

30.10.2015

THE HINDU

Study on butterflies released



Srinivas R. Reddy, Field Director, Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, releasing a survey report on butterflies in Coimbatore on Wednesday.

A study on butterflies in Coimbatore Forests Division was released here on Wednesday.

The study was conducted by Prabhakar Veerarajendran of Osai, a non-governmental organisation involved in nature and wildlife conservation, and the Coimbatore Division of the Forest Division. to carry out a survey of butterfly species present in Coimbatore Forest Division. The aim of the study is to record the species of butterflies found in the forests, to record the presence of rare species, and identify the butterfly hotspots, said K. Kalidasan, president of Osai. The survey report was released by Field Director of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve Srinivas R. Reddy. The first copy was received by Coimbatore District Forest Officer M. Senthilkumar.

A dedicated long term field work was required to understand the butterflies of a particular patch of forest area, said Mr. Veerarajendran.



Butterflies are found in abundance during the beginning of monsoon. The survey found that their number gradually increased from September and reached its peak between October and December. November recorded the maximum butterfly count in Forest Division. A total of 193 butterfly species were recorded till date.

Farmers to get advance loan for Rabi crop in Odisha

Farmers in Odisha can now avail loan for upcoming Rabi crop without bothering to repay the loan taken for Kharif that suffered extensive damage due to drought conditions.

A high-level meeting attended by Chief Secretary G. C. Pati, Development Commissioner U. N. Behera and Finance Secretary R. Balkrishnan and representatives of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development and State Level Bankers Committee decided that Rabi loan will be advanced to the farmers without asking them to repay the Kharif loan.

It has been decided in the meeting that cooperative and commercial banks will not exert any pressure on farmers for repayment of Kharif loans in the affected blocks. The District Level Technical Committees will be convened soon for reviewing and revising the scale of finance for different Rabi crops as loan to the farmers.

The NABRAD and SLBC have also been requested to issue necessary guidelines to lead banks for convening District Level Bankers Committee meeting to extend the measures required for mitigation of drought like situation in affected areas and advance of Rabi loan to farmers.

Rescheduling of Kharif loan will be prepared after receipt of report of crop assessment, which is now underway.

“This year, crop cutting assessment will be done in three slabs - area affected by more than 33 per cent crop loss, more than 50 per cent crop loss and more than 66 per cent loss,” said Chief Secretary in a statement.

Agriculture department has also been directed to issue advisories for mixed crop and fodder cultivation as per availability of irrigation water and residual moisture which can sustain these crops.

Farmers exposed to benefits of poly greenhouse cultivation

A 1,000 sq m shed could be erected at an estimated cost of Rs. 9.5 lakh



Collector K. Nanthakumar collecting cucumber at the poly greenhouse set up in the model farm at Sundaramudayan in Ramanathapuram district on Thursday.— Photo: L. BALACHANDAR

To provide an alternative method of cultivation to farmers of this arid district, the horticulture department has decided to introduce, for the first time, the lucrative poly greenhouse method for the cultivation of cucumber and capsicum, and flower crop of marigold.

District Collector K. Nanthakumar inaugurated on Thursday, the 1000-square metre poly greenhouse erected at the model farm at Sundaramudayan near here, with interline micro drippers for irrigation, fertigation and fogging system for the purpose of demonstrating the efficacy of the method to the farmers.

About 250 farmers have visited the greenhouse and some of them evinced interest in setting up the house for cultivating hybrid varieties of cucumber and capsicum, which commanded good market in Kerala, B. Ilango, Assistant Director of Horticulture, said.

Stating that the Centre has made available the 1,000 square metre poly greenhouse under the National Horticulture Mission and the State Planning Commission, 5,000 sq m poly greenhouse under the State Balanced Growth Fund with 50 per cent subsidy to the farmers, he said a 1,000 sq m shed could be erected at an estimated cost of Rs. 9.5 lakh.

The Nammalvar Agriculture College at Peraiyur, near Kamudhi, has come forward to erect a 1,000 sq m poly greenhouse and the Collector presented the work order to its Correspondent Ahmed Yasin after he presented a cheque for Rs. 4.75 lakh towards beneficiary's contribution.

The houses with ultra virus plastic sheets were ideally suited for this high light intensity district as the recommended crops could be grown under controlled atmosphere, he said.

The fogging system helped to control the humidity and temperature inside the shed, he added.

Under greenhouse, a farmer could plant 600 plants each of cucumber and capsicum and another 300 plants of marigold.

They could start the harvest after 120 days and get a high yield of four to five kilograms per plant. After investing about Rs. 6 lakh, a farmer could breakeven at the end of the year after two or three harvests, he said.

