said the yield per plant or tree would be much higher than those of private nurseries. "So the cost at which we buy

them from the companies which develop and produce them is high along with the cost of running a green shade polyhouse," he said. They also said that this subsidy was not meant for farmers outside Salem. "For Coimbatore farmers, subsidies are being given for kitchen gardens, rooftop gardens and for drip irrigation," he clarified.

Benefits and risks of eating fish



Are you confused about the benefits and risks of eating fish? Here's what you need to know:

Benefits

Protects against stroke: A study found that people who ate fish at least once a week were 13 per cent less likely to suffer from a blockage of the blood supply to the brain (ischemic [stroke](#)) than those who did not eat fish that often. Now the American Heart Association recommends eating fish at least two times a week because the omega-3 fatty acids help protect the heart.

Helps fight disease: Fatty fish are the richest source of omega-3 fats. Omega-3s are critical for cardiovascular health and may also help protect against arthritis, diabetes, depression, and some cancers. Omega-3s are most concentrated in cold-water fatty fish such as sardines, herring, salmon, mackerel, and trout.

Risks

Dangerous during pregnancy:

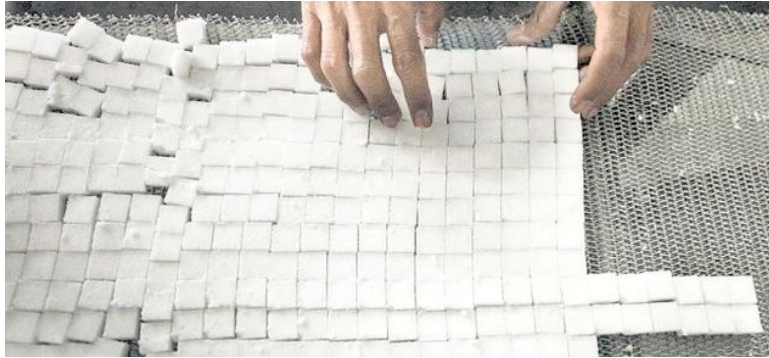
Pregnant women, nursing mothers, and women considering pregnancy should limit exposure to fish containing methylmercury — the form of mercury that is found in fish. This industrial pollutant can impede the development of the nervous system in fetuses, babies and young children. Since methylmercury tends to accumulate over time, it is most concentrated in larger fish with longer life spans, such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tilefish, and albacore tuna.

Farmed fish may contain contaminants:

Farmed salmon may contain high levels of pesticides and other toxins. To avoid any negative effects of this contamination, make it a point to buy wild salmon instead of farmed salmon. When grocery shopping, look for the labels on salmon to identify the fish as either farmed or wild.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Centre in a fix over quantum of sugar to subsidise



The government is in a bind over how much sugar to bring under the new production-linked subsidy scheme which is set to replace export sops that are non-compatible with World Trade Organisation (WTO) norms.

Double whammy

“Providing the subsidy for all sugarcane produced in the country may prove to be too big a burden for the ex-chequer, but limiting it to just quota exports could lead to action at the WTO,” a Commerce Ministry official told *BusinessLine*. The Food Ministry’s proposal of switching over to production-linked sugar subsidies from an export sop regime was endorsed by the Commerce Ministry as production subsidies are allowed under WTO while export sops are banned.

However, the Commerce Ministry has warned that if the production subsidy is not provided to all cane farmers and given just for the quota amount that is to be mandatorily exported by millers, it could lead to action at the multilateral forum. “If production-linked subsidy is provided for select

exports, it could be seen as actually an export subsidy and action could be initiated against India,” the official said.

Export sops

An inter-ministerial panel of senior officials under the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) is now looking at how to sort out the problem of coverage, before placing the proposal before the Union Cabinet.

The DFPD has been forced to discontinue export sops for raw sugar that it had announced in the past two sugar years (October to September) as the sops were being questioned by competing sugar producing countries such as Australia, Colombia and Brazil at the WTO.

