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THE HINDU

Rooftop fish farming gaining ground

Small and high-end ornamental fish are bred in containers on terraces



It is not just terrace gardening which is popular in Bengaluru. The terrace ornamental fish farming too is becoming a hobby among fish-breeding enthusiasts in the Garden City.

“This is part of the urban aquaculture where small and high-end ornamental fish varieties are bred in small containers on the rooftops by using the natural sunlight,” explains D. Seenappa, head of the Fisheries Department in the University of Agricultural Sciences-Bengaluru. According to him, there are a few hundreds of such fish-breeding enthusiasts who have taken to terrace ornamental fish farming in the city.

Most of these enthusiasts use broken tanks, package materials or other discarded containers for fish farming. “All that they need is a rigid structure. They use even hard package material as a box and cover its inner surface with polythene sheet to turn the structure into a waterproof container,” Dr. Seenappa says.

Apart from turning waste materials into containers, they also adopt natural method of supplying manure. They mix cow dung and coconut cakes with water stored in the container. When this is exposed to sunlight, planktons will grow within five to six days, he says.

Once this process is completed, the fish are let in. It is possible to rear 100 fingerlings in a 500-litre container as each fingerling requires about five litres of water. Normally, small ornamental fish varieties such as platys, mollies, sword tails and guppies that are colourful are preferred for terrace fish farming.

These fingerlings cost 50 paise to Re. 1 each, Dr. Seenappa says. Within 60 to 75 days of being let into the container, the fingerlings attain the marketable size of 1.5 to 2 inches. One would get an average income of about Rs. 800 from a 500-litre container in 60 to 75 days even if the survival rate is 80 per cent (i.e., 80 out of 100 fish survive) and they sell at an average price of Rs. 10 per fish, he says.

According to him, terrace fish farming is taken up more as a hobby rather than as a commercial practice as of now, though it pays well.

For details, contact the Fisheries Department of the university on 080-23515644.

Small and high-end ornamental fish varieties are bred in containers on terraces by using natural sunlight

Organisations to press for setting up Agro Food Park in Erode

The Erode District Small Scale Industries' Association (EEDISSIA) and Confederation of Indian Industry - Erode Zone have together planned to accord a thrust to Agro Food Park during their meeting with Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Nirmala Seetharaman later this week.

Erode's progress could be expedited through infrastructure for value addition to turmeric, fruits and vegetables, dairy and other products produced in huge volumes.

These strengths and the requirements for further progress will be highlighted to the Union Minister, R. Balasubramaniam, EEDISSIA president and KKSK Rafiq, Chairman - CII Erode Zone told reporters on Monday.

The two organisations will emphasise on establishment of an office of CFTRI (Central Food Technology Research Institute), a research centre, and food testing laboratory and quality testing centre, a permanent trade centre, cold storage, and an export centre, Mr. Balasubramaniam said.

Unlike Tirupur and Karur that are identified with hosiery and textiles respectively, there was potential for developing Erode in diverse areas, Mr. Rafiq said.

Ms. Nirmala Seetharaman will be taking part in a session on 'Role of Central Government in Industrial and Agricultural Development of Erode' and 'Make in India' at the Sakthi Duraisamy Mahal on October 9 from 10 am.

Session

The session will encompass topic-wise presentation: Turmeric by P.C. Duraisamy, Past Chairman, CII - Erode; Agri and Food Processing by P. Thirumoorthy, EEDISSIA Secretary; Construction by C. Devarajan, Vice-Chairman, CII - Erode Zone; Leather by Mr. K.K. Rafiq; Textiles by R. Subramanian, Past President, EEDISSIA; and Smart City by M. Chinnasamy.

Turmeric auctioned for Rs. 1.30 crore

Turmeric was auctioned for Rs. 1.30 crore at the Tiruchengode Agricultural Producers Cooperative Marketing Society on Saturday.

While ‘virali’ turmeric variety fetched a price between Rs. 6,210 and Rs. 9,109 per quintal, ‘kilangu’ fetched a price between Rs. 5,911 and Rs. 7,559 and ‘panankali’ fetched a price between Rs. 6,009 and Rs. 17,909.

About 2,300 quintal of turmeric was auctioned for Rs. 1.30 crore, a press release from the society said.