The District Rural Development Agency has erected the demonstration shed, S. Nagarajan, Assistant Director, Horticulture said. He said a Mahindra Group Company has erected the shed with imported UV plastic sheets. The sheets should be replaced at least once in three years for maximum yield, company's Agronomist N Gopalakrishnan said.

Turmeric auctioned for Rs. 70 lakh

Turmeric was auctioned for Rs. 70 lakh at the Tiruchengode Agricultural Producers Cooperative Marketing Society here recently.

While 'Virali' variety fetched a price between Rs. 7,890 and Rs. 10,301 per quintal; 'Kilangu' fetched a price between Rs. 6,599 and 8,080. About 1,200 quintals of turmeric was auctioned for Rs. 70 lakh on the occasion, a release of the society issued here said.

Meeting bats for crop insurance cover to seed growers

The Eight National Seed Congress concluded here on Thursday with a plea to the Centre to formulate a special crop insurance policy for seed-growing farmers and also to bring in changes in the existing insurance scheme by covering farmer as a unit.

Union Minister for Labour Bandaru Dattatreya, speaking at the valedictory session of the three-day event, said he would raise the issue of crop insurance coverage with farmer as a unit at the Union Cabinet meeting.

He noted that several State Governments, including Telangana, have been demanding for such changes in the crop insurance scheme as village and mandal (tehsil) as unit is not benefiting farmers.

He mentioned that the Centre is planning to bring in a comprehensive agriculture insurance scheme soon by extending insurance cover not only to crops cultivated by farmers but also to the entire family of a farmer so that it would act as a protection cover to education and health needs of the family.

‘Helpful features’

Expressing concern over the continuing spate of farmers’ suicides in Telangana, Mr. Dattatreya said the seed bill drafted in 2004 and now forwarded to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture had several features helpful to the farmers.

Telangana Minister for Agriculture Pocharam Srinivas Reddy said though the average burden of debt on farmers in the State was high but availability of average institutional credit in States such as Karnataka and Punjab was double, compared to Telangana.

Chairman of the organising committee of the Seed Congress C. Parthasarathi, who is also the Secretary of Agriculture, said the State Government had plans to increase the seed growing area by two-to-three times from the present 2.9 lakh hectares in the next few years.

Amaravati raises hopes of Srikakulam farmers

Area under vegetable cultivation likely to go up to 40,000 acres

The rise of Amaravati promises to be a great opportunity for Srikakulam, which has a reputation for growing the best varieties of vegetables. The district’s farmers currently export veggies to faraway markets like Hyderabad, Kolkata and Bhubaneswar but as new state capital gets built, they anticipate huge demand for their produce from there.

According to the state's Horticulture Department, vegetables take up 21,000 acres of land in Srikakulam. This may go up to 40,000 acres if construction of the second phase of the Vamsadhara project is completed. Laying down a distributory network for the Thotapalli project would also boost vegetable production in the district.



Currently, export of vegetables to states like Odisha, West Bengal and Telangana is only benefitting middlemen as most of the farmers do not have access to good cold storage and transport facilities. This forces them to sell their produce at low prices. For instance, tomatoes are priced at Rs. 36 in the Srikakulam town market but the ruling rate in villages is not even Rs. 20 per kg. Against this background, the rise of Amaravati may be a ray of hope for Srikakulam as it is six hours away. “The Government should establish more cold storage points in Veeraghattam and Palakonda,” said L.N. Naidu, a farmer from Talavaram village in Veeraghattam mandal.

Farmers also seek better coordination between the marketing, horticulture and agriculture departments. “Amaravati would certainly create a huge market for our vegetables. The government should respond by improving infrastructure in Srikakulam,” said K. Prakasha Rao, a farmer from Ponnada village in Etcherla mandal.

‘Rain guns to help mitigate drought’

Agriculture Minister P. Pulla Rao on Thursday said that the government was taking up different measures to make the State drought-free and using rain guns was one of these measures. These equipments would come in handy for farmers in areas, which recorded deficit rainfall.

Three companies, including Lindsay, Honda and Jain, which are into manufacturing these guns have approached the government to extend their services. Depending on the make and capacity, these guns help in spraying water over vast fields.

2nd instalment of loan waiver after Jan. 15

The State government is preparing an action plan for implementing the second instalment of crop loan waiver to the extent of Rs.4,300 crore after January 15. The last date for filing loan waiver applications has been set as October 30.

As it is the government was not receiving any applications from farmers and no more applications would be entertained after the deadline. In November all the applications would be processed and necessary steps would be taken accordingly, said Agriculture Minister P. Pulla Rao.

The government is making efforts to distribute certificates for farmers, whose loans extend beyond Rs.50000 and ensuring timely payments by banks for the convenience of farmers.

