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THE HINDU

Encourage research in science to help farmers: Etala

Minister inaugurates the three-day science fair organised by Telangana State Social Welfare Residential Educational Institution



A student explaining her model to R.S. Praveen Kumar, Secretary, TS Social Welfare Educational Institutions at the science fair held at Centre for Excellence in Karimnagar district on Thursday.

Minister for Finance and Civil Supplies Etala Rajender stressed on the need for encouraging research in science and technology for the benefit of farmers so as to stop suicides triggered by crisis in the agriculture sector.

Inaugurating the three-day science fair ‘Cosmos-2015’ organised by Telangana State Social Welfare Residential Educational Institution at Centre for Excellence in Alugunur on Thursday, the Minister said that technology should be developed in a such a way that a farmer should know where to sink a bore-well and fetch water to protect his/her standing crops.

Expressing concern over the haphazard development in the district while referring to the granite industry, he said the industry had only benefitted a

few people. In turn, it had caused more harm to the ecology with the loss of flora and fauna. He said the granite industry had displaced the wildlife and forced them to enter human habitations. Besides, it had also caused depletion in the groundwater table in the region, he pointed out.

Stating that science and technology should be used for the development of society, he quoted the examples of former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam deigning light-weight callipers and stunts. “Science is like two edges of a sword. It all depends on how it is used by social scientists (politicians)”, he said.

Telangana State Cultural Council Chairman Rasamayi Balakishan, MLC P. Sudhakar Reddy, TS Social Welfare Educational Institutions Secretary R.S. Praveen Kumar, Collector Neethu Prasad and others were also present. Earlier, the Minister and others inaugurated parents’ restroom at the Centre for Excellence. They also inspected various exhibits displayed by the students on the occasion.

A total of 980 students from 70 schools in Karimnagar, Adilabad, Khammam and Warangal districts are participating in the science fair. The students displayed their models on subjects like energy and science, agriculture, health, environment, mathematics and computers, humanities, economics and commerce and some models were on history and geography.

Cash prizes to first three winning models would be given in each category.

Protect all crops, officials advise farmers

A team from Agriculture Department inspects affected crops

Agricultural scientists inspecting the maize crop in Ariyalur district on Wednesday.

The Agriculture Department has advised the maize farmers of Sendurai taluk to take immediate action to protect the crop which has been damaged by strong winds in the recent days.

A team of scientists from the Agriculture Department, led by N. Pannerselvam, Joint Director of Agriculture, visited various parts of Sendurai taluk on Wednesday and inspected the crops damaged by the recent rains and winds.



The team visited Ayan Thathanur, Mullaiyur, Irungalakurichi, Manakudaiyan and Periyakurichi villages and found that though the taluk registered moderate showers, the strong winds had played the spoilsport in the region. It found that the maize could be immediately saved by the application of simple crop protection technique.

Azhagukannan, Professor and Head of Creed Krishi Vigyan Kendra, said that the damage had come at a time when tillers were about to ripen. It could be compensated by the application of urea and potash. He suggested the application of micro nutrients. About 1,691 hectares had been brought under maize in this taluk which registered just 92 mm of rain so far.

The team later inspected paddy fields and oil seeds in the taluk. About 396 hectares had been brought under paddy. For the paddy crop under water, the team has suggested immediate application of urea, neem cake and potash. The team has advised the farmers to drain the rainwater stagnant in cotton fields for registering higher yield and for protecting any disease in cotton.

Turning Wayanad into a cool season vegetable hub

A group of women farmers take a look at a trial plot of onion cultivation at the Regional Agriculture Research Station at Ambalavayal in Wayanad district.



Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) in association with Agriculture Department is gearing up to make Wayanad district a cool season vegetable hub of the State.

“Though some locations in the high ranges of Idukki district are known for cool season vegetables, the horticulture potential of the district, especially in cool season vegetable cultivation, is yet to be tapped effectively. So we are launching a campaign to promote vegetable cultivation even at small homesteads of all the four blocks in the district this season,” K. Asha, Deputy Director of ATMA, said.

Promotion of six vegetables

“The promotion of six vegetable crops, including cabbage, cauliflower, beetroot, carrots, French beans and onion, are included in the campaign. Trials and experience of farmers have proved the feasibility of these crops,” said Dr. Anil Zachariah, Deputy Project Director of ATMA, Wayanad.

As part of the campaign, the ATMA is organising a two-day orientation class on onion cultivation in the district.

While handling the first-day technical session of farmers at the Regional Agriculture Research Station at Ambalavayal on Thursday Jalaja S. Menon, Assistant Professor, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Thrissur, said onion could be grown in cool season in almost all the parts of the State including in the plains and coastal areas. The yield in the homestead condition would go up to 30 kilograms from one cent of land, Dr. Jalaja said.

Further studies were under way to streamline the recommendation for commercial cultivation of onion in large plots, she added. As many as 150 farmers attended the programme.

Onion seedlings would be distributed to them in three weeks along with study classes on other cool season vegetables, Ranjan.S. Karippai, Professor, KVK, Thrissur, said.

Free online course on crop management from November 30

Part-I of the course had witnessed encouraging response

After successful completion of part one of the course ‘Diseases of Horticultural Crops and their Management’, National Virtual Academy for Indian Agriculture is launching part two of the course in continuation of its first Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in agriculture.

The two-month free online course, which begins on November 30, will conclude on January 29, 2016. It is an initiative by a team of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) experts and educators from the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and its partners, together with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay.

Part-I of the free online course concluded on April 27, 2015. Part-II of the course will cover distribution, symptoms, causes, disease cycles and management of diseases of important horticultural crops and their economic importance. Interested persons can click on <https://www.iitbombayx.in/courses/NVAforIA/PATH372.2x/2015-16/about>

or email atoneagriculture@cgiar.org , according to a release here on Thursday.

Four-day Krishi Mela of UAS-B begins

The four-day Krishi Mela of the University of Agricultural Sciences-Bengaluru began on Thursday amidst inclement weather.

The huge slush in the fields and on the exhibition grounds due to the continuous rain in the last 10 days had made the ground slippery. Also, there was a spell of drizzling soon after the inauguration of the mela. But that did not discourage people as a sizeable number of them turned up even before the mela had been officially inaugurated by Governor Vajubhai Rudabhai Vala.

The mela, which is one of the mega agricultural extension programmes of this region as it aims at showcasing the latest farm technologies, research outcomes, crop patterns, pertains to 10 southern districts coming under the jurisdiction of UAS-B. In all, this year's mela has about 600 stalls pertaining to various activities related to agriculture.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Agriculture Minister Krishna Byre Gowda told the farmers that adopting latest and appropriate farm technologies was the only way to tackle the present agrarian crisis. "The problem with us is that we are trying to look at agriculture from an emotional point of view. But it is not possible to find a solution to the present problem through emotions," he observed.

The Governor stressed the need for ensuring that farm loans were not diverted by farmers to meet non-agricultural expenses such as marriages. "Diversion of such farm loans would affect your personal finances leading to a crisis," he told farmers.

UAS-B Vice-Chancellor H. Shivanna also spoke on the occasion.