Coconut kernels were auctioned for Rs. 2.50 lakh at the Mallasamudram branch of the Tiruchengode Agricultural Producers Cooperative Marketing Society on Sunday. While first quality kernels fetched a price between Rs. 68.65 and Rs. 74.35 per bag, second quality kernels fetched a price between Rs. 44.15 and Rs. 50.95.

About 120 bags were auctioned for Rs. 2.50 lakh on the occasion, society sources said.

ICAR annual workshop begins

The 26th national workshop of ICAR-All India Coordinated Research Project on Spices was inaugurated by V.A. Parthasarathy, former director ICAR-Indian Institute of Spices Research, Kozhikode and National coordinator of Bioversity International here on Monday.

In his inaugural address, Dr. Parthasarathy stressed the need to exploit the potential for spices cultivation in East Coast and North Eastern states of the country. Horticulture is poised to become the engine of agricultural growth in India, he pointed out.

Enhancing the productivity by adopting the philosophy of “more crop per drop of water” and other scientific technologies is the need of the hour to meet growing domestic and international consumption of spices, Dr. Parthasarathy said.

Presiding over the inaugural session, M. Anandaraj, Director of ICAR-Indian Institute of Spices Research, Calicut, urged the need for more


collaborative research for better output and more financial support to strengthen the project.

More than 100 research personnel from 23 states representing 38 centres across Agricultural Universities and ICAR institutions in the country are attending the three-day workshop.

The workshop will review the progress of research work during the last year and formulate new proposals.

The meeting will conclude on October 8.

Rooftop lessons in harmony

WHOLESOME		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First awareness session on Aquaponics held in city		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Method enables farming of vegetables and fish together
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Details are available on 85479 05872, 0484-2311013 & 2311724		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MPEDA provides free training and help in setting up aquaponics units

Ever wondered whether you could bring together your fish pond and vegetable garden to get past the confines of space that living in the city imposes on you?

The Kochi-based Marine Products Exports Development Authority (MPEDA) is now promoting and in fact, imparting training in ‘Aquaponics’,

a method that combines aquaculture – whether it is ornamental fish or the freshwater ones you would prefer to have on your dinner table – along with hydroponics, which is the cultivation of plants in water – again, this can be those charming roses and orchids, or the tomatoes, cucumbers and capsicums.

The first of such training programmes in the capital city, held at the State Agricultural Management and Extension Training Institute (SAMETI) here on Monday, had nearly 90 persons from across the city as participants.

According to MPEDA Deputy Director M. Shaji, who handled the session, the introduction of aquaponics in Kochi city a few months ago had already seen around 60 people trying out the method in their homes, either on terraces or in their gardens, while four commercial units too had started functioning.

“We are expecting a similar encouraging response from Thiruvananthapuram, both from people who want to take it up as a hobby or for their own household needs of fish and vegetables,” he said.

Aquaponics, he said, did not involve use of chemical fertilisers or pesticides, did not require soil, and small endeavours, for instance those using a 1000-litre tank, which could yield up to 25kg of fish, would cost around Rs.8,000 only.

Used bath tubs or cement rings could be used for the fish tank, with the other necessary equipment being a 25-watt submersible pump and a 10-watt aerator and a bell-siphon system.

The fish would provide with the necessary manure for the plants/vegetables, while the grow-bed for the vegetables, through which the water passes would ensure cleaned water.

The ammonia in the waste generated by the fish would be converted first into nitrite and later into nitrate for the vegetables, with the bacteria in the grow-bed handling the conversion process.

“We have seen successful experiments of sea bass and tilapia, while the vegetables being grown range from tomatoes to spinach, with root vegetables not being exactly suitable for this type of farming,” Mr. Shaji said.

Paddy procurement begins in Kuttanad

Paddy procurement has started in Kuttanad ending a fortnight-long uncertainty. Millers started collecting paddy after the government agreed to hike the handling charges.

The handling charges were hiked from Rs.142 to Rs.190 a quintal. Earlier, the millers had refused to lift paddy though the government had announced that the procurement would begin on October 1.

Many farmers in Thakazhy, Thayankary and other places had harvested the paddy in the last week of September as the information on date of procurement was not passed on to them sufficiently early. In previous years, the paddy procurement for the second crop had started in September itself, according to farmers.

The paddy, harvested and kept in the fields during the past fortnight, had to be removed to elevated places as the fields were inundated due to unseasonal rain.