The government has already deposited nearly Rs.7,600 crore into the accounts of farmers under phases under crop loan waiver, said Rythu Sadirika Samstha president and Finance Minister Yanamala Ramakrishnu. The Reserve Bank of India has in principle approved the move and legal opinions were being taken into consideration over distribution of certificates to farmers.

The certificates would entitle farmers to get an interest of 10 per cent and farmers have to present them before the banks only under exceptional circumstances.

Awareness would be created among farmers over this aspect, he said.

Financial constraint was not a deterrent for implementing the crop loan waiver. The entire loan waiver budget was estimated at Rs.25,000 crore and the government would clear this by December 2018 under different phases, he added.

The second conference of Rythu Sadirika Samstha would be conducted at Vijayawada on November 30.

During this conference, aspects pertaining to farmers suicides and the reasons behind the extreme steps and the solutions would be discussed.

City Union Bank maintains growth



City Union Bank has reported a 15 per cent increase in net profit for the second quarter ended September 30 at Rs.107.85 crore against Rs.93.75 crore in the same period in the previous year with a 7.3 per cent rise in total income at Rs.8,294.50 crore against Rs. 7,729.98 crore.

Addressing presspersons here on Thursday, N. Kamakodi, Managing Director and CEO, said the bank could maintain its growth and cost factors had been kept very much under control.

He said the bank continued its focus on SME (small medium enterprises) trading and agriculture segments and these segments accounted for 65-70 per cent of the bank's loan book.

Though the bank cut its lending rates, there was a drop in cost of deposits, resulting in an expansion in margins. The net interest margin was comfortable at 3.74 per cent.

The net interest income increased by 16.4 per cent to Rs.240.10 crore during the quarter from Rs.206.21 crore a year-earlier.

Deposits rose 10.6 per cent to Rs.25,616 crore as on September 30 from Rs.23,152 crore as on September 30, 2014. Advances climbed 12 per cent to Rs.18,935 crore from Rs.16,908 crore.

Considering a credit growth of 9-9.5 per cent for the banking industry, Mr. Kamakodi said, this should be considered comfortable.

Taking all steps to ensure water supply to save crops: Uma



Godavari waters flowing in the Polavaram Right Main Canal at Velagaleru in Krishna district on Thursday. Photo: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar

Irrigation Minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao inspecting works at Jakkampudi on the outskirts of Vijayawada on Thursday.

'1,578 cusecs of Godavari water being diverted to Prakasam Barrage'

Irrigation Minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao said all measures were being taken up to ensure water supply to the farmers for saving the standing crops, especially those in the Krishna delta. In a bid to protect the interests of farmers, 1,578 cusecs of Godavari water was being diverted through Polavaram Right Main Canal (RMC) into the Prakasam Barrage.

One pump was already commissioned at Pattiseema lift irrigation project and 1.04 tmc ft of water was being diverted through the Polavaram RMC. Efforts are onto install five more pumps by next week and draw as much water, said Mr. Rao while addressing media persons at Jakkampudi on the city outskirts after inspecting the RMC works.

The plan is to draw at least 80 tmc ft of water through 24 pumps at Pattiseema by next June. About 8 lakh acres was being cultivated in the Krishna delta using 28.96 tmc ft under Krishna delta while Godavari delta was using about 122 tmc ft for cultivating 9 lakh acres, he pointed out.

The Government was contemplating constructing a lift irrigation project at Chintalapudi in West Godavari district and enhancing the capacity of Guddigudem project on the Krishna and West Godavari border to store surplus water drawn from Pattiseema after filling the Prakasam Barrage.

A survey was being conducted to examine the feasibility with a cost Rs.1 crore. Authorities are studying different parameters, including necessary clearances from forests and environment etc and a report would be submitted by November. A final decision would be taken after examining the report, said Mr. Rao.

On the Krishna River Management Board meeting with the officials of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, Mr. Rao said the board had approved supply of 5 tmc ft for Krishna delta, 4 tmc ft for Guntur and Prakasam districts, 2 tmc ft for Krishna district upland areas and 3 tmc ft for Handrineeva for addressing the drinking water requirements.

Despite zero inflows from Almatti and Tungabhadra, the government was providing necessary help to farmers in Krishna delta through regular power supply enabling the farmers to draw water using motors. Instructions were issued to install motors on Budameru and Gunnderu drains and supply power enabling water supply to 60,000 acres. Besides, 2 kms power lines were being laid in Gannavaram mandal to provide water for about 10,000 acres, he claimed.

