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THE HINDU

At 7 per cent, India remains fastest growing major economy

CSO says growth would have been better had it not been for the poor Rabi crop.

India remained the fastest growing major economy of the world for a second straight quarter, with GDP growing at 7 per cent during April-June 2015 against 6.7 per cent in April-June 2014. Growth in the previous quarter, January-March 2015, was, however, higher at 7.5 per cent.

Data released the Central Statistics Office (CSO) on Monday showed marginal improvement in private consumption expenditure but gross capital formation rate — a barometer for investments — continued to decline. It was down to 27.8 per cent from 29.2 per cent in April-June 2014.

“Although the economy has been moving in the upward direction the climb has been slow and there are no perceptible signs that there is going to be a quick and sizeable increase...industrial and investment recovery is yet to materialise,” said Care Ratings Chief Economist Madan Sabnavis in a note.

A source at the CSO explained that growth would have been better had it not been for the poor rabi crop.

Growth during the quarter was driven primarily by the services sector. The manufacturing and construction industries recorded favourable growth too. The agriculture sector saw a decline, growing at a mere 0.6 per cent. Growth also slowed in the sectors ‘mining and quarrying’ and ‘electricity, gas, water supply and utility services’.

In terms of the gross value added, (GVA) growth was 7.1 per cent against 7.4 per cent in April-July 2014. The revised methodology for GDP (Gross Domestic Product) calculation subtracts subsidy and adds taxes to the GVA to arrive at the GDP.

The Modi Government’s budget announcement of higher public spending this financial year did not reflect in the data released as at growth was low at 2.7 per cent in ‘public administration, defence and other services’.

India had overtaken China as the world’s fastest growing major economy in the January-March quarter, growing 7.5 per cent against the neighbouring economy’s rate of growth of 7 per cent.

The International Monetary Fund forecast in July that India will grow 7.5 per cent in the current year, compared with China's 6.8 per cent, an average 4.2 per cent for emerging markets and 3.3 per cent for advanced nations.

Fisheries and Ocean University in WG

Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), an international institute of higher learning in Bangkok, has agreed to transfer the technology and help in establishing Andhra Pradesh Fisheries and Ocean University.

Bhimavaram-based Uddaraju Ananda Raju (UAR) Foundation of Ananda Group of Companies is planning to start the AP Fisheries and Ocean University in West Godavari district soon. The new university, proposed under Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) would be constructed in about 150 acres, said Ananda Group chairman U.K. Viswanadha Raju.

UAR Foundation has entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the AIT recently, said Mr. Raju at a press conference held here on Monday. AIT president Prof. WorsakKanok-Nukulchai and Vice-President Prof. Kazuo Yamamoto and Mr. Raju exchanged papers to collaborate in academic research in aquaculture and aquatic resource management.

The AIT which has affiliated institutes all over the world was doing research in agriculture, aquaculture and aquatic resource management, engineering, research and capacity building. The institute management has agreed to help the proposed Ocean University in all aspects, Mr. Raju said.

The MoA between the AIT and the UAR Foundation will enable to organise capacity building programmes for aqua farmers in India by holding technical seminars. Seminars on aquaculture, opportunities for AIT students to undertake internships in AP and arrange exposure visits for aqua farmers and entrepreneurs, he said.

Principal Investigator of Research Projects of UAR Foundation Dr. K. Gopal Rao was present.

Botanical garden gets a new lease of life



The facility was thrown open after the first phase of a Rs. 8-crore renovation initiative

Being a locale featured in Ang Lee's *Life of Pi* may have just been a fame multiplier for even otherwise, many aspects of the city's landmark Botanical Garden are pretty awe-inspiring.

On Monday, the Botanical Garden was opened after the first phase of a Rs. 8-crore renovation and beautification initiative, .

Lieutenant Governor A. K. Singh launched the new-look garden in the presence of Chief Minister N. Rangasamy, and Tourism Minister P. Rajavelu.

Later, they did a quick tour of the facilities accompanied by V. Balan, MLA and an entourage of officials led by Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Parida and Tourism Secretary Mihir Vardhan.

The add-ons, set up at an estimated cost of Rs. 4.81 crore, include a nature centre, lily pond with Ashlar bridge, jogging track, shrub bed, kid's play area, a renovated joy train for children and signages.

The second phase involves landscaping, an outer jogging track, a glass house, maze garden, an aquarium with a pond and provisioning additional ticket counters and toilets and parking facilities.

A butterfly conservatory, laser fountain, taxonomical park and staging annual flower shows are also part of the expansion plans.

The Botanical Garden (Le Jardin Botanique) established in 1826 by French botanist G. S. Perrottet encompasses 11 hectares of natural bounty that features indigenous and exotic flora ranging across evergreen, semi-evergreen, deciduous and tropical dry evergreen species.

With a history spanning 189 years, the Botanical Garden is among the oldest on the Coromandel Coast, and perhaps the only one of its kind on the East Coast.

The collection includes over 2,400 trees, 213 genus types and 293 species. Shrubs, medicinal plants, palm collection, fossils, foliage, ornamental plants, cycads and fruit trees provide variety. The oldest trees of the Bombax and Khaya genus go back 175 years.

Over the years, the government had been seized of the need to develop the garden to serve the interest of urban eco tourism and provide a green recreational space for visitors. Following a report by a steering committee to formulate a master-plan in 2002, it was decided to redesign the garden based on the objective of turning it into a prime tourist destination, revamp the way the landscape presented itself to visitors and to make the engagement more exciting for visitors by ramping up recreational values in addition to the informative function of the ecosystem.

The renovation and beautification was launched under the Centrally sponsored scheme “Development of Puducherry as a Mega Tourism Circuit’ where the Centre and UT Government shared the costs.

The plans suffered a major setback after the havoc caused by Cyclone Thane in 2011 which left the garden extensively damaged and about 300 trees completely uprooted. The Agriculture Department, which is the custodian of the premises, had been engaged in the restoration of the flora.

In September 2014, the Lt. Governor, who undertook a visit to the garden, was unhappy with the progress of the renovation and restoration and issued instructions to adhere to timelines for each phase of the project.

If work progresses on schedule, the second phase of work to make the garden a “living classroom, a picnic spot for children and tourists and a tranquil spot for the meditative minds” should be ready in a year.

‘Steps taken for achieving food production target’

A total of 84,959 hectares have been brought under cultivation in the district during the current crop season.

Under the current ‘Kar’ paddy season, 585 hectares have been covered by the end of July.

It has been targeted to cover 4,500 hectares under ‘Kar’ crop during this season.

Millets have been raised on in 26,721 hectares – cholam 19,914 hectares, kambu 1,579 hectares, raghi 244 hectares, makka cholam 3,597 hectares, other minor grains 1,387 hectares. So far, 74,244 tonnes of millets have been produced.

About 32,637 hectares have been brought under pluses and 20,622 hectares have been brought under oilseeds – groundnut 18,037 hectares, ellu 1,995 hectares, sunflower 14 hectares, castor 470 hectares and soyabeans 106 hectares – by July end.

The other major field crops of cotton at present stood on 1,041 hectares and sugarcane on 3,353 hectares.

N. Elango, Joint Director of Agriculture, while addressing the farmers' grievances day meeting here recently said that farm activities covered 59,587 hectares during the same season last year.

The State Government has fixed a food production target of 6.548 lakh metric tonnes for the current year (2015-16). The department has initiated all effective steps for achieving the target, Mr. Elango said.