Handling charges for millers hiked from Rs.142 to Rs.190 a quintal.

ISRO develops hailstorm app to assess crop damage

To fasten payment of crop insurance claims to farmers, the Centre on Monday launched a pilot programme Kisan, which will use satellite and drone-based imaging and other geospatial technology to get timely and accurate data on crop yields.

Also to access large-scale damage to standing crops, it launched an Android-based app for collection of data of hailstorm.

The app will be used by State agriculture officials and the data will help the Union Agriculture Ministry in having very fast assessment of damage to crops because of hailstorm.

“The crop insurance claim is calculated on the basis of crop cutting experiments. However, there has always been a problem in getting timely and accurate data, due to which payment of claims to farmers were getting delayed. A new programme Kisan is being launched on a pilot basis to address this issue,” Minister of State for Agriculture Sanjeev Kumar Balyan told reporters.

Initially, the pilot study will be carried out in rice and cotton fields in four districts during the ongoing kharif season in Karnataka (Shimoga), Maharashtra (Yavatmal), Haryana (Kurkshetra) and Madhya Pradesh (Seoni), he said.

It will also be carried out during the 2015-16 rabi season in eight districts in same States to assess the crop yields of rice, wheat and sorghum, the Minister said.

The programme will be jointly conducted by Mahalanobis National Crop Forecast Centre, Indian Space Research Organisation, India Meteorological Department, State Agriculture Departments and Remote Sensing Centres, Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS).

“Hailstorms cause large-scale damage to standing crops. However, at present, there is no comprehensive approach to collect hailstorm data. To overcome this, an Android app has been developed with the support of ISRO,” he said.

The app can be used through smartphones for collection of hailstorm data along with photographs and locations and can be uploaded on real-time to ISRO’s Bhuvan server.

Saplings on lake bunds to help recharge groundwater

As many as 500 saplings of 20 different varieties will be planted by Water Resources Department (WRD) on the banks of lakes in Kancheepuram district.

Launching the tree sapling planting ceremony at Sembakkam Lake near Tambaram on Sunday, Animal Husbandry Minister, T.K.M. Chinnaiyya said native varieties of saplings, including neem, amla, aakasha mallige, champaka, honge, jackfruit, Indian oak and Indian willow, will were chosen for planting.

The saplings, sourced from nurseries in the state, will be planted along other lakes and tanks, where Public Works Department has planned to take up conservation. From next week maintenance works will be carried out in Chengalpattu region.

Workshops

Student volunteers will be enrolled to plant 1,000-1,200 tree saplings on lake bunds. The PWD has plans to contact student-volunteers to spread awareness on conservation of water bodies which will also improve the water table, officials added.

Rs. 32.46-cr. crop insurance relief

The district had received Rs. 32.46 crore as crop insurance compensation to be disbursed to 34,824 farmers, Collector M. Ravikumar said here on Monday. The farmers, who insured crops in rabi season during 2013-14, suffered loss in crops such as maize, black gram, green gram, gingelly, banana and chilli.

Efforts were on to distribute the compensation amount of Rs. 32 crore soon to 34,639 farmers through 106 Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Societies and sum of Rs. 46.9 lakh through nationalised banks to 185 farmers.

Lessons in solid waste management

K'Sirs School prides itself on producing zero waste

An ongoing project undertaken by the K'sirs International School, Chinnavedampatti, Coimbatore, ensures zero-waste on the school premises.

There are 47 species of birds on the K'Sirs school campus. Five hundred trees, all native species, grow within its boundaries. Most importantly, the school does not allow even a scrap of waste to go out of its gates.

Even as the Coimbatore Corporation wrestles with the huge problem of garbage accumulation and its disposal, K'Sirs makes solid waste management look like a walk in the park.



There are 1,038 students that pour in and out of the school every day. Around 500 staff and students eat food cooked in-house. Every drop of grey water is recycled. “We have goats that acts as our lawn mower,” laughs Lalita Prakash, executive director, of the school.

There are Kangeyam cows and their dung is used as fertilizers and vermi-composting is an ongoing activity. The children are sensitised to solid waste management.

In fact, this year classes six to 12 took part in a major project that dealt with waste management. Each class was assigned a specific area. Students visited a restaurant, a goldsmith's workshop, a supermarket, a photo-studio, a local Mess, a gated community and individual houses to see what kind of waste and how much of it was being generated. They also visited a Panchayat and the Coimbatore Corporation to learn more about the civic body's role in waste management.