Government is contemplating constructing a lift irrigation project at Chintalapudi in West Godavari district and enhancing the capacity of Guddigudem project

Company to produce organic keerai

When pesticides residue is becoming a concern while consuming 'keerai' (greens), a group of 50 farmers in the district have come together with an initiative to grow 'organic keerai' on a commercial scale and popularise its use through unique marketing techniques.

The farmers will be adopting 'cluster approach' so that the cost of production could be brought down through bulk procurement of seeds and organic fertilizers.

Besides that, marketing of the different varieties of 'keerai' produced at different farm holdings and also the value-added products made from it becomes easier by developing a common brand for the produces from the cluster.

“This is going to be the first of the major initiative of the member farmers of the recently formed 'Aathma Organic Producers' Company' constituted in the district as it has been found that use of pesticides seem to be generally high in various crops and we have realised the obligation for giving the consumers a 'natural' product,' said K. Shanmugam, farmer and chief executive of the company.

For developing value-added products from keera, the company has planned to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology to train the said 50 farmers.

An interesting aspect of the project is that the farmers had evolved a novel marketing methodology.

“As a starter, we have created a database of people who consume ‘keera’ on a regular basis so that regular supply of the produce could be ensured. This apart, we are also telling the need for consuming organic keera to wider sections of society apart from exploring export possibilities of value-added products made from keera,” said the farmers.

To enhance the consumption of organic keera, a handbook containing data on the health benefits of keera and the added advantages of having the produce cultivated under organic conditions will be distributed to the people by the farmers’ group.

Tobacco farmers to switch to alternatives

The government’s intention of reducing tobacco consumption in the country should not hit growers who should be helped with alternative cash crops that are just as remunerative, the Federation of All-India Farmers’ Association (FAIFA) engaged in cultivation of cash crops said on Thursday

Referring to the government directive to tobacco farmers in Andhra Pradesh to cut cultivation by 52 million kg next year, FAIFA members said that there should be a policy to provide sustainable alternatives for tobacco growers in the transition period.

All stakeholders should be consulted before framing a “well-balanced” tobacco control policy, the FAIFA members said adding that steps should be taken to check alleged smuggling on imported cigarettes. Stating that a sudden call for cutting production will be difficult to absorb, the FAIFA said that the government should identify alternative, equally remunerative sustainable cash crops for tobacco growers and take care of new skill

requirement for smooth transition to such alternatives. The farmers' body bemoaned high taxation on tobacco and smuggling of cigarettes.

Special centres to sell red gram at subsidised rates

Responding to the Telangana government's request, millers and traders have agreed to open 10 centres in Hyderabad to sell red gram at a price less than the prevailing open market price.

In a meeting with the Commissioner of Civil Supplies Rajat Kumar here on Thursday, the pulse millers agreed to quality I red gram at Rs.160 a kg and second quality at Rs.135 a kg.

The centres will become functional with immediate effect and every person will be entitled to get one kilogram of red gram.

They also said that the government would open centres in every district and mandal headquarters with the assistance of Civil Supplies Corporation to sell red gram at the above prices.

One more farmers' produce company launched in Karur

Taking a cue from the Nachalur Farmers' Produce company, one more farmers' produce company has been launched in Karur district.

As many as 500 farmers have enlisted in the company registered under the name of Nadayanur Agricultural Producers Company Limited with a paid up capital of Rs. 25 lakh. Each of them has contributed Rs. 5,000 as share capital.

Considering the interest shown by farmers and initial services of the company, the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) has sanctioned Rs. 33 lakh towards its working capital and term loan requirements.

It has been provided with the support of Producers Organisation Development Fund (PODF) of NABARDs. It is the second producer company in the district to get the support under PODF. Direct procurement, distribution of inputs to farmers including certified seeds and fertilizers, procurement and sale of coconut shells are among the special services to be offered to farmers.

D.S. Chauhan, Deputy General Manager, NABARD, Tamil Nadu, who inaugurated an oil-extracting unit of the company on Wednesday, said it had made a good beginning within a short span of time.

He suggested that the company could go in for branding and labelling of their special products such as chemical-free sugar and oil so that it could promote sale through e-portal platform.

Monsoon intensifies in Kanyakumari



Sudden rain lashed Tuticorin on Thursday. —Photo: N. Rajesh

Kanyakumari district received widespread rain on Thursday as the northeast monsoon intensified, bringing more flow into the reservoirs.

While Perunchani dam had water at 74 feet, against its capacity of 77 feet, water stood at 42.77 feet in Pechiparai dam (48 feet). Water level in Chitrar

I, Chitrar II, Mukkadal and Mambazhatharu dams have already reached their full capacity. Myladi recorded the highest rainfall of 80 mm in the region.