Of the food production target of 6.840 lakh metric tonnes for last year (2014-15), the department managed to achieve 6.384 lakh metric tonnes (IV advance estimate).

The district registered 4.573 lakh tonnes of food production during the year 2013-14. The district experienced widespread rainfall during the current season.

The district got 548.8 mm rainfall till mid-August this year, against the normal average rainfall of 483.7 mm expected during the same period. The district got 309.1 mm rainfall in the summer months of March, April, May and another 160.7 mm rainfall through the South-West monsoon season during the next three months.

The district got 830 mm rainfall during 2014, against the average annual rainfall of 993.9 mm.

Mr. Elango said that the district has already distributed quality seeds - paddy 42.7 tonnes, millets 5.8 tonnes, pulses 103 tonnes, and oil seeds 65.9 tonnes.

Already, 19,557 tonnes of fertilizers – urea 9,297 tonnes, DAP 3,041 tonnes, potash 3,045 tonnes and mixed manure 4,174 have been distributed to farmers. The district has a stock of 12,132 tonnes of fertilizers to meet the demand of farmers at any time, he said.

Recent rain raises farmers' hopes



Farmers have taken up sowing in Vijayapura district after the recent rain.—Photo: Rajendra Singh Hajeri

The recent showers have brought back smiles on the faces of farmers and they have started sowing.

The district was facing a deficient monsoon and crops were withering as a result. For the last over two months, the district had not received rain, farming had come to a halt and the crop sown was withering. Those who had not started cultivation are now heaving a sigh of relief. However, over 50 per cent of the kharif crop has been lost due to delayed and deficient rain.

According to a preliminary assessment, the farmers have incurred a loss of over Rs. 1,000 crore.

Drought-hit declared

The government has declared the district drought-hit. While the kharif season has almost come to an end, the rain would help farming the rabi season, farmers believe.

They said that it would at least ensure drinking water and fodder to the cattle.

With rabi season commencing, the farmers would be sowing sunflower, toor, white jowar and some pulses.

The Department of Agriculture, which had set a target of 4.51 lakh hectares (ha) for kharif sowing, has now set a target of 5.24 lakh ha for the rabi season.


Officials said that there is a demand for 12,500 quintals of seeds for the rabi season. The department has made arrangements to store seeds and fertilizers to supply through Raita Samparka Kendras.

Onions continue to grow dearer

Online grocery stores lure customers with rebates

HIGHS AND LOWS		
The Koyambedu wholesale market receives big onions from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. With shortage of truck loads from Nashik, the market now relies on loads from neighbouring States		
Vegetables	August	July
Onions	60	50
Brinjal	8-15	20
Potato	15-17	20
Beans	25	40
Carrot	35	40
Tomato	15	30
Ladiesfinger	15	25

***wholesale price Rs./kg**



The retail prices of onions that have been rising alarmingly for over a month have now touched Rs. 70 per kg, sending consumers' budgets haywire.

On Monday, wholesale prices of onions from Nashik, Maharashtra, touched Rs. 60 a kg. Traders in Koyambedu wholesale market recall that the prices of onions from Maharashtra had previously touched Rs. 70 a kg two years ago. But, unlike other cities like Delhi and Mumbai, there is some solace for Chennai as it gets some stocks from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Even the onions from Andhra Pradesh are priced at Rs.40 a kg in wholesale market because of demand from other States as well.

A reduction in onion crops this year and lack of rains had led to the steep hike in prices, said S. Chandran, a wholesale merchant.

Some customers have switched over to using small onions that are cheaper this season. They cost Rs. 30 a kg in Koyambedu wholesale market.

The city receives truck loads from various parts of the State, including Tiruchi, Theni and Dindigul.

While imports from Egypt are expected to bring down the price, traders here say it will not have any impact in Chennai, which normally gets 70-80 truck loads of onions every day.

50 truckloads

But now, it gets only 50 truckloads, mostly from neighbouring States, according to V.R. Soundararajan, a wholesale trader.

Some online grocery stores are luring customers with discounts. V. Yuvasri of Mogappair, who buys groceries online, plans to do the same with onions as well. “Many of them offer one kg of onions for Rs. 58 per kg and it gets delivered to doorstep,” she said.

Meanwhile, wholesale traders in the city say prices of onions may remain high for a month.

The cost of most other vegetables, including beans and carrot, has come down since July.

Seminar on global climate change

Poor people don't contribute to the global warming, but they are worst affected by it

The Government First Grade College, Malur, Kolar district has organised a two-day long seminar on ‘Global climate change-issues, challenges and policy implications’ on August 25 and 26.

The event was sponsored by University Grants Commission (UGC). It provided an opportunity to the teaching faculty and students to hear the presentations by a number of experts on the subject hailed from several parts of country including Chennai, New Delhi, Haryana and also Bengaluru. S. Bisalaiah, former vice chancellor of University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS-B), GKVK, Bengaluru, delivered the keynote address.



He warned that humanity has to face inevitable and unpalatable consequences which are certainly dangerous if we fail to address the global climate change issues.

“It is time to act in the framework of sustainable development, so that humans could live and prosper in harmony with nature, rather than at nature’s expense,” Mr. Bisalaiah said.

“As species, we are doomed to extinction if we continue our current pattern of production and consumption, and fail to reduce our carbon footprint,” he warned. He held ugly display of wealth responsible for the present state of climate condition. “Poor people don’t contribute to the global warming, but they are worst affected by it,” he said. To drive home his point, Mr. Bisalaiah said higher the temperature, greater the chances of dengue which primarily takes toll on poor people.

The GFG College principal Chadrashekhhar V. Nangali presided. “In the folk tradition there were methods to ease global warming,” he said.

Ganapathi Venkatasubramanian, Centre for Environmental Studies, Anna University, Chennai, Shivaramu H.S. of GKVK, Bengaluru, Prakash Vir Khatri of Shradhdhananda College, Delhi University, New Delhi were among others who presented papers on various topics.

A touch of green



The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board has planted saplings on a six-acre site on the premises of SIPCOT Industrial Growth Centre in Erode.—PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

An 11-acre exclusive green belt is being created jointly by Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board and SIPCOT Textile Processors' Association. It is coming up on the premises of the Industrial Growth Centre and is doing well, thanks to installation of drip irrigation system.

Saplings of naval, peepal, teak, vembu, pungai and other fruit-bearing trees were planted in September 2014. The entire cost of land development, fencing, drip irrigation, plantation and tree guards for 500 saplings outside of the fenced area has been borne by the Association, official sources said.

The survival rate of the trees has been impressive. Once fully grown, in about four to five years, the trees will have large canopies and provide welcome shade, the sources said.

On its part, SIPCOT provides water free of cost for the green belt. Greenery in the fenced area is being regularly monitored.

PWD takes up construction of 10 check dams

Rs. 26.13 crore has been earmarked for the projects

As a move to create artificial recharge structures, the Public Works Department (PWD) has begun the construction of 10 check dams across different rivers of the district.



When completed, the check dam across the Ayyar near Thuraiyur is likely to help in recharging the water table.

They will come up at Nagaiyanallur across Karaipattanaru, Irungalur across Upparu, Ammapettai across the Ariyaru, Malaiyadipatti across Thombiyaru. Check dam construction has been taken up at Kanneer Vadugapatti across Koraiyaru, Chettiapatti across Kannutharu, and Nagallur across Thazhugaiyaru. Ayyaru will have two check dams at Chithambur and Veeramachanpatti.