“If we would have continued to give sops in the new sugar year that started last month, one of the sugar producing countries would have dragged us to dispute at the WTO,” the official added.

The Centre, therefore, let the export sops lapse on September 30, and started working on an alternative scheme linked to production.

The DFPD wants that even if it is not possible to give such subsidies to all sugarcane produced in the country, it should be at least given for the four million tonnes of sugar export quota mandatorily fixed by the Government and imposed on sugar millers. The quota has been imposed to get rid of some of the domestic glut and help millers pay cane arrears to farmers which stands at over an estimated ₹12,000 crore.

Sugar millers have said that they would suffer huge losses if they export sugar under prevailing market conditions without sops as the global prices for sugar is much lower than the domestic prices.

The DFPD has proposed to give a direct payment of ₹47.50 a quintal as production subsidy to farmers of sugarcane.

India's sugar production in 2014-15 was 28.1 million tonnes against a domestic demand of 24 million tonnes.

Export incentive to boost natural rubber shipments



The Centre has added RSS (Ribbed Smoked Sheet) and TSR (Technically Specified Rubber) in Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS) which would make exporters eligible for an incentive at the rate of two per cent for exports to 169 countries including China, US, Germany, Italy, Poland, UK, Malaysia, Brazil, Egypt, Iran, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Turkey and UAE.

The Rubber Board had been pressing with the Directorate-General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) for the inclusion of natural rubber (NR) in the MEIS since the announcement of Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2015-20, as the policy announced on 1 April 2015 had not included NR in any of the export incentive schemes. It is presumed that the inclusion of NR in the scheme would give a fillip to exports of NR from India.

The extension of incentive as a part of FTP is expected to improve the competitiveness of Indian exporters by reducing infrastructural inefficiencies and associated costs. In FTP 2015-20, the government has merged Focus Product Scheme, Market Linked Focus Products Scheme, Focus Market Scheme, Agri-Infrastructure Incentive Scrip and Vishesh Krishi and Gram Udyog Yojana for rewarding merchandise exports with different kinds of duty scrips into a single scheme.

Duty Credit Scrips (DCSs) shall be granted as rewards under MEIS. The DCSs and goods imported or domestically procured against them shall be freely transferable. The DCSs can be used for payment of customs duties for import of inputs or goods and payment of excise duties on domestic procurement of inputs or goods including capital goods and payment of service tax.

In June 2012, the government had added NR in the Market Linked Focus Product Scheme with two per cent incentive.

Q3 tea production down on adverse weather

Indian tea production is heading for a shortfall in calendar 2015 – for the first time in recent years.



“Tea Board has now come out with its estimate of September production and a compilation for year so far shows that in the first three-quarters, India has lost 20.22 million kg (mkg) or 2.32 per cent over the same period of 2014,” Rajesh Gupta, compiler of Global Tea Digest, told *BusinessLine*.

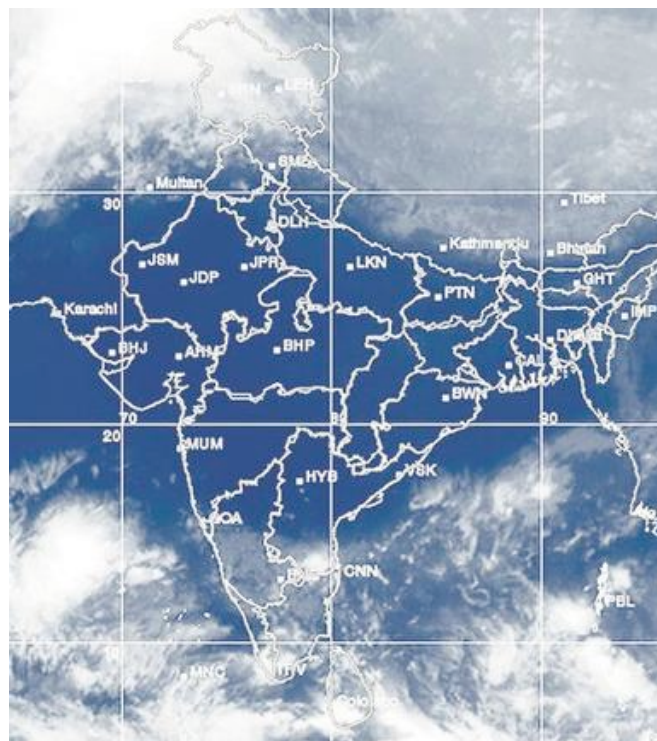
Adverse weather has pulled down the production in both North and South India.