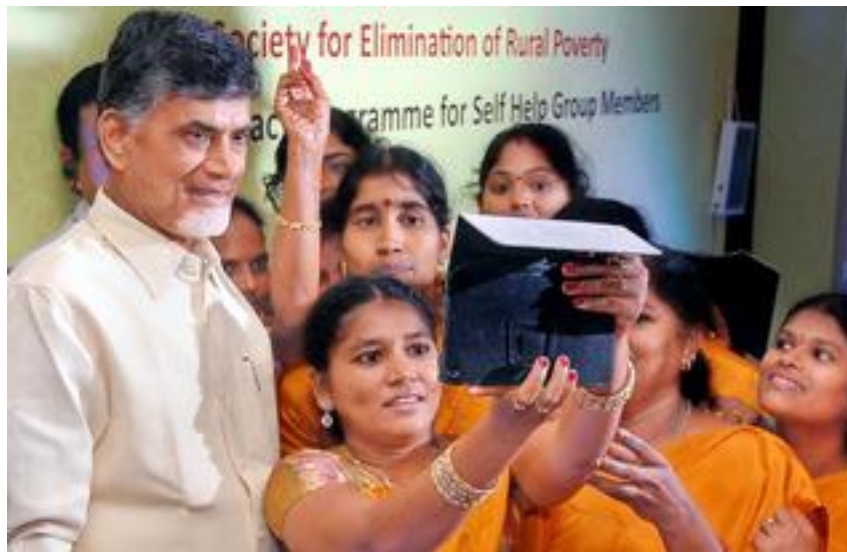
Meet on diet for a green planet

A two-day national conference on 'Ecological approaches towards diet for a green planet' will begin at the Pallotti Institute of Lay Leadership, Animation and Research at Nagamalai near here on Friday.

The conference, organised by Building Ecological Regenerative Agriculture and Societies India, in association with Biodynamic Association of India, will discuss the needs, requirements, experiences and processes involved in implementing sustainable agriculture, especially introducing concepts like ecological regenerative agriculture, sustainable food societies and diet for a green planet.

Rs. 660-cr. Rural Inclusive Growth Project launched

The World Bank-funded project will be implemented in 150 most backward mandals in the State



Members of Self Help Groups taking a selfie with Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu during the launch of the A.P. Rural Inclusive Growth Project in Vijayawada on Thursday.

Taking a significant step, the State government on Thursday launched the Andhra Pradesh Rural Inclusive Growth Project to eliminate poverty, women empowerment, increase agriculture income, secure increased access to human development services and social entitlements.

The Rs.660 crore project will be implemented in 150 most backward mandals in the State.

The State government will be implementing the project in association with World Bank, which would extend 75 per cent of the total project and the rest will be borne by the A.P. Government.

It will have five major components, value chain development through producer organisations, human development, social development, safety nets and entitlements, mission support and partnerships and project implementation support.

In an effort to create an ecosystem of innovation and seek suggestions from experts and corporate companies, the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) signed memorandum of understandings with 16 different corporate companies in taking up the project here on Thursday.

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said since decades women were neglected and they need to be encouraged in all fields. “Women attribute to 50 per cent of the workforce and if one ignores such quantum, then it can hinder development,” said the Chief Minister while addressing a round table with Chief Executive Officers of different companies.

Financial support was imperative to change the status of women and urged the corporate companies to extend their support in overall development of the self help groups by training them in different fields, including skill enhancement, capacity building, processing, manufacturing, packing, online marketing etc.

“The SHGs have a corpus fund of Rs.4,500 crore and the State government will invest Rs.10,000 crore, if required,” he said and acknowledged World Bank India for their incessant support to the Velugu Program and extending support for the new project and using technology to bring transparency, accountability and decision-making.

He said there were plans to Smart Andhra Pradesh Foundation, which will further help in creating Smart Mandal, Village Foundation.

Chief Secretary (Planning Department), S.P. Tucker said the government had achieved double digit growth with 9.75 per cent growth was achieved in the first quarter and 11.5 per cent in the second quarter.

The government was focussing on 150 backward mandals and agri-business models for 85 lakh women and stressed that public-private-partnership model was essential for professional management, besides strengthening the value chain to eliminate middle men.

As per the MoUs signed, the role of different companies is as follows: Wal-Mart Stores will train SHGs in processing and establish a special cell for developing women entrepreneurs. Experts would be roped in from US, UK and Mexico to work with local farmers in Anantapur, East Godavari districts.

ITC Agri Business division will help in value chain development through exploration of commodity buy-back and technical support towards developing down-stream components of value chain.

Olam Agro India will work with rural communities in development of sustainable value chains around cashew and chilly. It will help in productivity enhancement, post harvest management etc. Mahindra and Mahindra, Agri and Allied Division would provide technical assistance and marketing partner.

Govt. to introduce portal to support innovation

Aiming to push innovation in the country, Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Thursday said a separate portal would be established under Department of Electronics and IT (Deity) through which innovators can seek government support for their ideas and products.

“Under Department of IT, a separate portal shall be created which is dedicated to the innovators of India,” Mr. Prasad said at an event by technology giant Intel in the national capital. He added that anyone who innovates can put up his innovation on the portal. “My department will follow it. We will reach them in the event they are worthy of that. They will be given all the support,” the Minister said, adding that he will personally oversee the initiative.

Mr. Prasad also facilitated 10 finalists of the ‘Intel and DST Innovate for Digital India Challenge’ who have developed innovative solutions for various fields such as healthcare, agriculture among others.

“We believe that grassroots level innovation built through robust public private partnership like this will lead the way towards achieving a truly Digital India,” Mr. Prasad said.

Govt. to launch programme to boost pulses cultivation

Concerned over the drastic fall in pulses and oilseeds production across the globe which has affected the domestic market, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken an initiative to launch a dedicated programme to promote the sowing of key agri commodities. Two schemes to be assisted by the Centre may be launched at a joint conference of Agriculture ministers of all states scheduled for November 24-25 in New Delhi, Maharashtra minister for Agriculture Eknath Khadse said. According to Khadse, only 30 per cent countries in the world produce pulses and oilseeds, while the rest are just consumers.

“In last five to six years, due to natural calamities and other reasons, production of pulses has reduced drastically.

According to the demand and supply rule, shortage in production has affected prices, which suddenly shot up during the festive season”, he said. The minister claimed that in the coming decade, the production of tur, oilseeds and other pulses will only go down.

“Thus, there is a need to be prepared for a long-term solution, for which the Prime Minister has taken the initiative”, Khadse said.

He further said Modi has permitted Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan to hold a meeting with state Agriculture ministers despite the Winter session of Parliament in progress that time.

“The meeting will thus be held on the November 24 and 25 in the national capital,” Khadse said.PTI

Govt. approves over Rs 1,100 cr subsidy for cane farmers

In the first ever direct subsidy payment to farmers, the government on Wednesday decided to pay sugarcane growers Rs 4.50 per quintal for the cane they will sell to loss-making millers, a move that will cost Rs 1,147 crore to the exchequer.

The Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided to give a production-linked subsidy directly to cane growers, as export subsidy, which was provided in the last two sugar seasons 2013-14 and 2014-15 to millers, was questioned by many countries at the WTO.