A sum of Rs. 26.13 crore had been earmarked for the projects.

V. Selvaraj, Executive Engineer, PWD, Ariyaru division, said the construction work had been progressing well.

Of the 10 check dams, eight check dams would be built by the end of October.

Remaining two check dams would be completed within December. It had been decided to store water received in the forthcoming monsoon season.

Most rivers, where check dams were constructed, were jungle streams in nature. They got enormous inflow during monsoon period.

Since there were no sufficient structures to check the flow of water, it could not be harnessed to the optimum level.

Huge amount of rainwater went waste.

The check dams were aimed at checking the flow to recharge the groundwater, wells, and borewells.

Check dams

Mr. Selvaraj said check dams at Chithambur and Veeramachanpatti across Ayyaru would cost Rs. 6.45 crore and Rs. 2.60 crore respectively.

Veeramachanpatti check dam would facilitate the recharge of groundwater at Veeramachanpatti, Kembiyampatti, and Vadakuveli villages and 112 wells and 18 borewells. It would solve the drinking water problems in the surrounding areas to a large extent.

Pinworm damages tomato crop in Kolar, Chickballapur districts



‘There is no effective pesticide available to prevent pinworm attack’

Even as the tomato farmers are reeling under huge loss due to the steep fall in prices, the cultivators are worried about the prospects of damage to their crop due to pinworm attack.

Experts from a number of agricultural and horticultural farming agencies have found that pinworm, a fruit borer, is attacking the tomato crop in Kolar and Chickballapur districts where it is cultivated on a large scale.

Unlike the leaf minor, which was pestering the farmers in the past by eating up only the leaves of the tomato plants, pinworm is attacking and destroying all parts of the plant, including stems, leaves and the mature fruit, thus impacting both the quality and quantity of this fruit.

According to D.C. Halalingaiah, Senior Assistant Director, Horticulture Department, it is also called ‘South American Pinworm’ as it has its origin in that part of the world.

“Pinworm attack on tomato plants is seen more in Kolar and Chickballapur because of dry weather condition than it is found in Bengaluru Rural and Ramanagaram,”

according to Mr. Halalingaiah. He told *The Hindu* that though there is no effective pesticide available so far for this newly detected insect, a number of guidelines have been framed to control it. Experts from the Regional Research and Extension Division of Gandhi Krishi Vignana Kendra (GKVK), Bengaluru, and the Indian Horticultural Research Centre at Hesaraghatta in Bengaluru conducted a joint survey to assess the loss that tomato cultivators have suffered, and then they have suggested some precautionary measures to control the pinworm attack on tomato plants.

Organic farming

To understand the resurgence of the concept of organic farming, we need to revisit the era of the Green Revolution ([‘State View — “Organic farming caught in ‘quality vs quantity’ debate’](#)”, Aug.30). The Green Revolution, and the resultant and phenomenal increase in grain productivity, had a dramatic and far-reaching impact. The fundamental strength of India actually rests on the foundation of food self-sufficiency. Therefore, would it have been possible to achieve all this had farmers followed the traditional methods of organic farming?

What our commercial farmers follow today, in terms of the use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and irrigation, is certainly not scientific agriculture. The successes accomplished during the first phase of the Green Revolution made our farmers overzealous and their greed overtook needs. There was an overuse of fertilizers, pesticides and water, which is at the root of all problems today. No one is conceptually against organic farming. But, admittedly, our knowledge and expertise in the “science” of organic farming is inadequate to realise the productivity potential of our high-yielding crop varieties. We have to prudently regulate and control the commercial production of edible crops by introducing a farmers’ registry and provide them all possible help in terms of scientific guidance, materials and financial incentives. What we should aim for is scientific-precision farming with the least damage to our natural resources. An evergreen revolution should not be confused with traditional organic farming.

M.R. Sethuraj,

Thiruvananthapuram

Water level at Mettur

The water level at the Mettur Dam stood at 91.39 feet on Monday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 6,498 cusecs and the discharge 16,000 cusecs.

Spinning a success story



A total of 38 coconut producer companies have been formed, with Kerala accounting for 23, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka six each and Andhra Pradesh three

Ravaged by rampant pest attacks and violently fluctuating prices, Kerala's coconut farmers are parables on agrarian distress in the country. But their lot may be changing with a set of new initiatives by Coconut Development Board that include tapping and selling neera and value-added products from the unfermented, sweet sap from coconut flowers.

The new initiative has been aided by a move by the State of Kerala to free neera from within the purview of the more than a hundred-years-old excise rules, which govern production and sale of intoxicating drinks, including toddy, the fermented sap from coconut flowers.

Beginning 2012, coconut farmers have been organised into Coconut Producers' Societies (CPSs). Each society consists of 40 to 100 farmers and each farmer contributing at least 10 palms for tapping neera as well as nuts.

At the next level, the Societies, numbering between 25 and 40 have joined together to form Coconut Producers' Federations registered under the Charitable Societies Act. The Federations have joined hands to form Coconut Producer Companies in which shareholders are Coconut Producer Societies.

A total of 38 coconut producer companies have been formed in the country, with Kerala accounting for 23, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka six each and Andhra Pradesh three, said a Coconut Development Board official.

In Palakkad district, 458 CPSs have together formed the Palakkad Coconut Producer Company, which has established high-tech coconut driers, a neera tapping unit and 30 *Coconut Point*, shops that sell its own brand *Palm Fresh* coconut oil, value-added products from coconuts, safe-to-eat vegetables and rice produced by the member farmers.

The initial capital for the project accrued from individual farmers. Each farmer pays Rs.100 per tree as his equity contribution. Of this, Rs.20 is paid upfront while the rest of the amount is deducted from the collection of nuts and neera from the tree by the producer company.

The total capital mobilisation is Rs.5 crore and the Palakkad company has mobilised Rs.2.5 crore so far. The target will be achieved by the end of this year, says Vinod Kumar, CEO.

Shahjahan Kanjiravilayil of Kaippuzha Coconut Producer Company in Kollam district says that farmers, numbering about 20,000 under the company, are paid between Rs.9 and 10 lakh per month since operations began at the end of February this year.

Coconut farmers' income had nearly doubled after neera tapping was launched, he said pointing out that the company was turning out 15,000 bottles (200 ml each) per day at its plant. The demand is going up with the company tying up with institutions like the Sree Chithira Institute of Medical Sciences for large volume of supplies.

The Palakkad company ended its first financial year between June 2013 and April 2014 with a profit of Rs.4.5 lakh and declared four per cent dividend. The dividend has been paid as redeemable coupons, which the farmer members can use for purchases at the sales outlets owned by the company.

The member farmers also received a production bonus of Rs.2 per kg of raw, husked nuts. The unaudited results for 2014-15 point to a profit of Rs.4 lakh. The company exported, mostly to Europe, 10 tonnes of palm honey and two tonnes of sugar during 2014-15. However, weather variations and a 40 per cent rain deficit is likely to hit neera production during the current year.

The company, which has availed loans to the tune of Rs.7 crore from different institutions for setting up various facilities, will establish a neera bottling plant to boost sales. It will also establish 70 more *Coconut Point* sales outlets to cut out middlemen who charge up to 40 per cent in commission.