“The children and staff of the school are already into the habit of segregating. The next step is to take this awareness out of the school, says Lalita. The school also runs a Carbon Neutral programme where through various parameters (students and staff fill a detailed questionnaire about their diet, mode of transport, what they wear, their cosmetics, cooking medium, type of lighting they use at home, etc.), it measures carbon footprint and tries to neutralise it by planting the requisite number of saplings.

Rs. 150-crore loans proposed for women SHGs

Loans to the tune of Rs. 150 crore will be distributed to members of women self-help groups in the current financial year in the district.

At a function held here to distribute loans for small and medium scale industries, Collector V. Dakshinamoorthy said that the district continued to be in the top for the past two years in providing loans to the SHGs.

He said that the target for loan distribution to SHGs was fixed at Rs. 121 crore for the current year of which Rs. 86 crore was already distributed. “We will distribute Rs. 150 crore as loans to the SHGs,” he added. The Collector appreciated all the banks that were providing loans to the members for their development.

He distributed loans to the tune of Rs. 2.38 crore to 558 beneficiaries under the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency Limited (MUDRA) scheme. Member of Parliament P.R. Sundaram participated.

Walking fish, unicorn and sneezing monkey discovered in Eastern Himalayas

A walking fish, a unicorn (of sorts), a blue eyed frog, a ‘sneezing’ monkey, are among the two hundred and eleven new species discovered in Eastern Himalayas in the last six years, says the WWF Living Himalayas Initiative’s latest report termed “[Hidden Himalayas: Asia’s Wonderland](#)” released on Monday.

In total there are 133 plants, 39 invertebrates, 26 fish, 10 amphibians, one reptile, one bird, and one mammal out of which 15 were found in Bhutan and 60 in Nepal. Also, in the last 15 years, 550 species have been discovered in the region covering Bhutan, north Myanmar, Nepal, southern Tibet and north-eastern Indian states like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Sikkim, North Bengal.



“The importance of the Eastern Himalayas as a biodiversity hotspot is well known. Endowed with exceptionally rich flora and fauna, the region is truly a conservation jewel,” said Yeshey Dorji, Minister of Agriculture and Forests of Bhutan.

Released on the World Habitat Day, the report shows some very intriguing discoveries like “Snubby” as the scientists have nicknamed the snub-nosed monkey found in Myanmar who sneezes, especially, during rains because the rainwater gets into their upturned noses causing them to sneeze.

Another interesting discovery is a ‘walking’ snakehead fish because of its ability to survive on land for upto four days and writhe and wriggle up to quarter of a mile over wet ground. “Because of its aggressive traits, National Geographic has dubbed the snakehead fish as “Fishzilla” The exploration of more remote areas of the Indian, Nepalese, and Myanmar mountain ranges will undoubtedly yield additional new snakehead species in the future according to scientists,” said the report.

One has only heard of unicorns in dreamland, but a unicorn of sorts as the report put it, is discovered because of the protruding “column” found underneath the species.

“With discovery, comes the important responsibility to continue protecting and caring for these precious gift that this world has been blessed with,” said Dechen Dorji, Country Representative, WWF Bhutan.

With India serving home to about 12% of the world’s endangered plant species, its important to gauge the threats to original habitats. The report specifies the threats to natural habitats in Eastern Himalayas, climate change being the top most followed by mining, oil and gas projects, road construction, construction of new dams and illegal hunting.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Hi-tech KISAN to help assess crop yields

The government on Monday kicked off a project - KISAN - that will use space technology and drone-based imaging for estimating crop yields. An Android app, designed by space agency Isro, too was launched which will assess real-time data on hailstorm occurrences to figure out crop loss in affected areas.

Both these technical support systems will help the government in effectively running crop insurance schemes and in disbursing compensation to farmers.

"The KISAN will use geo-informatics system along with high resolution data from UAV/drone-based imaging for improvement in yield estimation and better planning of 'crop cutting experiments' which are needed for crop insurance programme. This will help in deciding crop loss more objectively and in a very fast manner", said agriculture ministry in a statement.

Under the project, a pilot study is proposed to be launched in one district each of Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra during current kharif season and two districts each of these states during the coming rabi season of 2015-16.