North India accounted for the bulk of loss of 18.93 mkg with production drifting to 677.10 mkg. Assam, the country’s largest tea producing State, lost as much as 17.67 mkg to total 427.68 mkg. West Bengal lost 1.94 mkg to dip to 230.38 mkg.

South Indian production fell by 1.29 mkg to total 177.63 mkg. Here, Tamil Nadu reported a fall of 2.09 mkg to reach 125.05 mkg. Kerala posted a marginal increase.

“Collectively, India’s production till September dropped to 854.73 mkg from 874.95 in the corresponding months of last calendar,” Rajesh Gupta noted. In the last few years, India has been posting record production year after year. At the present going, industry sources estimate the current calendar to end up with a production of around 100 mkg – some 20 mkg less than last year.

Met says next ‘low’ may drive up N-E monsoon from Saturday



True to forecasts, the India Met Department has said that a rain-triggering low-pressure area is expected to pop up over South-East Bay of Bengal by Saturday. Tamil Nadu will start getting a fresh wave of rains from the system from the same day since the larger easterly wave hosting the ‘low’ would start impacting the coast.

Extended forecast

The forecast put out by the Met for the three days from Saturday is as follows:

Saturday: Heavy rain would occur at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Sunday: Heavy to very heavy rain would occur over isolated places over Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

Monday: Heavy to very heavy rain would occur at isolated places over Tamil Nadu and Puducherry and heavy rain over Coastal Andhra Pradesh.

Meanwhile, the 'low' would be put under constant watch for signs for intensification since it has a long way to travel towards the Sri Lanka or Tamil Nadu where it is likely headed.

Likely depression

The US National Centres for Environmental Prediction sees a likely depression toying with the North-East tip of Sri Lanka by Monday.

It may possibly intensify another round and move West-Northwest likely towards Nagapattinam-Puducherry to become the second deep depression to hit the coast during this season.

Early outlook from the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts is not that optimistic and suggests that the system may wash over the coast as a depression at best.

Meanwhile on Thursday, India Met located convective (rain-triggering) hanging heavy over part of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Central and South Arabian Sea, Central and South Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. Rain or thundershowers lashed many parts of South Interior Karnataka and Rayalaseema and at a few places in Coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry during the 24 hours ending in the morning.

Arabian Sea ‘low’

Clouds over Arabian Sea and parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu are attributed to a remnant cyclone of the erstwhile deep depression setting up a ‘low’ over South-East and adjoining East-Central Arabian Sea.

Unlike the two preceding ‘lows’ that went on set up back-to-back cyclones of record-breaking intensity in the basin (extremely severe cyclones ‘Chapala’ and ‘Megh’), the latest one may fail to get traction over the very waters pulverised by the predecessors.

The European Centre is of the view that the ‘low’ may linger over the Central Arabian Sea for sometime and become inconsequential in due course.

Rubber continues to stay flat

Spot rubber continued to rule unchanged on Thursday. RSS 4 was quoted steady at ₹111 a kg, by traders and the Rubber Board. The grade closed flat at ₹108, according to dealers. The sentiments remained neutral as the domestic futures remained closed on the NMCE consecutively for the second day owing to Diwali (Bali Pratipada) RSS 3 (spot) closed marginally higher at ₹82.08 (₹82) at Bangkok. November futures closed at ¥130.5 (₹70.01) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber rates (₹/kg): RSS-4: 111(111); RSS-5: 108 (108); Ungraded: 99 (99); ISNR 20: 93.50 (93.50) and Latex (60% drc): 83.50 (83.50).