Chairman of Coconut Development Board T. K. Jose said that the major challenge before neera business was a shortage of tapping technicians. Money and technology are no longer limiting factors, he said.

Tools to reap profits



Being a government agency, the company does not target huge profits and this gets reflected in the price of items.



'Super Bazaar' brings all farming needs under one roof.

True to its tagline, the Agro Super Bazaar at Kissan Jyothi, Fort, caters to 'all agricultural needs under one roof'. The 3,200-sq ft facility of Kerala Agro Industries Corporation Ltd. (KAICO) is a one-stop shop for a wide variety of products for farmers at various stages of agriculture.

The first-ever agricultural hypermarket in the State, launched in June 2010, provides farming tools and agro-machinery. The products include lawnmowers, garden tillers, grass choppers, blowers, sprinklers and sprayers. Heavy machinery, including tractors and power tillers, are provided. Also available are high quality hand-tools such as pruning cutters, shears, sickles and knives with some being imported from countries such as Taiwan. They are offered at the cheapest possible rates. "Being a government agency, the company does not target huge profits and this gets reflected in the price of items. Items at the bazaar are sold at small margins. Our prices are lower than those at the open market," says Nikhil Krishnan, an accounts officer at the outlet.

With the emergence of the neera production in the coconut sector, the hypermarket has introduced neera knives that are meant for tapping. The company is also in the process of obtaining licence for supplying neera in its outlets.

Located near the bazaar is a greenhouse facility where saplings, both nursery and medicinal, are kept for sale. Coconut saplings, including the dwarf variant, are available at reasonable rates. There are also mud pots of different shapes and sizes, including hanging pots, orchid pots, and bonsai pots.

The bazaar also provides seeds, bio-pesticides, organic fertilizers, and grow bags at a separate stall on the premises. Mr. Krishnan said the stall was managed by trained staff with several years of experience in farming. They are capable to advising customers on the remedies for plant diseases.

While the Agro Super Bazaar is primarily meant for agricultural tools and related items, the outlet also provides a wide range of other products.

Biogas plants are available at subsidised rates. There is also a range of food products under the brand 'Jyothi,' produced by the Kerala Agro Fruit Products, a unit of KAICO. Those produced by Kudumbasree groups are also sold at the outlet.

Being a government agency, the company does not target huge profits and this gets reflected in the price of items.



Rajasthan government plans organic farming, aims to tackle malnutrition

The ambitious plan, starting this year, will bring 50 hectares of agricultural land in each block of the state under organic pulses farming.

The state government has decided to tackle malnutrition with the help of vegetarian sources of protein using good old traditional organic farming.

The government plans to divert several thousand hectares of land for farming of organic varieties of pulses in order to tackle the twin issues of protein malnutrition and unsustainable chemical fertilizer-based farming.

“Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) has repeatedly emphasized promoting traditional and organic farming. The issue found mention in the Union as well as the state budget,” agriculture minister Prabhu Lal Saini told [The Indian Express](#).

“The whole world is realizing the importance of sustainable agriculture that is in tune with nature. It is time we put in place mechanisms and infrastructure for promoting sustainable organic agriculture,” Saini said.

The ambitious plan, starting this year, will bring 50 hectares of agricultural land in each block of the state under organic pulses farming. The government will provide a subsidy of Rs 20,000 per hectare to promote organic farming. The produce will be certified organic and in five years, all agricultural markets (krishi mandis) would be required to sell at least one organic product.

Saini said the plan will help provide a vegetarian source of much-needed protein to millions of people who don’t consume other sources like egg, fish and meat to meet their protein requirements.

Eventually, the government intend to bring over 2,500 hectares under organic pulses farming over a five-year period, Saini said. “We will also provide other incentives to farmers so that they take up the practice. Three farmers will be selected for best agricultural practice and will be rewarded Rs 1 lakh each,” he said. According to the data available with the Union ministry of agriculture, Rajasthan stands second in terms of production and area under pulses.

In order to expand the pulses footprint to the high-potential southern Rajasthan tribal belt, the ministry undertook dissemination of new pulses-based technologies under the tribal sub plan last year.

Maharashtra set to ban sugarcane farming in drought zon



Former minister Harshvardhan Patil, who runs sugar mills in western Maharashtra, agreed that in a crisis, “the state government’s first priority will obviously be drinking water for people and animals; agriculture will come later”.

The Marathwada region hit severely by drought, the Maharashtra government is looking at banning sugarcane cultivation and crushing from mid-September in the worst-affected districts. Both processes demand huge quantities of water but the expected move, if and when introduced, could face opposition from the sugar industry.

The decision could come as early as Tuesday, when Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has convened a meeting with senior ministers and agriculture experts to recommend water-saving measures to be introduced from the middle of the month. Agriculture Minister Eknath Khadse hinted at what is in store.

“Sugar cultivation and crushing require huge amounts of water from dams, rivers and borewells and have to be banned in Marathwada,” Khadse said. “We have to keep people and animals alive. Sugarcane cultivation and crushing can wait for one season.”

The ban could be extended to some districts of North Maharashtra and Western Maharashtra, which too are facing a water crisis. The state government may also recommend a change in crop pattern to promote less water-intensive crops. “The production of 1 kg sugar consumes 2,068 litres water,” said an agriculture official.

Former minister Harshvardhan Patil, who runs sugar mills in western Maharashtra, agreed that in a crisis, “the state government’s first priority will obviously be drinking water for people and animals; agriculture will come later”.

But he stressed the sugar industry’s importance to the economy. “The sugar industry in the state is worth Rs 50,000 crore,” he said. “Some 25 to 27 lakh farmers cultivate sugarcane, 10 lakh more work as labourers during harvesting, and 2.5 lakh others are employed in sugar mills.” The industry contributes revenue of Rs 5,000 crore, half of this to the state and half to the Centre.

Marathwada has 75 to 80 of the state’s 205 sugar mills. Of the five dams in the region, Jayakwadi is 6 per cent full while the rest have sunk to dead reserves.

“In Solapur, Osmanabad, Latur and Beed, sugar mills often find ways to exploit water bodies to overcome losses,” said the officer, calling for a strict ban with penalties.

“Sugarcane should not be allowed in drought-prone districts,” water management expert Madhav Chitale said.

“Today, the average rainfall at the best of times is suitable for crops that can sustain eight months. Cane cultivation and crushing require water for 12 months. The

government should seriously go for changes in crop pattern... Sugar is best suited for districts like Kolhapur with surplus rainfall.”



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Centre okays import of 1,000 tonnes of onion, will reach India by Sep 10

The government on Thursday approved bids for importing 1,000 tonnes of onion at Rs 45 per kg and the shipment will reach Indian ports by September 10. The government has also decided to import more to boost domestic supply.

This fresh supply is likely to improve availability and moderate the prices further. The imported onions would be supplied to state governments once they place their requirements. The states can then sell the onions through fair price shops or can take special initiatives to supply them to consumers.

Meanwhile, onion price have been in the decline for the past few days as its availability has increased.

Department of agriculture, in an official note, has said that though onion production has been slightly less in Maharashtra it has increased in Madhya Pradesh. The production this year is likely to be the same as last year.

Arrivals of onions in Lasalgaon and Pimpalgaon have been increasing and the wholesale prices of onions at Lasalgaon has come down to Rs 48 per kg. Fresh onion stocks are coming to Delhi from Karnataka and because of this wholesale price of onion in Delhi has come down to Rs 41 per kg.