The decision was hailed by the industry body ISMA, which said that millers’ cane price liability would reduce by about Rs 1,100 crore, thus partly compensating their losses.

Sugar mills are facing a liquidity crunch due to surplus output that lead to low retail prices of the sweetener.

“To further ensure timely payment of cane dues in the current sugar season, the government has decided to provide a production subsidy at the rate of Rs 4.50 per quintal of cane crushed to offset cane cost,” an official release said.

The subsidy would be paid directly to farmers on behalf of millers and adjusted against the cane price payable to farmers towards FRP, including arrears of previous years.

The remaining balance, if any, would be credited into the millers’ account, it said, adding that priority will be given to settling cane dues arrears of the previous years.

The Centre has fixed Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP), the minimum price that mills have to pay to cane farmers, at Rs 230 per quintal for the 2015-16 season (October-September).

With the subsidy being borne by the government, mills will now have to pay only Rs 225.5 a quintal to farmers.

‘Schemes to cultivate spice crops with modern technology soon’

Kadamba Spice Trading Centre was launched at the Sirsi Market Yard in a programme held on Wednesday. Karnataka Spice Development Board Hubballi president Mohammed Mujmil Khajia, who inaugurated the seminar, said that schemes to cultivate spice crops with modern technology would be implemented soon.

Dr. Maheshwar D.L, Vice-Chancellor of Bagalkot Horticulture University, who inaugurated the centre, said that a proposal has been sent to the State and Union governments to promote a comprehensive development directive scheme for horticulture crops. Campco president S.R. Satishchandra, who released a booklet on spice crops, said that pepper grown in Uttara Kannada has been called ‘King of Spices’ since ancient times and such glory could be attained now by promoting cultivation of pepper with the use of modern technology.

The former Camco president Konkodi Padmanabh said that arecanut was a traditional crop grown in Malnad, but it was grown everywhere now and this

would affect the rate in the market. The government should bring restriction on horticulture crop growing areas so as to get good rates for all crops.

38 CBSE schools to take part in science expo

The 14th annual two-day C.V. Raman Venad Sahodaya Interschool Science Exhibition organised by the Sree Narayana Central School at Nedungolam, near here, in association with the Venad Sahodaya Complex (VSC), the authorised organisation of CBSE schools, will be held at the school on November 20 and 21.

Nagercoil too

School Principal V. Radhakrishnan Nair said that 38 CBSE schools in the VSC group from the districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, and Pathanamthitta in Kerala and from Nagercoil district in Tamil Nadu will take part in the event. The competitions will be held separately for the secondary and higher secondary sections.

Cash prizes

A science quiz competition will be held for the students. There will be cash prizes for the winners for both the science model exhibits and the quiz competition. President of the VSC K.K. Shajahan said the exhibition will be inaugurated by C.P. Radhakrishnan Nair, former director of the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute.

The valedictory function will be inaugurated by Chathannur MLA G. Jayalal. The exhibition will comprise pavilions by NATPAC; Tropical Botanical Gardens, Palode; Legal Metrology Department; Travancore Medical College Hospital; Next Education; and Thiruvananthapuram IIIT.

Tobacco fetching better prices this year

Bright grade tobacco, which fetches good prices, was harvested in vast quantity in the State this year.

Even as the government continues to woo tobacco farmers towards sericulture to meet its commitment to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the produce is fetching the farmers in Karnataka a better price than last year.

During the first 33 days of the auction season, which began on October 7 this year, tobacco was sold at an average price of Rs. 138.02 per kg, which is a steep climb from the average of Rs. 117.99 per kg that it was fetching after a corresponding period of auction last year.

Tobacco is auctioned across 12 platforms in the State, mostly in Mysuru, and the auction season extends up to 90 days.

Disclosing this to *The Hindu*, officials at the Tobacco Board, however, said the quantum of tobacco yield is expected to slump to around 85 million kg this year from 103 million kg realised last year.

Better quality

The better remuneration for farmers has been attributed to harvesting of superior quality tobacco crop this year.

“Last year, there was little rainfall during May and June followed by a spell of heavy rainfall during July and August. This year, the climatic conditions changed, with rains lashing the area during May and June followed by dry conditions during July and August, which worked out well for the tobacco crop,” an official said.

The decline in tobacco output has also been attributed to weather conditions in the tobacco-growing areas of Mysuru district.

Javaregowda, president of FCV Tobacco Growers Federation of Karnataka, said the quantity of bright grade tobacco that fetches a good price was harvested in a vast quantity this year in the State.

This was in contrast to the limited quantity of bright grade tobacco that was harvested in the neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, he said, adding that exporters had shown greater interest to purchase the superior quality Flue Cured Virginia (FVC) tobacco grown in Karnataka.

Reacting to the Union government's move to encourage tobacco farmers to shift to sericulture, Mr. Javaregowda said the farmers would not mind shifting to any crop that provides them good remuneration.

But, he felt that the Union government's policies, particularly on reduction of import duty on imported silk, had harmed the prospects for sericulture.

Though about five to 10 per cent of tobacco farmers in Mysuru region tried their hand with ginger cultivation this year, the price of ginger collapsed, causing them loss, he said.

2015-16

Quantity of Tobacco sold during the first 33 days of auction – 16.21 million kg

Average price after 33 days of auction – Rs. 138.02 per kg

2014-15

Quantity of Tobacco sold during first 33 days of the auction – 15.99 million kg

Average price after 33 days of auction – Rs. 117.99

Authorised crop size – 100 million kg

Anticipated yield 2015-16 – 85 million kg

Space to be provided for keeping cattle

Corporation Commissioner S. Sivasubramanian addressing a meeting of dairy farmers in Tirunelveli on Thursday.

To put an end to stray cattle menace, the Corporation authorities convened a meeting with dairy farmers here on Thursday.

Addressing the meeting, Commissioner S. Sivasubramanian said Tirunelveli, which had been selected by the Union government to be upgraded as ‘Smart City,’ was being provided with basic civic facilities. However, stray cattle roaming on roads hindered vehicular movement. Hence, farmers should keep their cattle in the backyard or stables.

“For those who don’t have adequate space, we have planned to earmark a sprawling area in all four wards to keep the animals. The Department of Animal Husbandry has agreed to give its suggestions for creating this facility. Dairy farmers should prevent their animals from straying into public spaces,” said Mr. Sivasubramanian.



He warned that the Corporation would impound stray cattle and take action against the owners.

The Commissioner also held discussions with traders on avoiding sale of non-degradable plastic bags and cups.

City Engineer V. Narayanan Nair, City Health Officer V. Rajasekar, Assistant Director of Department of Animal Husbandry E. Chandrasekaran, Assistant Commissioner of Thatchanallur zone D. Samuel Selvaraj and sanitary inspectors participated in the meeting.

KUFOS fisheries awards announced

Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies has announced its third fisheries awards, constituted to felicitate individuals for their outstanding performance in different fields in the fisheries sector. K.A. Paili Kanakkassery from Edvanakkadu, Ernakulam, who has been engaged in traditional fishing for the last 35 years has been selected as the best traditional fisherman.

He is the leader of Poomkavanam fishing group, said a press release here. The best fish farmer is Jenson P.D. from Thiruthoor near Paravoor. He undertook large scale cage fish culture and pen culture and helped increase the inland aquaculture production in the district.