Business Standard

R Gopalakrishnan: Intelligent farming

Election fever and Diwali are behind us, so it is time to discuss mundane things again. The humble pulses have become a pulsating national issue. Over the years several commentators, including this writer, have anticipated the impending crisis; however, as with other crises, each recurrence delivers its own message.

The urban excitement about start-ups, [entrepreneurship](#) and innovation is missing in farming. Try compiling a repertoire of bottom-of-the-pyramid innovation articles on farming. Agri-business correspondents write reasoned columns. However, policy-makers seem interested in lofty programmes,

with little reference to the [farming](#) sector. Logically, [Digital India](#) should connect progressive farmers through smartphones; [agriculture](#) should be a [Make in India](#) candidate because it delivers 15 per cent of India's exports, valued at \$ 40 billion; it should be a [National Skills Development Mission](#) candidate because it employs 260 million people - over half of India's workforce. Experts suggest that India's agricultural exports can be doubled to \$80 billion and that the increased output can be produced by fewer, better-trained farm workers.

In a recent article, Narendra Pratap Singh, director of the Indian Institute of Pulses Research, Kanpur, said: "It is not lack of research as much as policy support that is currently missing in pulses." The message from the senior scientist seems to be, 'The pulses problem is not because of us scientists; the problem is with regard to policy and interdepartmental coordination'. Truth be told, apart from technology, the business model (way of doing things) can be a huge source of innovation. Farming and agriculture are crying out for a business model innovation.

So what is the farming problem? Is India short of good farmers, funds, schemes or experts? None of them. In fact, it has too much of these valuable resources, but they work in an uncoordinated and unfocused manner. As pointed out in a recent book (*The Silo Effect* by Gillian Tett, Little Brown, 2015), "Silos are cultural phenomena... They arise because social groups have particular conventions about how to classify the world... People tend to assume that their way of behaving is natural and the way other people behave is not... Occasionally we can imagine a different way of organising our world".

Farming and agriculture need an alternative national framework. If you search for an explicit National Agricultural Policy, similar to India's Industrial Policy Resolution of the 1950s, you will encounter a strange phenomenon: the present National Democratic Alliance government may mention a 2005 United Progressive Alliance draft, which anyway needs updating.

Sixty items such as law and order and police and agriculture are pure state subjects under the Indian Constitution; if so, what is the Union agriculture minister accountable for? The country needs an agriculture czar, who will do different things, differently - in other words, intelligent and innovative agriculture. Implementation of a collaborative programme with the states can replicate the dramatic results achieved by three earlier agricultural revolutions - food grains, milk and poultry. It is an innovation priority that the nation cannot keep waiting for. What should be done?

Y S P Thorat, former chairman and managing director of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, and I have co-authored a paper titled, 'Sarthak Krishi Yojana', which is accessible (<http://www.rallis.co.in/sarthakkrishiyojana.html>). It suggests a coherent framework to transform agriculture and is inspired by the national industrialisation experiences through five pillars - technology, risk, institutionalisation, policy and skills. Some of its ideas: adopt a formal technology policy with regard to soil health, crop protection chemicals, crop nutrients and seeds; actively promote

Section 8 companies in which farmers can be shareholders - sort of the small and medium-sized enterprises equivalent for farmers; set up agricultural technical training institute, a bit like the industrial training institute, to promote advanced farm skills; as part of Digital India, connect 10 million progressive farmers to access knowledge, experiences, markets and technology.

Consumer inflation up on pricey pulses



Consumer Price Index-based (CPI) [inflation](#) for October rose to five per cent - the highest in four months - compared with 4.41 per cent in September and 4.62 in October 2014, according to official data released on Thursday.

The rise in monthly [retail inflation](#) came on the back of increasing food prices, especially pulses, whose prices rose a staggering 42.2 per cent year-over-year for October.