As there was flooding at Tirparappu Falls, people were not allowed to take bath. The Collector, Sajjansingh R. Chavan, inspected some of the dams and instructed Public Works Department officials to monitor the inflow every hour. The rear compound wall of the Government Higher Secondary School at Marthandam collapsed in the impact of the rain on Wednesday. But no one was injured.

Following is the rainfall (in cm) recorded in Kanyakumari district in the last 24 hours ending 8.30 a.m. on Thursday: Myladi 80, Kurunthancode 75, Aanaikidangu 68, Pechiparai 65, Mambazhatharu 55, Eraniyal 53, Kozhiporvilai 45, Kottaram 43, Buddhan Anai 37, Perunchani, Colachel and Surulodu 36 each, Adayamadai 35, Mullanginavilai 34, Nagercoil 27, Boothapandi 19, Chitrar II 16 and Chitrar I 10.

Tuticorin district also experienced widespread rainfall.



Dry October spells rabi gloom

Rainfall during the current month has so far been 52 per cent below normal for the country as a whole.

If a poor kharif crop resulting from a second consecutive southwest monsoon failure wasn't bad enough, the prospects for the ongoing rabi season don't seem too great either.

Rainfall during the current month has so far been 52 per cent below normal for the country as a whole. 30 out of 36 meteorological subdivisions, accounting for 90 per cent of India's area, have received scanty or deficient rains in October. This comes on top of deficient rainfall in July, August and September.

Making things worse is water levels in 91 major reservoirs. As on October 21, these were filled to only 58 per cent of their total storage capacity, as against last year's corresponding level of 76 per cent and the last ten years' average of 77 per cent. The reservoir water position is particularly poor in the Krishna, Godavari and Cauvery basins. Major reservoirs in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra such as Nagarjuna Sagar, Sriramsagar, Srisailem, Somasila, Malaprabha, Jayakwadi, Bhima, Girna and Khadakvasla have less than 33 per cent water relative to their live storage capacity.

The combination of poor rains and low reservoir level does not augur well for the rabi crop, the plantings of which have just begun. The kharif crop's failure due to dry weather in August and September had led farmers in many parts to pin their hopes on the rabi season and go in for early sowing. But with hardly any rains in October either, even this crop faces threat of moisture stress.

The hope currently is from Northeast monsoon rains that have commenced over Tamil Nadu, Kerala and the adjoining areas of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, and also developing western disturbances. The Met Department has forecast showers across peninsular India and parts of Madhya Pradesh,

Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand in the coming days. The lower temperatures accompanying these should help boost rabi sowings.

The main rabi season crops are wheat, mustard, chana, masur, onion, potato and also — though these are largely grown during kharif — maize, groundnut, urad and moong. From a consumer perspective, a good rabi crop of pulses and onion would help cooling the price spiral in these commodities that aren't easily importable.

The Centre, meanwhile, is yet to announce the minimum support prices for the current rabi season crops, despite sowing already underway. A substantial increase in the MSPs of chana and masur would encourage farmers to expand area under these crops, which is in consumer interest as well.

hindustantimes

Nestlé India
60% on



profit nosedives
Maggi woes

Nestle India Ltd said its quarterly profit dropped 60%, as the company reels from the impact of a ban on its Maggi instant noodles in the country.

The India unit of Nestle SA, the world's largest packaged food company, posted a profit of 1.24 billion rupees for the quarter ended Sept. 30, compared with 3.11 billion rupees a year earlier. Net sales fell 32 %to 17.36 billion rupees.

The company was caught in a standoff with Indian regulators for months following a nationwide ban on its Maggi instant noodles.

The ban was imposed after local regulators reported in May that some packets of Maggi noodles contained unsafe levels of lead. Nestle had to order a recall of the product next month, which cost it about 66 million Swiss francs (\$67 million).

Nestle said on Thursday that sales were hurt by about 153 million rupees during the quarter as a result of the withdrawal.

Nestle had challenged the ban enforced by an Indian food regulator in a court, which had ordered retesting of Maggi noodle samples at three separate laboratories.

Earlier this month, Nestle said in a statement it had received test results from all three labs mandated by the Bombay High Court and all 90 samples, covering six varieties, were safe to eat. The company has since started manufacturing the popular noodles again.

A spokesman at the company's global headquarters told Reuters on Monday that Nestle planned to resume sales of Maggi noodles in India in November.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

India-Africa summit: Modi pledges to help Africa's agriculture sector

Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Thursday vowed that India will help Africa in developing its agriculture sector.

He addressed dignitaries from Africa at the third India-Africa Forum Summit and said: "Africa has 60 per cent of the world's arable land reserves and just 10 per cent of the global output. India will help to develop Africa's agriculture sector."

He said a spurt in Africa's agriculture sector can drive the continent's march to prosperity and also support global food security.

Appreciating the measures taken by the African countries in the fields of healthcare, education and agriculture, Modi said: "We see strong measures that are radically improving healthcare, education and agriculture. Primary school enrolment in Africa now exceeds 90 per cent."

He said Africa has now joined the global mainstream of innovation.

"The mobile banking of M-Pesa, the healthcare innovation of MedAfrica, or the agriculture innovation of AgriManagr and Kilimo Salama, are using mobile and digital technology to transform lives in Africa," Modi said.

"India has committed \$7.4 billion in concessional credit and \$1.2 billion in

grant since the first India-Africa Summit in 2008," Modi informed African delegations.

It is creating 100 capacity building institutions, developing infrastructure, public transport, clean energy, irrigation, agriculture and manufacturing capacity across Africa, Modi added.

Farmers may have to buy natural manure with urea to get subsidy

Concerned at the harmful effect of chemical fertilisers on consumers, the Modi government is working on ways to bring down the use of urea by farmers.

The government proposes to make it "mandatory" for all those who buy urea to also buy natural manure, if they have to avail of the government subsidy. The Centre's plan is to offer a deal, where it will be compulsory to buy one bag of composted manure, with every two bags of urea, to avail the subsidy on chemical fertiliser.

Union ministers including chemical and fertilizer ministers Ananth Kumar and urban development minister M Venkaiah Naidu have already discussed the issue and the draft proposal has been prepared. The decision has yet to get the Cabinet nod, sources said.

The move will help the farmers to resort to organic fertiliser and cut the use of urea whose excessive use not only destroys soil fertility but also leads to groundwater pollution.

Heavy urea usage affects crop quality and reduces immunity of crops to different kinds of pests. One theory for the recent attack of whitefly pests on cotton crops in Punjab is the excessive use of urea.

Why you must have bananas



A bunch of bananas are almost always stocked in every household.

It is quite cheap and safe to eat with the outer skin protecting the inner sweet fruit. Even when the outer covering becomes soft with dark spots on it, the inner flesh is good enough to be used to cook up something tasty from the many traditional recipes found in Indian regional cuisine. While the cooking style varies from region to region, traditional Indian cuisine always made use of ingredients which were easily available and a lot of experimentations were done according to the local ingredients available.

POWERHOUSE OF NUTRITION

While bananas are known to be a rich source of potassium, ripe bananas are a powerhouse of nutrition and it is one of the few fruits that can be used by

almost all people across all ages. Easy to digest, ripe bananas have higher levels of antioxidants as they ripen. Says nutritionist Dhvani Shah, "Ripe bananas contain a high concentration of dietary fibre, potassium, vitamin B-6 and antioxidant compounds. Ripe bananas are a rich source of vitamin C, which ensures the health of your skin and bones and may decrease your risk of cancer, heart disease, osteoarthritis and age-related bone degeneration."

HOW THEY WERE USED IN TRADITIONAL INDIAN CUISINE

Puris, halwa, pakodas, appams, dosas or flavoured buns, ripe banana has made its place in cuisine from various states of India.

Says homemaker Alka Pai, "Apart from adding ripe banana to halwasheera, we make sweet banana puris too, which are best enjoyed with tea and some people like to eat them with milk and coconut chutney . I also remember my mother making Filos (Goan banana pancakes) for breakfast. These thick dense pancakes are hard to resist as the sweetness of jaggery is mixed with the ripe bananas, and the hint of coconut lends them a unique taste."

Since the South produces a large quantity of this fruit, it is not surprising that they have a number of recipes that makes use of ripe bananas. Ripe bananas are also added to sweet appams to make painyarams which make it spongy and light to bite.

Chef Sudhir Pai remembers a recipe from his childhood days, "Rulava bhakri is a traditional, easy-to-make snack from Mangalore and it can be savoury and sweet as per your choice. Nothing was wasted in the olden days,

and same was the case in my house, when we found ourselves stuck with overripe bananas, it would be transformed into tasty preparations. Rulava Bhakri or Kela Rawa Bhakri is banana semolina dosa, another innovative item from our traditional regional cuisine." Ripe bananas find their place in Bengali cuisine too. Paka kolar bora is ripe banana fritters or pakodas, which are crunchy outside and soft inside."

MANGLOREAN CUISINE

RULAVA BHAKRI (BANANA SEMOLINA DOSA)

Ingredients ½ cup semolinarava, 1 ripe banana mashed , 3-4 tbsp freshly grated coconut, 2 tbsp powdered jaggery, 3 green chillies, 1 inch piece of ginger, 1 sprig curry leaves, salt to taste and water as required

Method

Take rava and the mashed over ripe banana in a bowl. Add coconut, jaggery, green chillies, and ginger and curry leaves. Add salt and water to mix well to form a thick batter which should be such that it should fall from the ladle. Heat a pan smeared with oil and pour a ladle full of batter. Spread it evenly to give it shape.