Fall in demand stabilises onion prices

Soaring prices have pulled down the demand for onions in the wholesale Muhana mandi in Jaipur.

Onion is being sold for Rs30-50 per kilo depending on its quality in the wholesale market.

Currently, not much quantity is arriving from Nasik. Locally cultivated and some varieties from Maharashtra and Karnataka are being sold in the wholesale mandi.

"The demand has gone down significantly. Every day, the mandi sees 4-5 truckloads of onions going unsold," said Dayanand Medhnani, president, Jaipur Aaloo, Pyaz Aartiya Sangh, at Muhana mandi.

He said that earlier, the daily requirement of onions in the city was 20-22 truckloads. But it has reduced to 14-15 truckloads now. A truck carries 40 tonnes to 60 tonnes of onions.

The wholesale dealers said the prices of onions are stable due to fall in the demand. "The prices are not increasing anymore. Good quality onion is available in the retail market in the range of Rs 40 to Rs 80 per kilo.

The new crop has started arriving in the market, which has given some relief to people.

The new onions are being sold for Rs40-50 per kilo in the wholesale market. "It is being supplied from the areas between Maharashtra and Karnataka. The variety has nice, red colour. Jaipurites like red onion. So it has a good market here. But it cannot be stored for long like the onion from Nasik can be, which is also red in colour," said a wholesale trader.

Box - In the scenario where the demand and supply of Onions is affected at the Mohana wholesale Mandi situated in the outskirts of Jaipur, the wholesalers said that they are compelled to pay in advance for their every order of Onions been exported from Nasik and other parts of Maharastra. "Earlier on credit basis we used to get quintals and tons of onions from Nasik and other parts of Maharastra. But with the limited supply the producers and farmers have asked us to pay in advance with every order of Onions," said Abdul Sageer, a wholesaler in Onions, garlic and ginger.

Aug recorded just 123.8 mm of rainfall

Like the past two months, August also remained a dry month with only 123.8 mm of rainfall recorded by the met department. The average rainfall in August on the contrary is 242 mm. Except for four days when the rains lashed the entire city, most of the rains this August was sporadic.

The city had received only 52.9 mm rains in August last year which means that August, 2015 was better in terms of rainfall but it falls short of the average rains.

The city received scanty rains in the months of June and July this year. It was expected that heavy rains will lash the city in August but this never happened. In July, only 79.9 mm of rainfall was recorded.

The monsoon season had set in late and the first rains lashed the city on June 25. This year, June received rains for only three days and the total recorded rain gauge was 48.9 mm. This means that in the past three months, the city received only 252.6 mm of rains against the average rains of 550 mm-600 mm (average of rainfall in three months).

It was however surprising, both for the locals and the met experts, that 170 mm of rainfall was recorded in March this year whereas this month is not meant for rains.

The situation is quite grave and the Met experts also believe that the rainy season will fail to show much impact in September as well. Either it may not rain at all or this new month may get scanty rainfall. Such a situation besides affecting farming in the region, will also cause loss to the crops in the coming days.

According to Met experts, due to excessive rains in March, the seasonal crops had suffered damage and now the situation will become worse due to scanty rainfall.

CB Singh, Met expert at CSA university, while talking to TOI, informed that the day and night temperature increased and the weather turned humid due to scanty rains. The same weather scenario would continue to prevail in the coming days with no chance of rains, he informed. "August also remained dry like July and there was only 123.8 mm of rainfall, which is too less in comparison to the average rains of 242 mm in August", he said.

Technical officer in Met department of CSA university Rajvir Singh said that climate change is certainly the reason for the rain deficit this year. He cited the example that in March this year it unexpectedly rained upto 170 mm whereas in June and July, if put together, the total rainfall gauge is only 128.8 mm, much less then the rainfall recorded in March. He also said that the increased pollution level in the city is also a reason for the poor rainfall in the past two months.

Naushad Khan, associate professor in agronomy department of CSA University while speaking on rain deficit said that this situation can cause problems to the small and marginal farmers in comparison to the wealthy farmers. "The big farmers who have tubewells will be able to survive their crops but the small farmers who are dependent on rainfall will be at loss", he said.

He has advised the farmers to opt for integrated farming system so as not to suffer losses. "They are advised to use the same farm for growing cash crops, vegetables and make use of phosphorous to have a good yield", he said.

Well sealing boon for state farmers, doubles their incomes

Bhikhabhai Papat, 55, a resident of Mangrol in Junagadh district, has sown groundnut this year, but plans to also sow wheat on his five-acre field this winter too. Papat earlier grew only one crop a year, but for the past two years has been harvesting two. This was possible because of the well sealing project he took up on in his field.

"Rainwater earlier flowed out on to the street, but with the help of the Coastal Salinity Prevention Cell and Agakhan Foundation, I constructed a small 1.5 foot boundary wall along the field in such a way that the water gets channelized into the well," says Papat. To ensure that rainwater doesn't mix with brackish water, Papat has sealed the bottom of his 70-foot well with cement concrete and also lined the well. Rainwater in the field is collected in the well and is used to water the kharif groundnut crop. In October, when the water is exhausted, farmers use the brackish groundwater for sowing wheat. "Wheat is grown with the brackish water," says Papat.

Govindbhai Lakhbhai, 60, says because of the water harvesting, he has been able to take two crops annually for the last two years and this increased his income. "I borrowed money from the local moneylenders, but have already repaid the loan." He says that because of the sealing the bottom, the stored water doesn't seep into the ground from the well. "The ground water here is very brackish and if the rain water is allowed to seep in, it also becomes saline." Lakhbhai doesn't reveal his total income but says that he has bought two heads of cattle, worth Rs 50,000, also from the additional income.

Ramesh Makwana, the programme coordinator at the Gadu office says: "The trust has financed 50 such wells in nine villages along the coast. The well sealing project has been taken up in Seal, Nandraki, Samanwada, Chakhwa and Sangrawada among other villages."

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Sustainable Agro-commercial Fin Ltd looking to convert into small finance bank

Non-banking finance company Sustainable Agro-commercial Finance Ltd (SAFL), which specialises in providing loans to individual farmers, will seek to convert itself into a small finance bank by 2018, according to MD & CEO Arvind Sonmale.

The Jain Irrigation Systems-promoted NBFC, which started operations in late 2012, has five lines of business — micro-irrigation system financing, small business loans, agri-project financing, solar product financing, and third party tie-ups.

Sonmale said: “We will become a small finance bank. We qualify on all the parameters (branches, business, and financial inclusion) that the Reserve Bank of India has prescribed for a small finance bank license except one — they want five years of operations.

“...So, we have to wait for two more years before we become eligible on that ground. After two years, the plan is to convert SAFL into a bank.”

SAFL’s final goal is to convert itself into an agriculture-focussed bank, which will provide end-to-end solutions for farmers, including crop loans, personal/education/housing loans, deposits, money transfers.

Small finance banks, as envisaged by the RBI, will further the cause of financial inclusion by providing savings vehicles, and supplying credit to small business units, small and marginal farmers, and other unorganised sector entities through high technology-low cost operations.

As at March-end 2015, the loans outstanding on the SAFL’s books stood at Rs. 156 crore, against Rs. 95 crore as at March-end 2014. The average loan size is about Rs. 1.20 lakh.

In FY15, the NBFC made a net profit of Rs. 2 crore (after taking into account one time exceptional expenditure for raising funds from Mandala Capital), against Rs. 13 lakh in the previous year. Its shareholders are: JISL (58.8 per cent stake), Mandala Capital (24 per cent), and IFC, Washington (12 per cent).

Outlining SAFL’s business model, Sonmale said: “We cater exclusively to an individual farmer (retail agriculture). For other NBFCs, this (agriculture financing) is one of the many activities that they do.

“We will finance anything that can add to the income and productive capacity of a farmer. We will not finance consumption loans because they do not add to the farmer’s prosperity. We would like farmers to move from sustenance to sustainable farming.”

Loans for installing MIS (micro irrigation systems) account for 73 per cent of the total loan outstanding. SAFL finances MIS manufactured only by JISL. In the case of other lines of business, it provides finance for farm equipment manufactured by non-JISL companies.

“So, there is synergy between us (SAFL and Jain Irrigation Systems), although we work at arm’s length. Also, drip irrigation helps the farmer to increase the yield, lower water usage for farming as well as save on fertiliser and pesticides,” explained Sonmale.

In five years, loans for JISL and non-JISL products will account for 50 per cent each of the total loan portfolio, he said, and added that by 2018, SAFL expects to grow its loan book to about Rs. 2,500 crore and have 175-200 branches.

Study finds shift from agriculture in rural areas

Over the years, rural household income, disposable surplus and expenditure have increased and reduced their vulnerability to monsoon failure.

Pradeep Kashyap, CEO of MART, told *BusinessLine* that several studies suggest there has been a silent shift in occupation — from agriculture to regular income sources in services and manufacturing sectors — despite a significant skill gap.

“Salaried employment in rural sector has moved up from 11 per cent in 2008 to 22 per cent in 2013. This trend continues even now, occasional sample surveys suggest,” Kashyap added.

Moreover, the salaries have grown over the years. So have employment opportunities, particularly for villagers, near small towns.

“This has resulted in three times more disposable income in the hands of a village household than that of an urban household,” he mentioned.

Over 95 per cent of the village household has house ownership compared to 69 per cent in urban India, census 2011 and IRS 2011 showed.

“This is a distinct cost advantage that leads to higher disposable income. Added to this is ownership of farmland that earns rural household extra income. Further, overall cost of living in villages is lower than urban centres,” he said.

Emergence of the service sector in providing rural employment (40 per cent) has made a difference. Agriculture employs only 30 per cent.

Latest irrigation scheme, a non-starter



Where irrigation works That's more the exception than the norm Ch Vijaya Bhaskar
The launch of any new scheme by the government always creates a sense of déjà vu. First, priorities, plans and programmes constantly change depending upon who's in power at the Centre; second, schemes, new or old, deliver identical outcomes.

The Ganga Action Plan (GAP), Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP), MNREGA were all launched with much fanfare with an aim of grandiose transformation of the lives of ordinary Indians. While the GAP continued to make 'giant strides' on paper, the reality was that the Ganga got dirtier. Similarly, the MGNREGA had everything on paper — participation, generation of employment and even a website full of data and statistics of achievement. Yet, there is hardly any evidence of MGNREGA achieving grand success; rather, it has been criticised for corruption and mismanagement.

Programmes galore, but...

In July, this year, a new scheme was announced, the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY). This will replace and converge all existing schemes of investment in irrigation at the field level, such as the AIBP, command area development (CAD) programmes, Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) and MGNREGA. It promises better water management, financial management and greater productivity in agriculture. The scheme has been recently approved by the cabinet

committee on economic affairs chaired by the Prime Minister with an outlay of Rs. 50,000 crore spread over a period of five years from 2015-16 to 2019-20.

The inauguration of one programme after another is not new in India. Once they are unveiled their achievement is confined to paper. This is due to poor conception and refusal to learn from failures. The AIBP was launched 19 years ago, but several irrigation projects overshot their target date of completion, not twice but thrice or even four times. Not a single project nor the State government was penalised nor was the grant component converted to loan as penalty for not meeting the target date of completion, in accordance with AIBP norms.

Indefinite delays

Funds continued flowing for projects under AIBP even as they were delayed. In the 19-year history of implementation of AIBP, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India conducted performance audit twice (2004, 2010). It found gross irregularities in the implementation of irrigation projects funded under AIBP, and a mismatch between irrigation potential reported and potential actually created. Norms for AIBP kept changing several times since 1996, but not the standards of accountability. Now, AIBP has been made a sub-component under the new scheme, the PMKSY.

PMKSY too lays down grand objectives of achieving greater water use efficiency, increasing water and agricultural productivity, and avoiding duplication of the various government programmes of water and agriculture management.

Referring to the draft guidelines posted by the department of agriculture and cooperation, (assuming that the same would be largely retained), it is clear that the government has learned few lessons from the failures of the past programmes, in particular, the AIBP.

The PMKSY contradicts the National Water Policy-2012, formulated by the government itself. While NWP-2012 aims at management of water from the perspective of hydrological unit, that is, river basin or sub-basin or watershed, PMKSY envisages water management at the level of the district — a lower order political boundary of governance. Wherever the watershed is divided by several districts, there could be several plans within a single watershed tearing up the watershed in different directions. So, even before the start of the programme, the contradiction of hydrological unit versus district as a unit will torpedo the envisioned objectives of PMKSY.

Ignoring problems

One of the principal causes of the failure of the AIBP was its inability to take land acquisition into account. PMKSY pays little attention to this. The requirement of

agencies to possess land first before funding is not in the scheme of PMKSY. Therefore, two of its sub-components, namely AIBP and ‘ *Har Khet Ko Pani* ’ could be adversely affected and can fall short of the target.

While the programme unveils a grand vision of end-to-end solutions — from tapping water source to distribution to water management — in order to increase water and agriculture productivity in the command area, it turns a blind eye to the fact that the command area is not under the control of the government. “Per Drop More Crop” requires higher investment to introduce costly sprinklers and drip irrigation which small landowning farmers cannot afford. The extent of government contribution in the investment of micro-irrigation on behalf of farmers, or incentives for farmers who adopt such micro-irrigation, finds no mention in PMKSY.

Messy affair

PMKSY is a bureaucratic mess. Groundwater specialists have little say, while water managers have been relegated to a supporting role even in the examination of the technical feasibility of irrigation projects. The State level sanctioning committee headed by the chief secretary has been entrusted with the task of sanction and approval.

While specialists are the pillars of innovation and manufacturing in advanced countries, the PMKSY is loaded with generalists in the bureaucracy. The engineering component has been emasculated.

There is also no reference to accountability when there is a failure to meet targets or to formulate any district plans. The tenure of service of the bureaucrats heading the committee is secure, irrespective of the outcome of PMKSY — a key drawback. The results of several past and present schemes such as GAP, MGNREGA, AIBP, IWMP and CAD should have been a lesson for all future programmes not to repeat mistakes. Planners who have conceived PMKSY seem to have completely forgotten this reality. It’s simply a case of old wine in new bottles, all over again.

The writer is with the Central Water Commission. The views are personal

Sept rain crucial for kharif foodgrain output: IARI

Kharif foodgrain production may fall below last year’s level of 126.31 million tonnes (mt) if crucial September rains are not well distributed, the government’s premier agri-research body Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) said today.