K. Gopakumar, former deputy director general of ICAR was selected as the best fishery scientist and N. R. Menon, chairman of Nansen Environmental Research India is the best fisheries educationist. Salini Gopi, who completed MFSc from KUFOS, is the best fisheries student, the press release added.

Central nod for Kinfra mega food park

Modern infrastructure will be set up for food processing industry

The Union Ministry of Food Processing Industries has given its final approval for Kinfra's proposed mega food park in Palakkad, an official release said.

The park is aimed at providing modern infrastructure for stakeholders in the food processing industry apart from creating a value chain from farm to market.

The park also aims at increased price realisation for farmers, reduction in wastage, capacity building of producers and processors, and creation of an efficient supply chain along with significant direct and indirect employment generation.

Under the scheme, each project will get a grant-in-aid support to the extent of 50 per cent of the eligible project cost, subject to a maximum of Rs.50 crore. The estimated project cost of setting up Kinfra mega food park is Rs.119.02 crore. NABARD has sanctioned a term loan of Rs.28.34 crore under the Food Processing Fund.

Kinfra has earmarked 78.68 acres of its land in Palakkad district, located in Elapully and Pudussery villages, to develop the Central Processing Centre. Kinfra also proposes to set up four Primary Processing Centres (PPCs) in Wayanad, Malappuram, Thrissur, and Ernakulam districts to support farmers by facilitating pre-processing of the farm produce. The four PPCs would be located at Kinfra Small Industries Park, Mazhuvannoor, Ernakulam; Kinfra Small Industries Park, Koratty, Thrissur; Kinfra Food Processing Park, Kakkancherry, Malappuram; and Kinfra Small Industries Park, Kalpetta in Wayanad district.

Apart from basic infrastructure, the food park would also provide common facilities, named core facilities, which are specifically designed for the food processing sector. The core facilities include cold storage, ripening chamber, raw material warehouse, finished product warehouse, silos, pack house, spice processing facility, cashew processing facility, quality control laboratory, and reefer vehicles.

Farmer with a 5,000-book home library



Siddalingeswhara Veerappa Kalival

It is common for farmers to have a rich collection of crop varieties and cattle breeds. But this young, innovative farmer, Siddalingeswhwara Veerappa Kalival, has a library in his farm that boasts of a collection of 5,000 books on agriculture, besides the CDs.

Thirty-year-old Mr. Kalival, who took up farming on his 75 acres of land in Ibrahimapura of Shiggaon taluk in Haveri district after completing BA, has a penchant for reading anything to do with farming. He was honoured with the Dr. M.H. Marigowda State-level Best Horticulture Farmer Award by the University of Agricultural Sciences-Bengaluru, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Krishi Mela on Thursday. He now plans to develop a village library which has books exclusively on farming and facilities to view CDs on innovative farming methods.

Known for his experiments in farming, he has demonstrated high-density banana cultivation by growing 2,640 banana plants in an acre against the conventional practice of accommodating 1,000 to 1,200 plants. “In the conventional practice, each plant would yield 35 to 40 kg of banana. But, I got an average of 35 kg from each plant, resulting in doubling of my profits,” he says.

He is also using used water bottles as a mechanism to provide drip irrigation to plants grown by him, as part of agro forestry.

Similarly, H.L. Naresh of Hanjugodanahalli of Sakleshpur taluk, who also got the Marigowda award, is known for his innovative practices in increasing the fertility of land through effective management of water and manure application. “Other farmers in my village get only about 25 bags of coffee (of 50 kg each) from an acre. But, I get an average yield of 60 bags an acre,” says Mr. Naresh.

Using drones in farm sector

Get ready for new-age agriculture. Drones are set to be used to know the scientific status of standing crops and the farmland.

According to Bosch officials, the company is set to conduct an experiment soon on the campus of the UAS. Rathan D.R., head of Bosch's Solutions and Systems Team of the Agriculture Technologies, told *The Hindu* that the drone pictures would be analysed to know if the plant growth was healthy and if there was any possibility of pest attack.

This would help in advance warning of pest attack so that preventive action could be taken. Preventive action is always cheaper and effective than the post-damage efforts, he said. Of course, use of drones by the private sector is banned in India.

Ruchi Soya Industries to invest Rs. 350 cr. in State

Setting the stage for the next edition of Invest Karnataka-2016, the State hosted the Mumbai Road Show on Wednesday at the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai. The event saw the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Ruchi Soya, manufacturer of edible oil, and the State government. Ruchi Soya Industries will invest Rs. 350 crore in the State, both in the agriculture and energy sectors. Ministers R.V. Deshpande, D.K. Shivakumar, and Roshan Baig were present at the road show. Key industrialists Sajjan Jindal, Chairman and Managing Director of JSW Steel Ltd., Harish Bhat, Member, Group Executive Council, Tata Sons Ltd., Jajaj Dhani, president-International Operations, Asian Paints, and Venugopal Dhoot, Chairman, Videocon, were present.



Smog in the region: Punjab under scanner but study says state lit fewer fires this harvest season

Gambhir, who primarily works in oils, is constantly inspired by the many facets of nature and the world around him.

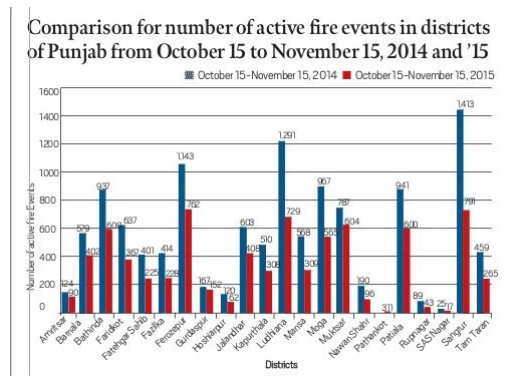
While Punjab has come under fire for the smog that enveloped the northern region this harvest season, with the state even facing the ignominy of having to reply to a notice from the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on the issue, a study has found that active fires during this period —much of it lit by

farmers attempting to get rid of paddy stubble — had reduced by a significant 38 per cent in the state this year.



The study, conducted by Punjab Remote Sensing Centre (PRSC) – under the state agriculture department, is based on satellite images released by NASA. The images are obtained through MODIS (or Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer), a key instrument aboard NASA’s Terra and Aqua satellites.

The researchers have studied images captured between October 15 and November 15 (peak harvest season for paddy in Punjab) in 2014 and 2015. As per their report, the satellites captured 12,368 active fires in 2014 but only 7,553 during the corresponding period this year – a 38 per cent decrease.



The number, however, is still dangerously high.

Much like last year, Sangrur, Ferozepur and Ludhiana districts are the worst offenders this season but even they have shown a drastic reduction in the number of fire spots. While in 2014, 1,413 fires were spotted in Sangrur, it has reduced to 791 this year; in Ferozepur, it has reduced from 1,143 to 762

fire spots while in Ludhiana it has come down from 1,291 to 729 active fires.

None of the districts crossed the 1,000-mark this season.

All districts in Punjab barring Pathankot have witnessed a reduction in active fire spots (see graph).

The hilly district of Pathankot, as per the study, had 11 fire spots this year as compared to three last year. The scientists said this is a minor development as the district hardly practices paddy farming due to unsuitable topography.

The NASA images has also shown that the fire spots across the state last year, 4,509 between October 29 and November 4, is higher as compared to the corresponding period this year (2,100). Similarly, between November 5 and 11, the number of fire spots was 3,734 last year, which has come down to 2,367 this time around.

But from November 12 to 15, the numbers have risen this year – 1,149 active fire spots across Punjab – but even then they are less than the 1,255 recorded last year.

The final report of this study would be submitted to Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB), which sources said has asked PSRC to assist it with in-depth analysis of stubble burning images released by NASA owing to the recent embarrassment the state faced in way of the National Green Tribunal notice.

Speaking to [The Indian Express](#), PRSC director Dr B Pateriya said: “The actual number of fire occurrences may vary in the ground but the study is a true representation as observed over the satellite images. Our teams are also in the field and match the satellite images with ground report using GPS systems. The numbers have reduced to great extent but Punjab is still burning and lot more needs to be done”.

PRSC is working in coordination with NASA and ISRO to procure the detailed images and analyse them for PPCB.

PPCB member secretary Babu Ram said a project of Rs 358 crore is pending with the Centre, which when released would allow the state to provide

subsidies for bailers and biomass plants. “We have a meeting on Friday, to discuss the setting up of ethanol production refineries using stubble which will be used by companies in petroleum sector. The PRSC study will help us in identifying target districts but it is not practical to use satellite images in identifying farmers’ fields and book them,” he claimed.

hindustantimes

Hanging gardens: A complete guide to growing your own veggies



In 2011, Priyanka Shah (now 29), an MBA student, started drawing up a business plan for an enterprise with a social impact. Shah grew up seeing her parents tend to lemons, chillies and curry leaves in a small balcony in their Powai apartment — which they then used in their day-to-day cooking. She reasoned that if her family could maintain a little patch of green in a small space, others could, too. She was determined to promote sustainable urban farming by providing the resources required to set up a kitchen garden. But she says her plan was met with scepticism. “People have a misconception that edibles can only be grown in rural areas. But there’s a lot you can grow in your balcony or backyard,” Shah says.

Shah went ahead and set up iKheti in 2012, which provides everything from seeds and organic manure to waste management and consultancy services. While Mumbai is infamous for its matchbox-sized apartments, green champions, like Shah, are proving that urban gardening and farming is indeed possible.

The new farm in town

Terraces provide the biggest spaces for urban farming, and one of the most successful examples of that is the Flyover Farm, developed by Fresh & Local, a start-up that works to promote urban farming in Mumbai. The 2,000 sqft community garden sits on the terrace of a residential building on Mohammed Ali Road. The name is inspired by the JJ Flyover that overlooks the building. From bananas, drumsticks and chikoos to mangoes and tamarind, more than 45 varieties of plants — fruit, vegetables, herbs, flowers — are grown here.

The Table let you participate in workshops that are designed to impart skills and the desire to grow your food

Urban Leaves is another group of plant lovers with a specific target: they hope to see at least one green rooftop in every suburb of Mumbai. They currently manage two terrace farms — one on the Don Bosco School campus in Matunga, and one on the Bhavan's campus in Andheri. Both Fresh & Local and Urban Leaves invite volunteers to join them in the weekly maintenance of these spaces, making them community projects in the true sense. Green Souls, a not-for-profit organisation, manages a farm at Our Lady's Home in Dadar. Here, boys from the shelter are trained in practical urban farming, and their 5,000 sqft rooftop space isn't just a pretty, verdant space, but one that meets a significant portion of their nutritional needs.

But beyond the sheer satisfaction of growing food yourself, should you care if you aren't so much of a green crusader? Turns out you should. Some people are opting for urban farming as they don't fully trust the food bought off shelves. And even though some of the produce is labelled 'organic', there is no better way to know your food is safe than to see it grow in front of your eyes. "I no longer buy leafy vegetables from the market," says 49-year-old city resident Jyoti Patkar. "In our city, they are often grown near railway tracks and watered with sewage water. So, I decided to be self-sufficient instead." Her love for farming led Patkar to cultivate an array of edibles — from cherry tomatoes, radish, beetroot to bitter gourd and lemongrass — on her 700 sqft terrace.

Go local

Growing locally has environmental benefits too, so while you're saving yourself from unknown chemicals, you're doing your bit for the planet. "Every day, trucks full of vegetables and fruits arrive in the city. The fuel consumption because of this transportation is massive. By farming yourself, you reduce your carbon footprint," says Preeti Patil, founder, Urban Leaves.

But can the grow-it-yourself idea succeed at a scale larger than your balcony? The fine-dining restaurant, The Table, in Colaba, believes it can. It adopted the farm-to-table philosophy in 2012. All of their produce is harvested at the Table Farm in Alibaug. They even let you participate, to pick up skills and the desire to grow your food. At their workshops in Alibaug, people can try their hand at farming for a day. Participants gain an understanding of various aspects of farming, from planting seed trays and transplanting seedlings to harvesting and preparing a meal. Being a farmer for a day is an experience offered by Anusha Babbar's Under the Tree, too. Babbar holds workshops on organic gardening and farming at her farm in Karjat. Participants can volunteer to plant seeds and prepare mulch, among other things.

The demographics of people showing up for workshops is quite varied — from college students to senior citizens, and from working professionals to homemakers. Apart from tomatoes, cucumbers, and herbs such as sage and Italian basil, interest in microgreens (small greens used to enhance flavour and visual appeal) has also grown, says Aditi Punj, a former member of Fresh & Local. A few of the workshops (by The Table and Fresh & Local) are especially designed for children, to build awareness. "The beauty of gardening is that it is a leveller. Everybody gets their hands dirty and there is something for everyone to do," Punj says.

Farmer for a day: A first-hand experience by Meenakshi Iyer

On a crisp, chilly morning last year, a few of us landed at the Gateway of India jetty to be whisked away to a quiet farmhouse across the sea situated in Alibaug. Owned by the folks who also run The Table, a popular south Mumbai eatery, the farm has been producing vegetables and microgreens used in the restaurant's kitchen.

We were the first batch to (quite literally) get our hands dirty in the farming workshop conducted by Adrienne Thadani of Fresh & Local, a non-profit urban farming start-up. The morning began with a few quick tips on the ideal climate for farming, best kind of soil and information on organic gardening. Then, with the help of scrapers, we started tilling the land to get it ready to sow seeds. After almost three hours of digging, laying dry hay on the soil beds and filling them with soil again, the beds were ready to sow seeds of vegetables like okra, brinjal, cabbage, tomatoes and spinach.

Following this tedious exercise, we watered the beds and moved to the next task: plucking fresh microgreens to go in our lunch. As a reward for all that hard work, chefs from The Table cooked us a delicious meal of barbecued chicken, fresh farm-to-fork salad and wine. While the farm-to-table is a relatively new concept in the city, it is nice to see some restaurants taking the lead.

“After almost three hours of digging, laying dry hay on the soil beds and filling them with soil again, the beds were ready to sow seeds of vegetables like okra, brinjal, cabbage, tomatoes and spinach,” says Iyer. Learn the basics

The Table: Plant seeds and harvest vegetables at its Alibaug farm. Chefs will prepare a lunch with the day’s harvest.

Call: 98339 48363 / Email communications@foodmatters.in

Visit thetable.in

Urban Leaves: It conducts workshops on various aspects such as seed sowing, pruning, design principles for an urban farm, and building trellises.

Register on urbanleaves.org

Fresh & Local: Visit its Flyover Farm on the weekly open day to get all your questions about urban farming answered. They host volunteer days too.

Where: Rooftop of Mohamedi Manzil, Mohammed Ali Road, Kalbadevi

When: Every Wednesday, 3pm to 7pm

Call: 96198 24557/ Email info@freshandlocal.org

Visit: freshandlocal.org

Under the Tree: Be a farmer for a day at founder Anusha Babbar’s farm in Karjat.

Email anusha@underthetree.in

Visit underthetree.in

Blue Bulb: Its team will come over to your home and conduct a three hour workshop on urban gardening.

Call 3227 0033

Visit bluebulb.in

**Make the most of your space, and grow plants that work together.
Winter is the best climate to grow root vegetable**

To Volunteer

1)Where: Don Bosco Provincial House Rooftop in Don Bosco School Campus, Matunga

When Every Sunday, 7.45am to 10am

Call: 2414 5228

2)Where: Sardar Patel Institute of Technology rooftop, Bhavan's Campus, Andheri

Call: 2670 7440

Buy essentials

* *iKheti*: Offers everything from seeds and saplings to customised services. Also offers DIY seed kits which contain all the raw materials required to grow edibles. All you have to do is add water.

Visit: ikhedi.co.in

* *Trustbasket*: Offers seeds, fertilisers, soil and tools required for urban farming. Offers DIY kits too.

Visit: Trustbasket.com

* *Nursery Live*: A one-stop online store for all kinds of seeds, pots and containers and fertilisers.

Visit: nurserylive.com

* *Beej Pleej*: A seed-saving collective that allows you to share, exchange and sell seeds you have saved.

Visit: beejpleej.org



THE TIMES OF INDIA

[ICRISAT, IIT Bombay launches free online agriculture course](#)

The National Virtual Academy for Indian Agriculture will launch an online course on diseases of horticultural crops and their management in collaboration with the International Crops Research Institute for Semi Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Hyderabad, and the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay.

The two month free online course, which begins on November 30 and concludes on January 29, 2016, is an initiative by a team of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in agriculture and educators from the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and its partners together with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay.

"Complementing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of a Digital India where - Quality Education reaches the most inaccessible corners driven by Digital Learning, we are excited to see the launch of MOOCs (Part-II) in India, which offers high quality learning opportunities for students across the country," said Dr David Bergvinson, Director General, ICRISAT.

"The course materials have been methodically planned and prepared by highly experienced team of educators and professors in the agricultural field, who have devoted their time and effort to educate the Indian masses on sustainable agriculture practices," said Dr Sumanthkumar, Scientist - ICT for Development, ICRISAT.

The Part-II course will cover distribution, symptoms, causes, disease cycles and management of diseases of important horticultural crops and their economic importance. The course can be used as a supplementary study material at the universities in the current semester where "Diseases of Horticultural Crops and their Management " course is being offered, said an official statement from ICRISAT.

Earlier, the NVAIA had completed its first Massive Open Online Course (MOOCs) in agriculture. The Part- I of the free online course (Diseases of Horticultural Crops and their Management), which was announced on February 2 in Chennai by Professor MS Swaminathan, Father of India's Green Revolution and Emeritus Chair of the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) concluded on April 27. The course witnessed over 900 enrolments from learner participants from across the country ranging from participants holding degree from junior high school to doctorate level.

[Govt asks banks for 100% insurance of rabi crops](#)

To protect farmers from losses due to natural calamities during the rabi season, the state government on Wednesday asked all banks to ensure 100% insurance of the crops. Deficient rainfall during kharif has severely affected agricultural production in 139 blocks of 21 districts.

At the State Level Bakers Committee (SLBC) meeting here, chief secretary G C Pati asked all banks to re-phase kharif loans in view of the drought situation in the state.

To prevent farmers from borrowing from private moneylenders who fleece them, the state government on Wednesday asked the banks to make available adequate finance to for the rabi crop.

Responding to the state government's instruction, the banks have agreed not to recover kharif loans from the farmers in the near future. Agriculture specialists working for banks will advise farmers to go in for non-paddy cultivation to make up for the losses incurred during the kharif season. "As farmers are likely to face scarcity of cattle fodder, particularly in drought-affected areas, banks will also finance fodder cultivation this season," said chief secretary G C Pati.

Development commissioner U N Behera, who also attended the SLBC meeting, expressed concern over the low credit deposit ratio (CDR) in the current year and urged banks to increase the CDR. In September, the CDR in Odisha was recorded at 70% against 74% during the corresponding period of 2014, official sources said.

Finance secretary R Balakrishnan emphasized on extending banking services to all villages in the state. "Banks have been advised to scale up their correspondence and banking van models to cover all the villages at least once a week," he said.

At present, a total 4,727 branches of all banks, including 2,584 rural branches, are operating in the state.

[‘NE monsoon a blessing for farmers’](#)

COIMBATORE: Farmers across the district are a happy lot this time, as no crops were damaged in the northeast monsoon showers. They also expect a good harvest this season, thanks to the right amount of rainfall.

The district had received almost 250mm of in a span of two weeks.

Even as widespread flooding was reported in paddy fields across the Cauvery delta and southern parts of the state, farms in and around the district

were not submerged. Inundation of agricultural farms was, however, reported in Thondamuthur and Periyanaickenpalayam, but excess water was drained out immediately, securing the crops.

Farmers growing black gram in Thondamuthur and bengal gram in Periyanaickenpalayam were a worried lot when heavy rain lashed the area a fortnight back. "But fortunately, water drained out completely in 48 hours as there was a lull in the rainfall," said a senior agriculture officers. While bengal gram is cultivated across 1,500 hectares in the district, black gram is cultivated across 300 hectares of land in the district.

According to agriculture officers and weather experts, the district received just the right amount of northeast monsoon showers, helping the crops rather than damaging them.

While Periyanaickenpalayam block received the highest amount of rainfall this month at 227mm, Thondamuthur reported 162.1mm of rainfall. This is the sowing season for short-term crops like maize, pulses and other millets in the district.

"Seedlings have already begun growing at the farms. There was a scare of seedlings getting spoilt if water stagnated in the fields for more than 48 hours," said the officer. "However, every two rainy days were followed by a sunny day and a cloudy day. It helped the excess water to percolates into the ground," the officer added.

Weathermen said the ideal amount of rainfall a district should receive was around 20mm every three days or so. "This will help the crops and soil absorb the right amount of water, while the remaining percolates into the ground or drains off," said the head of the Agro Climate Research Centre at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, S Paneerselvam.

"Except for banana or maybe sugarcane, no other agriculture or horticulture crops require more than 20mm rainfall every three days," concurred the district secretary of the Tamil Nadu Farmers Association, A Kandasamy.