Cover and cook on medium heat till the top surface is cooked. Flip and cook for a minute.

Remove from flame and serve hot with butter andor enjoy it with pickle.

PARSI CUISINE

KERA PAR EEDA (SPICED EGGS ON BANANAS)

Ingredients 3 ripe bananas, 2 eggs, 1 small onion finely chopped, 1 small tomato finely chopped, 1 chopped green chilli, 1 tsp ginger-garlic paste, ½ tsp turmeric powder, 1 tsp chopped coriander salt to taste, oil.

Method

Heat oil in a pan and add the chopped onion along with chopped green chillies. Saute well.

Add the ginger-garlic paste and when the onions turn brown, add the turmeric, chopped tomatoes. Cook well.

To this add the bananas cut into medium thick slices, salt and coriander. Mix gently and after couple of minutes flatten the mixture on the pan. Gently mark two surfaces and break the eggs into the hollows. The other method is to beat the eggs together and pour them over the top. Cover the pan and turn the heat to low, and cook until the eggs are set.

GUJARATI CUISINE

PAKKA KELA NU SHAAK (RIPE BANANA VEGETABLE)

Ingredients 3 Ripe Bananas, sliced, 1 tsp red chilli powder, 2 tsp sugar, ½ tsp mustard seeds, ½ tsp cumin seeds, ¼ tsp turmeric powder, 1 tsp oil, salt to taste

Method

Heat oil in a pan, add mustard seeds and let them crackle.

Add cumin seeds, banana slices and rest of the dry masalas and mix well. Cook for couple of minutes and remove from flame. Serve hot with roti.

THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

Kuwait lifts ban on Indian poultry

Kuwait has lifted the ban on import of eggs from India, according to the website of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda).

The ban was imposed in 2013 by the GCC countries and was lifted following reports by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) stating that India was free from the highly pathogenic Avian influenza.

Usually, the ban is lifted only three months after the OIE declares a country free from bird flu.

Namakkal accounts for nearly 95 per cent of egg exports from India. Egg exports, which stood at 288.12 lakh in 2013-14 fiscal, dropped to 175.55 lakh in 2014-15. For the current fiscal (till June), the number stands at 140.12 lakh, according to the data from National Egg Coordination Committee.

Trade sources said this does not make any big difference as exports to Kuwait are negligible and that, on an average, they used to ship only five containers (of 4.72 lakh eggs each) a month.

Strong Arabian Sea cyclone saps N-E monsoon of vital energy

A strong cyclone in the Arabian Sea has, contrary to forecasts, drained the North-East monsoon over Tamil Nadu of vital moisture and weakened it for the time being.

Cyclone 'Chapala' took shape over East-central Arabian Sea early this morning and is forecast to intensify as an 'extremely severe cyclone' (just below the rank of super cyclone), away from Indian coast.

Caught unawares

The pace at which the transformation took place overnight and the forecast level of intensification caught most weather forecasters unawares.

They had expected a counterpart low-pressure area in the Bay of Bengal to move in tandem from off the Sri Lanka coast to the Tamil Nadu coast and start raining down heavily.

But on Thursday, this 'low' had weakened and was seen drifting over Sri Lanka, with a band of southerly winds blowing towards the Tamil Nadu coast.

According to Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, these winds will still be able to bring in moderate to heavy rains along the coast towards the weekend. The India Met Department said that 'Chapala' had been moving at a speed of 14 km/hr to drop anchor on Thursday afternoon 1,140 km west-southwest of Mumbai and 1,060 km east-southeast of Salalah, Oman.

Severe cyclone

It would move west-northwestwards and intensify into a severe cyclonic by the night and further into a 'very severe' and an 'extremely severe' cyclone. It is expected to cross North Yemen and adjoining Oman coast by Monday evening.

Meanwhile, North-East monsoon flows are expected to strengthen once 'Chapala' weakens.

A number of international forecasters are now scouring the Bay of Bengal for signs of a storm developing in the basin.

IMD has now joined them to mount a watch for a low-pressure area likely taking shape to the South-southwest of Andaman Sea during the first week of November and intensifying.

What gives them confidence is the fact that the storm-builder Madden-Julian Oscillation wave is widely expected to stay anchored over the waters in the region at least until November 3.

‘New output-linked cane subsidy is WTO-compatible’

The Commerce Ministry is in agreement with the new sugar subsidy scheme proposed by the Food Ministry which is linked to production of sugar cane.

The new scheme is to replace export subsidies that are disallowed under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules and have given the country a lot of trouble recently at the multi-lateral forum.

“We have gone through the cabinet note circulated by the Food Ministry and given our green signal to the new sugarcane subsidy scheme which seems to be in tune with WTO norms,” a Commerce Ministry official told *BusinessLine*.

The Food Ministry has circulated a cabinet note for inter-ministerial comments on the new scheme reportedly proposing direct payment of ₹47.50 a quintal to growers out of total cane price of ₹230 as production subsidy for 2015-16 season.

“As long as sugar subsidies are linked to production and India can prove to WTO members that it has no connection with exports, these cannot be challenged,” the official said.

However, the government has to ensure that total production subsidies to cane growers do not cross 10 per cent of the value of sugar production – another stipulation under the WTO.

The subsidy will be paid directly to farmers that supply sugarcane to mills that not only produce sugar but also ethanol and electricity, according to the proposal.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) is likely to take up the proposal soon, the official said.

For the last two years, the Food Ministry has been announcing export subsidies for raw sugar leading to a lot of flak at the WTO. The subsidies were announced mainly to reduce the domestic glut and help millers pay

cane arrears to farmers which stood at ₹14,000 crore at the end of August.

In February this year, the government raised the export subsidy for raw sugar to ₹4,000 a tonne for the 2014-15 season for up to 1.4 million tonnes (mt) of sugar, leading to a lot of protests from sugar exporting countries.

Fearing that India may be dragged to dispute by one of the agitating members at the WTO, the Commerce Ministry advised the Food Ministry not to extend sugar export subsidies in the new sugar year that started in October and instead come up with a WTO-compatible scheme.

There is a carryover stock of about 10.2 mt of sugar this season (started October) because of supply outstripping demand, according to industry estimates.

Kochi tea loses steam on subdued upcountry demand

After a spurt in the last few consecutive weeks, prices of several tea varieties have moved southwards at Kochi auctions amidst low arrivals.

In sale no 44, the quantity on offer in CTC dust was 8,13,000 kg. The market for high priced teas was ₹5-10 a kg lower and sometimes more except for select best and popular marks. However, the decline in prices was less for medium and plainer varieties, the auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said.

Vendors continued to be active on good liquoring varieties, while there was a subdued demand from upcountry buyers.

In orthodox grades, the market for primary grades was dearer, but others were less. The quantity on offer was 13,000 kg.

In Cochin CTC dust quotation, good varieties fetched ₹105-152, mediums at ₹81-119 and plain grades quoted ₹60-73.

In leaf grades, the quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 129,500 kg and the market for select best highgrown broken, whole leaf and Fannings were steady to firm.

The demand was less in CTC grades and the market for broken was lower by ₹3 to ₹5 and sometimes more, witnessing heavy withdrawals. The quantity on offer was 72,500 kg.

In dust grades, Monica SRD quoted the best prices of ₹153 followed by Mayura SRD at ₹147. In leaf varieties, Chamraj FOP-sup green tea fetched the best prices of ₹309 followed by Pascos Hyson Green tea at ₹280.

Tobacco farmers threaten stir from December 1

Lashing out at the Centre for “ignoring” the farmer community and issuing a cut in tobacco cultivation, producers of flue-cured Virginia in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have threatened a Punjab-type agitation from December 1. They also threatened to go to court seeking ‘equitable taxation’, compensation for farmers and demanded a CBI enquiry against the “hidden agenda” of foreign-funded anti-tobacco activists.

Blaming higher taxes and pictorial warnings for the 31 per cent annual growth of smuggled tobacco in the Indian market, Chengal Reddy, Chairman, Consortium of Indian Farmers’ Association, said, “for the first time in 100 years, 22 tobacco farmers have committed suicide in the last one year. Of these, 15 suicides were in Andhra Pradesh and seven in Karnataka.”

Addressing a press conference by the Federation of All India Farmer Associations here on Thursday, Reddy said in the 18 months of its rule in the Centre, the Prime Minister had not met even a single farmer delegation. The Federation also displayed smuggled cigarette packs at the press conference, adding that many of these, which enter India from Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Dubai among others, did not contain any pictorial or text warning.

BV Javare Gowda, a grower from Karnataka, said, “Foreign powers would like to see India converting from a tobacco exporter to a net importer.”

G Seshagiri Rao, a sugarcane and tobacco farmer from Andhra Pradesh, said, “India is the second largest exporter of quality tobacco earning ₹6,000 crore foreign exchange every year. The production cut in AP will make farmers lose livelihoods and destroy our export opportunity.”