Launching the project, minister of state for agriculture and farmers' welfare Sanjeev Balyan said the project will be extended to other parts of the country after success of the pilot study.

The KISAN project will be implemented by Mahalanobis National Crop Forecast Centre (MNCFC) in collaboration with Isro Centres (Space Applications Centre, Ahmedabad & National Remote Sensing Centre, Hyderabad), India Meteorological Department, CCAFS, state agriculture departments and state remote sensing centres.

The App, launched to assess real-time data on hailstorm occurrences, will use photographs and geographical coordinates (longitude and latitude) to find out the crop loss.

‘Will turn 1,000 farmers into agro-entrepreneurs in a yr’

Turning 1,000 lowly farmers into agro-entrepreneurs within the next one year, and 5,000 farmers into millionaires in the next five years. That's the ambitious goal the Goa government has set itself towards financial empowerment of farmers, said state agriculture minister Ramesh Tawadkar at a farmers meet at Canacona recently. A concerted drive towards that end will be launched in the state shortly, he added.

"There is unlimited scope for employment in the field of agriculture. Our aim is to generate 8,000 to 10,000 employment opportunities in this field in the next 5-10 years by promoting organic farming in Goa. For this, farmers

will need to change their outlook towards farming; agriculture should be viewed not as a lowly task but as a potentially lucrative venture. No farmer in the state should live in poverty; that will be our mission - financial empowerment of farmers," Tawadkar said, addressing the gathering at the launch of the All Goa Farmers Empowerment Campaign organized by rural development wing of Rajyoga Research and Education Foundation, at Agonda, Canacona, recently.

Tawadkar also introduced the concept of 'yoga farming' whereby power of pure thoughts is employed to generate rich yield of crops.

Stating that the state horticulture department has been successful in building confidence among the farmers that horticulture was a rewarding venture, Tawadkar said the Goan climate was also conducive for orchid cultivation which fetches handsome dividends for flower growers.

Director of agriculture Ulhas Kakode, speaking on the occasion, said that a campaign will soon be launched in the state whereby officers of the agriculture department, including the zonal agriculture officers (ZAOs) will go to villages and hold meetings with farmers to motivate them to take to organic and traditional methods of farming.

The All Goa Farmers Empowerment Campaign will culminate at Mandrem on October 11 after coursing through over 50 villages.

Onions from north Karnataka bring prices down

Imports from Egypt, China and Pakistan coupled with harvesting of the local crop have led to a fall in onion prices to Rs 45-55 a kg from Rs 70-80 in retail markets in Karnataka. Local produce reached the two main wholesale markets of Hubballi and Bengaluru in the last few days. The traders expect prices to decline further after the ongoing truckers' strike ends and more stock arrives from local farmers. At Hubballi wholesale onion market, the average price fell to Rs 45 a kg on Sunday from Rs 60-70 on Saturday.

In the retail market in Bengaluru, prices fell by Rs 8 to Rs 10 a kg. Hopcoms stores sold onions at Rs 52 a kg on Sunday for a medium size onion, while best quality onion prices stood at Rs 57 a kg. The arrival of good quality red Egyptian onions brought the prices down, though arrivals weren't large

enough to affect a major drop.

Prices shot up to Rs 80 a kg last month after onion stocks were exhausted at Hubballi market, which supplies most of the state. This was a result drought and untimely rains in parts of Gadag, Bijapur, Belagavi, Dharwad, Bagalkot and other major onion growing districts. Eventually, arrivals from Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh also stopped.

Officials said onion crops in several places were damaged by recent rains. Farmers who managed to protect their crops managed to get Rs 5,000 to Rs 6,500 per quintal.

"About 1,500 to 2,000 tonnes of onion imported from Egypt has arrived in Karnataka but it has failed to check the prices. Prices have started to fall after the new crop was harvested in parts of north Karnataka last week," said Wahab Mulla, a leading onion merchant at Hubballi mandi.

The bulbs are coming from Chitradurga, Ajjampur, Navalgud, Shiratti, Belagavi, Ballari and Bagalkot district to Hubballi, he added. Every day, 200 trucks arrive at Hubballi compared to 20 trucks two months ago, he added.

[Govt launches project to use space technology and drone-based imaging to estimate crop yield](#)

The government on Monday kicked off a project - KISAN - that will use space technology and drone-based imaging for estimating crop yield in better way and also launched an Android App, designed by the country's space agency Isro, to assess real time data on hailstorm occurrences to figure out crop loss in affected areas.

Both these technical support systems will help the government in effectively running the crop insurance schemes and disbursing compensation to farmers.

"The KISAN will use geo-informatics system along with high resolution data from UAV/drone-based imaging for improvement in yield estimation and better planning of 'crop cutting experiments' which are needed for crop insurance programme.

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The App, launched to assess real time data on hailstorm occurrences, will use photographs and geographical coordinates (longitude and latitude) to find out the crop loss.

It will help the government to get real time data about the hailstorms which will be collected through the agriculture department officials of different states. This will support in deciding the crop loss more objectively and quickly.

Symptoms and solutions to stop binge eating

In today's fast paced stressful life it's common to not maintain a good diet. There are more eating disorders than healthy options.

The consequences of these problems cannot only lead to physical complications, but also psychological issues. These concerns escalate when body is not maintained appropriately—based on age and height. It has also been proved by researchers that expression of eating disorder has a lot to do with cultural differences. These can be further classified as feeding disorder—selective eating, food phobias and food refusal.

According to doctors and researchers, the problem is not restricted to person's behaviour, but also carries psychological chaos. As Dr Nupur Krishnan, director of Bio-Logics Nutrition Clinic puts it, "People eat food

for three reasons. First, to satisfy stomach because they feel hungry. Second, to satisfy tongue because of the taste they enjoy while eating food. And third, to please mind by eating food to satisfy their emotions." However, the last part can cause severe damage to a person's health, especially when it's connected to emotional cravings. "When a person loses control over what to eat, how much to eat and when to eat, this condition becomes more dangerous, which is called as emotional eating disorder. Emotional eating disorders can destroy self-esteem and ruin health with many complications."



There are three types of emotional eating disorders that are connected to mind, they are: Binging - Eating more food than required; Anorexia Nervosa - Eating less than required quantity of food; Bulimia - Sometimes eating more and other times eating less to compensate.

Symptoms of Binge Eating

Eating food that might total up to calories required for three to five days.

Eating more than a normal person

Eating more than required during a normal circumstances

Eating within every two hours

Eating with no control over quantity

Eating disorder ends in a vicious circle, which can make an over weight person disconnect with the society. It will lead to more physical and psychological stress. And, this stress will lead them to binge eating. Dr Kalpana Khatwani recommends, "It is important to note that sometimes an eating disorder may be a symptom of an existing underlying depression/anxiety. For any long term successes we have to treat the underlying cause of the eating disorder not just the symptoms."

The eating disorder can also lead to sudden weight loss, which affects the serotonin levels resulting in depressed moods. As Dr Khatwani observes, "Almost everyone is counting calories, watching sugar intake and following any and every dietary guideline spoken of in the media!

It's easy to miss the one person who may have tipped over into the pathological zone. Some signs to watch out for are irritability brought on by excessive restriction of calories resulting in mood swings, sudden and excessive weight loss, excessive discourse regarding the harmful effects of certain foods, eliminating major food groups from ones diet."

Moreover, binge eating is also associated with non-nutritional foods, which will lead to multiple chronic diseases. Too much sugar and concentrated starches can cause hormonal disorder affecting metabolism that will tempt people to eat more unhealthy food like candy, cookies, pastries, ice cream and breads. Unlike starving oneself, it is important to not use food as an emotional stress reliever.

Solution for Binge Eating

Prefer small and frequent meals that include plenty of whole grains, fruits and vegetables

To avoid larger portions on platter, share the meal before consumption

Measure the food with appetite

High protein breakfast before active routine

Reduce the intake of caffeine and carbonated beverages

Do not replace main courses with snacks

Include regular exercises, brisk walks, yoga and meditation

Eating disorder is intertwined with physical needs and emotional cravings. These issues need to be taken seriously as it may induce further irreversible health issues.

Millers want cane prices linked to sugar

Hit by low sugar prices that do not cover cost of production, the Indian Sugar Mills Association has urged the Centre to link sugarcane price to sugar prices.