Experts also said rainwater could be harvested better if the fall was spread out over a period of 45 days to two months. "The water gets collected in water tanks, rivers, lakes and even farm ponds, only if it rains in regular intervals," Paneerselvam pointed out.

"We need to give time for the water to start percolate and spread around the reservoirs and raise ground water levels. If it rains like in Chennai or some other parts of the state, the reservoirs will start overflowing instantly, allowing the water to simply evaporate or drain out into a channel we can't use," he said.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Will direct cane subsidy sweeten the sugar sector



The direct subsidy announced to the cane growers may not be adequate to lift the sugar sector from the current crisis say experts, while farmers – who are sceptical about the success of the scheme as it is linked to the export performance of the mills – feel that the Centre should have increased the quantum of the incentives.

Performance based

“The direct payment of subsidy is a welcome move. However, the government should have increased the quantum of the direct payout,” said Kurubur Shantakumar, President of Sugarcane Growers Association in

Karnataka. Shantakumar was, however, not sure about the mills achieving the performance targets on exports and the ethanol blending programme.

“They should not have linked the direct subsidy to the mills performance. We are not sure as to how much sugar will eventually be exported as it would all depends on the demand-supply situation in the global market,” he added.

The government has mandated the mills to export four million tonnes for the 2015-16 season and for the farmers to get the direct subsidy, mills have to meet 80 per cent of the export target.

Export deals

“The scheme is not going to serve any purpose to help address the root cause of the sugar sector crisis,” said Kamal Jain, Managing Director of the Pune-based Kamal Jain Trading Services Pvt Ltd, an industry veteran.

The export prices have seen a decline in an immediate reaction to the government’s announcement as buyers are seen discounting the Indian white sugar.

Export deals that were concluded for the new white sugar at ex-factory price of ₹24,000 a tonne before the announcement have now come down to ₹22,500 levels on Thursday when some 25,000-50,000 tonnes were contracted, Jain said. The deals that were struck at around \$370 a tonne were at a discount to the London price that’s hovering between \$390 and \$406.

Control mechanism

“Millers will be under pressure to sell at a discount to meet their liquidity demand and also the export performance targets,” Jain said while suggesting that the government come up with a minimum benchmark price to avoid underselling.

Jain further said that the government should bring back the control mechanisms to regulate the prices, a suggestion backed by Sudhir Panwar, a farmer leader and professor who is now the member of Uttar Pradesh Price Commission.

“If the government can procure wheat, rice and cotton at an assured price, what is wrong in buying sugar or routing it through agencies such as ISMA, ISEC or the sugar co-operatives,” Jain said.

“Direct subsidy is a misnomer, as the quantum is already part of the FRP,” said Panwar. “Instead of leaving it to the market forces to stabilise the sugar prices, the government should bring back the release mechanism to control the prices,” Panwar added.

Abhijit Ghorpade, of Ghorpade Agrovet, broker from Kolhapur, said demand is coming up for raw sugar at ex-factory price of ₹2,000 a quintal, while that for white sugar at ₹2,350-2,450. The cane subsidy of ₹4.5 a quintal roughly translates at ₹385 a quintal for the miller in terms of sugar price.

According to the Indian Sugar Mills Association, as per the reports submitted by sugar factories to the government, sugar mills have exported about 0.80 lakh tonnes of sugar in October 2015. However, there are reports that sugar mills have already made contracts for export of around 2-3 lt in November.

Export targets

Millers, while stating that the scheme would help reduce their payouts, are also sceptical about meeting the export targets. “Exports are a losing proposition,” a miller in Uttar Pradesh said, while stating that shipments from the landlocked sugar producing region were not feasible. Moreover, to ship out sugar from UP to the nearest port, one needs to incur a freight cost of ₹2/kg, whereas production costs are higher, he said.

“The Centre has taken a pragmatic step to help the ailing sugar industry. Besides aiding the sugar industry, higher exports should help the country earn forex. Likewise, an increase in ethanol blending should help reduce the country’s oil import bill,” explains Palani G Periasamy, President, South India Sugar Mills Association (SISMA).

Deepak Guptara, spokesperson for the UP Sugar Mills Association said exports from the region will happen, but it was too early to say anything. “UP mills have to tie-up with their counterparts in the coastal states to

facilitate shipments,” he added. Meanwhile, some mills have started crushing in UP even before the State has announced the State Advised Price.

Centre may launch schemes to boost pulses output



Concerned over the drastic fall in pulses and oilseeds production across the globe which has affected the domestic market, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken an initiative to launch a dedicated programme to promote the sowing of key agri commodities.

Two schemes to be assisted by the Centre may be launched at a joint conference of Agriculture Ministers of all states scheduled for November 24—25 in New Delhi, Maharashtra Minister for Agriculture Eknath Khadse said.

According to Khadse, only 30 per cent countries in the world produce pulses and oilseeds, while the rest are just consumers.

“In last five to six years, due to natural calamities and other reasons, production of pulses has reduced drastically.

According to the demand and supply rule, shortage in production has affected prices, which suddenly shot up during the festive season”, he said. The Minister claimed that in the coming decade, the production of tur, oilseeds and other pulses will only go down.

“Thus, there is a need to be prepared for a long—term solution, for which the Prime Minister has taken the initiative”, Khadse said.

He further said Modi has permitted Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan to hold a meeting with state Agriculture ministers despite the Winter session of Parliament in progress that time.

Farmers seek alternatives to shun tobacco cultivation

With curbs on tobacco products proving to be stifling, tobacco farmers have asked the government to show viable alternative to the crop. They said harsh restrictions on tobacco products have failed to deter consumption as smuggled products have flooded the Indian market.

“The illicit tobacco products market, pegged at Rs. 13,000 crore, is adversely impacting the domestic tobacco sales. Smuggled cigarettes are flooding the Indian markets with large-scale consignments from Pakistan, Bangladesh and other countries,” Murali Babu, Kondapi Tobacco Growers’ Association (Andhra Pradesh), said.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, he said smuggling activity has resulted in stoppage of sales of about 20 million kilograms of tobacco in the domestic market.

P Chengal Reddy, Chairman of Consortium of Indian Farmers’ Associations (CIFA), said that proceeds of illicit tobacco trade could strengthen the arms of terrorism. “The government has been asking the farmers to move away from tobacco cultivation without suggesting an alternative,” he said.

B V Javare Gowda, Federation of Karnataka Virginia Tobacco Growers’ Association (Mysore), has demanded a CBI enquiry into the fund flow into non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that were fighting against tobacco consumption.

“They are getting funds from multi-national corporations. They are fighting against tobacco, while turning a blind eye to ills caused by liquor consumption,” he said.

Pepper brings cheer to distressed coffee growers

As the downward trend in coffee prices affect the growers, the uptrend in prices of pepper – mainly grown as an intercrop – is seen coming to their rescue this year. Pepper prices have been on an uptrend on reduced supplies and rise in demand.

“Internationally, coffee terminals are currently 25 per cent lower for Arabica and 13 per cent lower for Robusta since the start of this calendar year. Pepper sustains us,” Sanjiv Sarin, Managing Director and CEO of Tata Coffee Ltd, told the members of Karnataka Planters Association (KPA) on Thursday.