According to the Met Department, the country received 12 per cent less rains so far. Much affected areas are parts of Maharashtra, north interior Karnataka, Bihar, Odisha and Jharkhand, among others.

“Rains in September are very important. If September rains are well distributed, kharif production is still expected to be at least as good as last year or better than last year. If September troubles us, we will be still not reaching last year’s level,” IARI new Director Trilochan Mohapatra told PTI.

In the 2014-15 kharif season, foodgrain production was estimated to have fallen to 126.31 mt, from 128.69 mt in 2013-14 due to poor rains, according to the Agriculture Ministry data. Stating that any likely increase in kharif output would depend on the well-distributed September rains, Mohapatra said, “Even if you have a 10-12 per cent rainfall deficit, it may not matter much if it is evenly distributed.”

Transplanting of rice, the main kharif crop, is still going on in some States such as Bihar and Odisha and farmers would continue that till September-end, he said.

On crop condition of pulses and oilseeds, the IARI chief said these crops do not require much water, but they would suffer from extreme weather conditions.

According to the Ministry data, farmers have sown kharif crops on 96.78 million hectares till August 28 of the ongoing kharif season that started from June, against 95.69 million hectares in the year-ago period.

Rice has been sown on 34.58 million hectares, coarse grains on 17.25 million hectares, oilseeds on 17.45 million hectares and pulses on 10.55 million hectares in the said period.

Assam tea's cup of woes spills over with erratic rain



Erratic weather conditions and pest attacks have affected tea output in Assam, India's largest producer of the leaf.

According to Tea Board of India data, estimated production for June slipped to 60.91 million kg (mkg) – around 16 per cent lower than the same month last year.

“The month of July was slightly better than June since there was more sunshine, but August saw continuous rain through the second half and so one can see about 4-5 per cent lower production in the established gardens,” said SK Pathak, Deputy Director (Advisory) and Chief Scientist at the Tea Research Association, Tocklai, Jorhat.

Output is likely to be hit harder in parts of Upper Assam like Dibrugarh and Tinsukia.

Incessant rain over the last few days has seen almost 700 villages in 10 districts being submerged.

“Ideally, there should be rain at night and sunshine through the day. At the moment, there are just overcast skies and if the night temperature drops then production will be affected,” said D Mukherjee, Executive Director of the Tea Board's North-East Zonal office in Guwahati.

He added that it was difficult to estimate whether overall production in the State will be lower this year since “peak time” for plucking also comprised September and October.

Pathak, however, believed that this year was not an exception and that conditions for healthy plant growth had been deteriorating over the last 5-7 years with no rains between November and March.

Diseases outbreak

As a result, productivity has been falling with the health of tea bushes compromised, allowing diseases such as ‘red rust’ to become commonplace across almost 20-25 per cent of Assam’s tea gardens.

“In addition to red rust, higher Helopeltis outbreaks have been aided by wet conditions this year. ‘Looper caterpillar’ and ‘tea mosquito bug’ attacks are rising. *Hyposidra talaca* (a type of moth that feeds on tea foliage) has also appeared in large numbers.

“These pests have benefited from adverse weather and are estimated to have damaged almost 2-3 per cent of the crop this year,” he said.

Assam produces between 52 and 55 per cent of India’s total tea production of 1,200 mkg of which 200 mkg was exported last year.

Export

sales

High grade ‘Assams’ compete with varieties from Kenya where drought conditions have hit an estimated 25 per cent of output.

In the beginning of August, quality ‘Assams’ were selling for \$3.5/kg, compared to Kenyan varieties that were pegged at around \$4-4.5/kg, said officials.

At a time when foreign sales have slipped 10.4 per cent to 76.1 mkg between January and May this year vis-à-vis last year, a dent in output from Assam could hurt exporters looking to capitalise on the Kenyan shortfall to service markets such as the UK, Pakistan and Egypt.

Wholesale onion prices down to 45/kg in Lasalgaon

Wholesale onion prices at Lasalgaon in Maharashtra, Asia’s biggest bulb market, today fell further by 3 per cent to 45 on increased arrival of the crop.

The retail prices are still ruling high up to 80 per kg across the country, making consumers’ budget go haywire.



As per the data maintained by the National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF), wholesale onion prices today declined to 45 per kg at Lasalgaon mandi from 48 per kg last week.

Onion prices had peaked to 57 per kg on August 22. The rates have started softening due to an increase in arrivals after the government restricted exports and decided to boost supply through imports.

According to the Consumer Affairs Ministry data, retail onion prices today are ruling at 67/kg in Delhi, 61/kg in Mumbai, 50/kg in Kolkata and 47/kg in Chennai.

In Aizwal and Varanasi, onion was retailing as high as 80 per kg, the data showed.

To check prices, the Centre has approved bids – floated by state-owned MMTC – for import of 1,000 tonnes of onion at 45 per kg and the shipments are expected to arrive by September 10.

MMTC, which has been asked to import onions till prices come under control, [has floated the second tender for overseas purchase of 10,000 tonnes](#) of the key kitchen staple.

That apart, the central agency SFAC, along with NAFED, is supplying onions through Mother Dairy's Safal outlets and booths of Delhi Milk Scheme for sale at subsidised rate in the national capital. Even the Delhi government is also selling onions at cheaper rate through fair price shops.

Last week, the government had said onion production this year is likely to be close to last year's level of 18.92 million tonnes.

Cardamom gains aroma as arrivals dip



Cardamom prices gained marginally last week on decline in arrivals at auctions held in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

During the first round of picking the arrivals soared but ever since the second round began the volume has shown a slip, market sources said.

“It appears that the second round of harvesting is not as good as the first one,” PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC told *BusinessLine*.

The frequent change in climate has become a matter of concern in the markets. They apprehend that if the present trend in the weather conditions prevailed the late crop might witness a fall, he said. As a result, all have resorted to active buying and that in turn has aided the prices to recover, he said.

Exporters continued to cover good volumes and last week they have bought an estimated 100 tonnes. Short supply last year had pushed up the prices with the average price touching 840/kg, whereas, it was at around 645 last week.

The individual auction average vacillated between 620 and 660 a kg.

Of the current arrivals, 8mm and 7mm capsules constituted 30 per cent each. Hence, bulk capsules were fetching 680-700 a kg.

The total arrivals today at CPA auction in Bodi were at 51.1 tonnes. The maximum price was at 886 while the auction average moved up to 631.78 from 604.80 a kg the previous Monday.

Total arrivals during the season up to August 29 stood at 2,730 tonnes (1,144 tonnes). Sales were at 2,693 tonnes and 1,114 tonnes respectively.

The auction average as on August 29 was at 647.49 (840) a kg.

Prices of graded varieties (/kg): 8mm bold good colour 880-920; 7-8 mm 720-750; 6-7 mm 610-630; below 6 mm: 580-600.

Business Standard

Union Agriculture Minister Inaugurate Skills Training Centers in Three Madarasas as a Pilot Project for Skill Development of the Minority Community in Bihar

Union Agriculture and Farmer Welfare Minister, Shri Radha Mohan Singh today inaugurated the skill training centers at three Madarasas located in Patna, Motihari and Kesariya in Patna, Bihar. On the occasion Shri Singh said that these project are on the line of Modi Government vision Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas. Shri Singh informed that Rs 3.60 crore has been provided to the 3 Madarasas, which will be spent on skill development of minority community.