The government should move away from the conventional system of fixing a Fair and Remunerative Price based on estimates of sugar prices and opt for a revenue sharing model with 70 per cent of sugar price going to farmers, it said. Sugar prices in recent years have consistently ruled lower than estimates and hit the viability of sugar mills. The Centre should collect a cess on sugar from consumers and use the fund to pay the difference between price paid by mills and FRP to farmers for sugarcane, ISMA said in a release.

According to sources in the know, the Association has made the representation as sugar mills find it unviable to pay farmers the FRP for 2015-16 (October-September) sugar season.

Sugar price is ruling at a low of about ₹2,500 a quintal while sugarcane FRP for 2015-16 is set at ₹2,300 a tonne linked to 9.5 per cent sugar recovery. At current cost of production sugar price will have to be over ₹3,200 a quintal for mills to pay farmers.

Last season the FRP had been pegged at ₹2,200 which had resulted in huge arrears of about ₹12,000 crore in sugarcane payments to farmers. Sugar had ranged around ₹ 2,600 a quintal then. Prices have dipped further since then. Sugar industry representatives point out that even the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices, which fixes the sugarcane price, had suggested the creation of a sugarcane stabilisation fund. The Commission had said this fund could be used to make up the sugarcane price difference to farmers when sugar prices are low.

Creating a fund to support sugarcane prices is a pragmatic option to support farmers. Farmers too are suffering losses on low sugar prices and delayed payments.

The government has said the industry should export about 4 million tonnes of sugar in 2015-16 to bring down domestic surplus.

The Association data shows that sugar production in 2014-15 was about 2.8 million tonnes (mt) and the estimate for 2015-16 is about 2.7 mt against domestic consumption of about 2.5 mt. Also there is an available opening stock about 9.6 mt.

High costs make Kerala's plantation crops unviable

The high production cost for all plantation crops has made its products from Kerala uncompetitive in the domestic as well as overseas market, Association of Planters of Kerala said.

The labour wages in the State are also on the higher side, while the productivity is the lowest among plantations States, the planters' body pointed out. C Vinayaraghavan, Chairman, APK, said that the tea industry is making a loss of ₹36 for every kg of tea produced. The cost of producing a kg of tea at the current wage level of ₹232 per worker per day is ₹120 whereas the average price of one kg of tea manufactured in Kerala at Kochi auction centre is ₹84. Expressing the association's willingness for a reasonable wage hike in tea plantations, he said there should be a corresponding increase in workers productivity.

On rubber sector, the planters' body said that the cost of producing one kg of natural rubber at the current wage level of ₹317 per worker per day is ₹150 where as the average price of one kg of rubber in ₹107. The grower is making a loss of ₹43/kg.

Likewise, the cost of producing one kg of cardamom at the current wage level of ₹232 per worker per day is ₹725 whereas the average price of one kg at Vandanmedu auction centre is ₹625 per kg. The grower, therefore, is making a loss of ₹100, he added.

Centre launches 'Kisan' pilot to speed up insurance claims

Crop insurance coverage in India, by most accounts, has been woefully inadequate for a number of reasons. With adverse weather having impacted

three consecutive cropping seasons, the Centre launched the 'Kisan' pilot programme here on Monday in an effort to speed up the process of claims for farmers.

Additionally, an Android-based application called 'Bhuvan', developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), was also launched to assess crop damage caused by hailstorms and gather data on the weather event using GPS technology.

The Kisan programme will be jointly conducted by the Mahalobnis National Crop Forecast Centre, ISRO, the India Meteorological Department and State agriculture departments, among others.

“Crop insurance claims are calculated on the basis of crop cutting experiments but there have always been issues in getting timely and accurate data. Due to this, payments to farmers were getting delayed and this programme is being launched to address this problem,” said Sanjeev Kumar Balyan, the junior Agriculture Minister.

Skymet, Amigo Optima, Precision Hawk and Qudich, are some of the manufacturers of unmanned aerial vehicles who are likely to partner with the government.

The pilot is being carried out in 12 districts across Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh over the current Kharif and upcoming Rabi seasons.

The districts chosen include Haryana's Kurukshetra (rice) and Hisar and Karnal (wheat), Shimoga (rice), Raichur (rice) and Gulbarga (sorghum) in Karnataka, Yavatmal (cotton), Ahmednagar (wheat) and Solapur (sorghum) in Maharashtra, and Seoni (rice), Vidisha and Hoshangabad for wheat in MP.