Tata Coffee, a large coffee grower in the country, is also the biggest growers of pepper with a production of 1150 tonnes in 2014-15.

“Pepper is paying good dividends. Global consumption is growing at 2-3 per cent annually. While it is difficult to predict supply situation owing to inherent agri aspects, a report from Nedspice portrays that there is a delicate balance between demand and supply, as shown by decreasing stock levels globally. The sharp increase in prices in the domestic market clearly portrays this pattern,” Sarin said.

“Pepper has been a saving grace for the planters,” K Kurian, Chairman, KPA, said adding that the recent uptrend in the prices has helped the growers absorb the impact of decline in coffee prices.

Kurian urged the Karnataka government to provide relief to the beleaguered coffee growers, who are reeling under the impact of low prices, by exempting the value added tax (VAT) on fertilisers, chemicals and mechanisation equipment.

The exemption of 5.5 per cent VAT on fertilisers, chemicals and the mechanisation equipment would reduce the burden on growers in the state to an extent, Kurian said while stating that the neighbouring Tamil Nadu and Kerala have already exempted VAT on fertilisers and chemicals.

While India continues to lag behind global leaders such as Brazil and Vietnam in production of plantation commodities such as coffee and pepper, Sarin exhorted the planters to focus on quality rather than quantity.

“Our efforts have to focus on high quality rather than sheer quantity. Indian Robusta quality is acknowledged globally. And that is one of the reasons why Indian Robusta does not do very well in the US where Robusta is seen as a cost reducer,” Sarin said.

Commenting on challenges faced by growers, especially the white stem borer menace, Sarin called for a collaborative effort to deal it.

“Over the years planters in India have been forced to switch over from Arabica to Robusta due to the White stem Borer infestation. Yet the solution to control the Borer menace eludes us. A collective approach is so critical – while individual planters need to focus on tracing, uprooting, growing shade the Coffee Board needs to push R&D to develop solutions,” he added.

‘Global corn prices to recover on lower production estimates’



Corn prices globally are expected to recover from multi-year lows on lower production estimates in major producing regions such as the US, the European Union, Brazil, Argentina, and Ukraine. However, the recovery is likely to be gradual and moderate due to higher ending stocks.

According to a report of the US Department of Agriculture released this month, global corn production is expected to fall by 3.4 per cent in 2015-16. It said as compared to 2014-15, corn production, until November 2015, fell in major countries, by 23.7 per cent in the EU, 19.2 per cent in Ukraine, and 4.9 per cent in India. Other countries reporting reduced production were Brazil (4.1 per cent), the US (4 per cent), and Argentina (3.4 per cent).

Overall, corn production in these countries is estimated to drop by 7.3 per cent cumulatively to around 535 million tonnes (mt) and world production is likely to drop by 3.4 per cent to 974.9 mt compared to 1,008.7 mt last year, said Shashin Desai, Executive Director-Business Operations, Anil Ltd, here on Thursday.

He said corn prices globally have been falling since the last few years due to abundant supply. In the last three years, prices have gone down drastically. Last year, corn production touched a record high with the US, the EU and China leading the list. This year, however, production is expected to drop in

the US and EU, while China is expected to have record output again with expectations of 225 mt against 215.7 mt last year.”

Though experts expected corn production in India at around 20 mt earlier, according to the USDA report, it is likely to decline by just 5 per cent to 22.5 mt.

Desai said though production is expected to fall this year, the ending stocks would still be higher as compared to consumption, and so the recovery in prices would be modest. According to a World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) report released on November 10, global corn ending stocks are expected at 211.91 mt compared to 208.21 mt last year. More than half the world’s 2015-16 corn-ending stocks are expected to be held in China.

Business Standard

Tomato price jump multi-fold due to crop damages

[Tomato](#) prices have risen eight-fold in the last three months and could require government intervention like those that brought the prices of onions and pulses under control.

In November, tomato prices have firmed up 30 per cent on reports of crop damage in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Karnataka. Traders estimate 15-20 per cent crop damage across the country.

Data compiled by the National Horticulture Board showed tomato prices in Bengaluru, jumped 700 per cent since September to Rs 4,000 a quintal. In Chennai, prices jumped 415 per cent, in Mumbai, they were up 335 per cent.

“Deficient monsoon rain hit acreage under kharif tomato. Unseasonal showers thereafter damaged sown crops. The crop also faced pinworm attack, lowering the yield in south India, especially Tamil Nadu. Supply has declined dramatically in three months,” said Anil Malhotra, general secretary, Tomato Traders’ Association, Azadpur Mandi, Delhi.

Arrivals in the Vashi [Agricultural Produce Markets](#) Committee (in Mumbai) were 32.9 tonnes on November 19, down from 51.1 tonnes on November 2.

Prices here jumped 30 per cent to Rs 3,400-3,600 a quintal from Rs 2,800-3,000 three weeks ago.

“Supply was disrupted because of the small crop size in the major growing regions of Maharashtra, including Nashik, Satara and Baramati. Supply started declining three months ago when unseasonal rain damaged the standing crop in most states. Now, arrivals from the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are affected because of unseasonal rain. Consumers will face high prices for the next couple of weeks,” said a functionary of the Vashi Agricultural Produce Markets Committee.

“Processed food companies normally build their inventory for the year during the January-February harvest. But they also buy intermittently. Such buyers are now absent from trade,” said Zaheer Shaikh, a Nashik-based tomato trader.

SLIPPING OUT OF THE PLATE
Tomato model price movement (₹/quintal)

Markets	Wholesale			Retail		
	Aug-31	Nov-18	Variations(%)	Aug-31	Nov-18	Variations(%)
Bangalore	500	4,000	700.00	1,000	5,500	450.00
Chennai	1,300	6,700	415.38	2,000	8,000	300.00
Mumbai	800	3,500	337.50	2,000	5,000	150.00
Hyderabad	1,000	2,500	150.00	1,600	3,500	118.75
Amritsar	1,200	2,600	116.67	3,000	5,000	66.67
Kolkata	2,200	4,400	100.00	3,500	6,500	85.71
Bhopal	1,400	2,400	71.43	1,800	2,800	55.56
Jaipur	1,550	2,350	51.61	2,500	3,500	40.00
Delhi	1,670	1,600	-4.19	3,500	4,000	14.29

Source: National Horticulture Board

Trade sources said large traders had started booking tomato in Nashik at Rs 34-36 a kg, indicating prices would continue to move up for the next couple of weeks. The said fresh supplies from Jaipur had started arriving, but these were low. Also tomato

exports to Pakistan have declined to 10-15 trucks (9 tonnes each) from 70-80 trucks a few weeks ago due to harvesting of the local crop there.

The prices of other vegetables were relatively calm but might move up in December-January when seasonal and occasional demand set in together, traders said.

With estimates of a sharp decline in [vegetable](#) output due to unseasonal rain, their supply may dip in January. Unseasonal October rain damaged the crop in Madhya Pradesh in Maharashtra, resulting in a delay in replanting. Farmers that had sown veggies in irrigated land saw an unknown disease hitting their yield which may create a scarcity when the occasional demand starts, warned a senior Vashi [APMC](#) official.