These centers run as pilot project and will be extended to others madarasas, after this they will get certificate and loan will be provided at lower interest rates. Union Agriculture and Farmer Welfare Minister also announced to setting up of R.O plants in these Madarasas to make available clean drinking water for students.

On the occasion Minister of Minority Affairs, Dr. Najma A. Heptullah said that the launch of the skill training centers through traditional educational institutions is an important milestone towards achieving the objective of skilling minorities community across the country. This scheme will bring together specialized training providers, leading industry bodies and trainees. The core objective of the scheme is to provide top quality skill training at the neighbourhood as per the demand of the market to the

students who are currently enrolled with traditional educational institutions like Madarasas, Maktabas etc or have dropped out.

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Monsoon deficiency at 22% in August, highest so far

The monsoon rainfall has been 11% below the benchmark long period average (LPA) till Monday, which is likely to impact kharif output of the country.

The month of August has recorded a monsoon deficiency of 22%, highest in the season so far, IMD said.

According to the Met department, the quantum of average monsoon rainfall across the country during June 1-August 31 has been 632 millimetres, which is 11% less than the LPA of 714 mm.

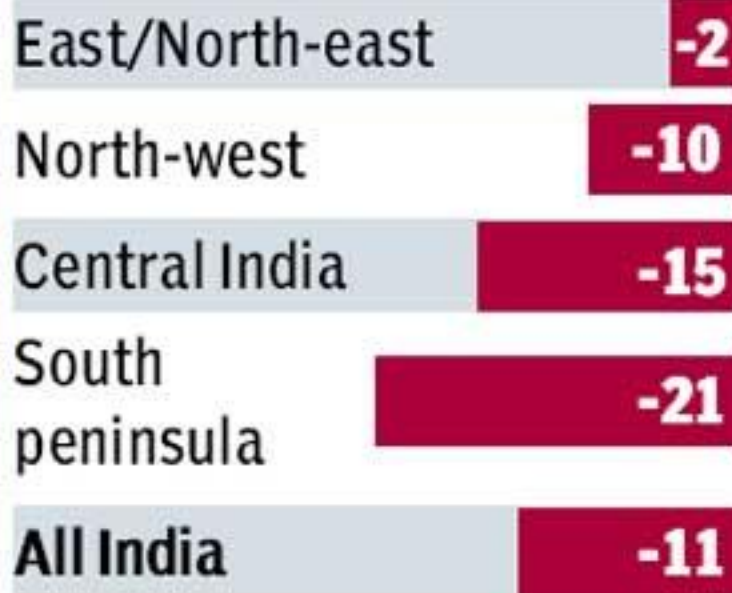
While June rainfall constitutes 18% of the total rainfall received during monsoon (June-September) period, the showers during July (33%) and August (29%) is critical for taking up kharif sowing activities.

However, a senior agricultural scientist said that the spread of rain in September would be crucial for kharif output.

Trilochan Mohapatra, director, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, said that September rain would be crucial for the kharif crop, especially for paddy. “The kharif output this year would be definitely less than what we achieved in 2013-14,” Mohapatra told FE.

Rains fail to keep date

(% change in rainfall from LPA, June – Aug 2015)



(Note: Data till Aug 31; all India rainfall was 16% higher than LPA up to June 30)

Source: IMD

In 2014-15, the kharif food grain production was estimated to have fallen to 126.31 million tonne, from 128.69 MT in 2013-14 due to deficiency in the rainfall.

Due to delay in monsoon in some of the key growing areas, transplanting of rice is still going on in some states like Bihar and Odisha and it is going to continue till the end of September, he said.

However, on the impact of pulses and oilseeds, Mohapatra said these crops do not require much water, but they would suffer from extreme weather conditions.

India Meteorological Department earlier this month had retained its June monsoon forecast about rainfall measuring 88% of LPA during April-September period. LPA is calculated on the basis of annual rainfall recorded between 1951-2000 (89 cm).

Last year also the cumulative rainfall during the entire monsoon season was 88% of LPA, which pulled down the country's food grains production by 5% to 251 MT in 2014- 15 from 265 MT in the previous year.

The monsoon this year entered the Kerala coast on June 5, then picked up pace and covered the entire country ahead of its usual schedule. In June, the country received 16% more rains than normal benchmark.

According to agriculture ministry data, the kharif sowing was done in 967.8 lakh hectare till Friday last week which is only 1% higher than a year before. While summer sowing is nearing its end, the withdrawal of monsoon rains this year may be delayed from the ideal date of September 1.

CICR to produce 'straight' varieties of cotton on mass scale



As the government has admitted that the first version of genetically modified crop of Bt cotton by US firm Monsanto was not patented in India, top officials at the Central Institute of Cotton Research (CICR), Nagpur, say the institute will now produce 'straight' varieties on a mass scale this year onwards.

"India is the only country where 95% area comes under hybrids. It is well known that hybrids are not suited for all conditions. Although there was no patent, Monsanto, for some reasons, took the route of withholding information so that farmers would have to buy from them," Dr KR Kranthi, director, CICR said.

"Of the 83 countries that cultivate cotton, majority of them use straight varieties. Countries such as Australia, China, the US, Brazil and Mexico have 2.5-3 times the yield of India. Moreover, the plant density is 1.1 lakh plants per hectare as against 11,000 plants per hectare in India which is 10 times less. CICR has been advocating newer varieties as this is the only way out for India. All along there has been a mental block on the part of the farmers which we hope shall now be removed," he said.

CICR has developed 21 varieties using cry1Ac but its commercial launch was held up for want of clearance from Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC). Since Monsanto does not have a patent for the Bollgard version, Indian scientists were free to use the same cry1Ac gene to develop indigenous varieties and supply them to farmers through government channels. However, the misinformation that Monsanto held the patent for the gene ended all such efforts.

Until now, over 1,600 Bt hybrids have been approved and many of them are being sold despite being priced R900-930 a pack of 450 gram. As against this, the straight varieties cost just R100-150 per kg and can be reused the next year at no extra cost, Vijay Jawandhia, a farmer activist, said.

Kranthi, too, echoed the same sentiment and said that it will take the institute a year to mass multiply the straight varieties. CICR has been attempting to persuade farmers to go in for very high density planting of early-maturing, short-duration varieties at the rate of 44,000 plants per acre for Vidarbha, Marathwada and Telangana which, it

says, will help the crop escape bollworm infestation altogether and leave more on the table for farmers.

Jawandhia had first brought the issue to light after he filed an RTI and he also took up the matter with Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#). Union agriculture secretary Siraj Hussain had written to the director general of Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR). The letter requested the agency to examine the possibility of using cry1Ac gene in developing Bt cotton varieties after obtaining requisite permissions from GEAC under the ministry of environment and forests (MoEF).

The agriculture secretary's letter says it was accepted in a high-level meeting held last month that Monsanto's patent for the gene in the US had expired in 2012. In India, it did not have any patent at all. "It seems we were not able to take prompt action in making Bt cotton seeds with this particular gene or other genes available to our farmers," says the letter.

On August 19, additional commissioner (seeds) responded to a follow up letter by PMO, saying that the department of agriculture has suggested that ICAR examine the possibility of developing Bt cotton seeds after getting clearance from GEAC. The second letter says it has been gathered that Monsanto does not have any patent for cry1Ac in India or Pakistan. The latter has, in fact, already approved 31 starlight line varieties for farmers to reuse in their fields. Jawandhia says he intends to write to the PM to ensure that the decision is implemented.