According to data released by the Central Statistics Office, consumer food price inflation rose 5.25 per cent for October, compared with 3.88 per cent in both September 2015 and October last year. Among the sub-groups, the

prices of pulses, which have a weightage of almost three per cent in the [CPI](#) index, rose 33.25 per cent for rural areas and 59.45 per cent year-over-year in October. Vegetables, with a weightage of 7.5 per cent, rose nearly two per cent combined, while cereals and products, with a weightage of 12.35 per cent, rose 1.5 per cent for the month.

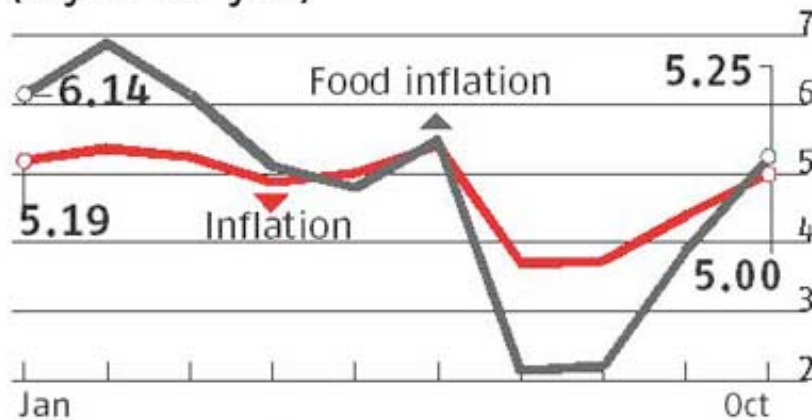
The combined group of food and beverages, 54 per cent of the total index, rose 5.34 per cent, while fuel and light, with a weightage of nearly 8 per cent, showed an increase of 5.32 per cent.

Miscellaneous items, which includes household goods and services, health, transport and communication and has a weightage of 27.26 per cent, rose

3.51 per cent year-over-year in October.

UPWARD TREND

Consumer price index-based inflation (% year-on-year)



Note: Base year is 2012

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

"The inflation numbers have come as a surprise to the market in that they are higher than expectations. Prices of pulses remain a concern, but that

will correct as more the price rise, the more people will grow pulses," said D K Joshi, chief economist at Crisil.

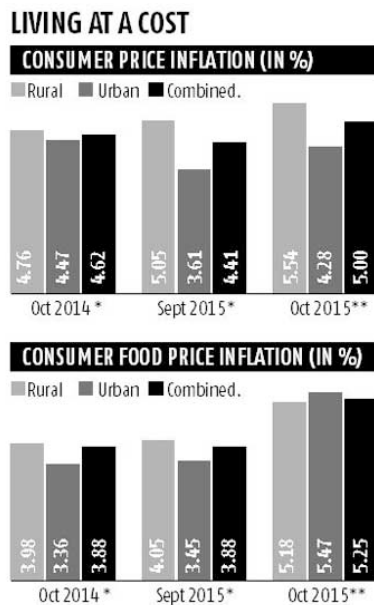
Analysts polled by Reuters had predicted October retail inflation to be 4.82 per cent year-on-year, while those polled by Bloomberg had forecast CPI inflation to come in at 4.9 per cent.

Preliminary data on rabi sowing released by the department of agriculture shows that chana has been planted in around 1.74 million hectares of land till October 30, up from 1.52 million hectares sown during the same period last year.

In total, chana is planted in around 8.77 million hectares of land during the rabi season, which means current acreage is just around 20 per cent of the usual area. Overall, pulses, which also include lentils, have been sown in around 2.06 million hectares, down from 2.13 million hectares during the same period last year.

Crisil Chief Economist Joshi said the higher-than-anticipated inflation data meant that Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Raghuram Rajan may not

go in for a rate cut in the next monetary policy meeting in the first week of December. He, however, added that the inflation data for January 2016 would still likely be lower than 5.8 per cent that Rajan is targeting for that month, a view shared by other economists as well.



* Final; ** Provisional
Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation