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THE HINDU

The 'Sweet Route' from Mudhol to Moscow

Sugarcane farmer exports 60 quintals of organic jaggery to Russian buyer



For 2015, the Mudhol organic jaggery park's target is to produce 150 tonnes of jaggery.

Enterprising sugarcane farmer L.S. Belur has gone from just producing organic jaggery in his hometown in Mudhol of Bagalkot district to exporting the product all the way to Russia.

“I exported 60 quintals of organic jaggery to a Russian buyer, and I am proud of this achievement,” said Mr. Belur. He has been able to do this, thanks to the encouragement given by the organic jaggery park launched in Mudhol in September 2013, by the University of Agriculture Sciences, Dharwad.

“Jaggery is no longer a product that is consumed domestically. Because its quality meets international standards, we are able to export,” said C.P. Chandrashekhar, project leader of the park. The demand has increased substantially in the domestic market too.

He said when the park was launched, it crushed some 300 tonnes of organic sugarcane to produce 30 tonnes of jaggery. The next year, the park crushed

900 tonnes and produced 90 tonnes of jaggery. “For 2015, we are targeting to crush about 1,500 tonnes of sugarcane to produce some 150 tonnes of jaggery. Of this, over 100 tonnes will be exported to Russia,” Dr. Chandrashekhar said.

He said as organic farming is gaining popularity, more farmers are coming forward to adopt this chemical-free farming, which gives them higher revenue. “With organic jaggery, a farmer can earn at least Rs. 1,000 more/quintal of sugarcane as against chemically produced jaggery,” he said. Though, Dr. Chandrashekhar admitted that the cost of organic jaggery is till over 30 per cent higher to chemical jaggery because of limited production and higher cost of transport, he however believes that with the increased production in future, the cost of will comedown significantly.

Free of chemicals

As per the Food Safety and Standards Act, jaggery producers can no longer use chemicals beyond the permissible limit, and the Organic Jaggery Park holds regular training programmes to educate them about the importance of chemical-free farming. “The park is working as facilitator to get organic sugarcane crushed to get jaggery, at the same time, we are spreading awareness on the norms,” said C.P. Chandrashekhar, project leader of the park.

Farmers can think of organic jaggery-making as an alternative when dependence on sugar factories is creating problems today

C.P. Chandrashekhar

Project leader, Organic Jaggery Park

Sugarcane farmer exports 60 quintals of organic jaggery to Russian buyer

Student-teacher duo develop model to purify Musi water for farm purpose



Biology teacher S.V..Ramaraju and his student Gyara Sravani with the model in Nalgonda on Wednesday.- Photo;Singam Venkataramana

A seventh class girl student and her teacher came up with a model to purify the polluted Musi river water and use it for agriculture purpose. The duo demonstrated it during the three-day district-level Inspire Science Fair-2015 in Bhongir.

Student, Gyara Sravani, student of ZP High School at Maktha Anantharam village, said that they have observed many farmers cultivating with Musi water suffer from various skin, respiratory and others diseases since they work in the polluted water and also consuming the food grain and vegetables grown with polluted water.

Sravani said that after seeing the problems being faced by the farmers, she along with the support of her biology teacher S.V.Ramarajulu prepared a filter which should be fitted at the entrance of farmer's field with proper way.

Removes industrial effluents

The filter will have a fishing net in the upper part followed by sand, charcoal and gravel which will almost remove industrial effluents and other pollutants. Mr. Ramarajulu suggested that the farmers should fit this filter in

a such way that the water should pass through this filter just before entering the field. The biology teacher said he along with his student conducted a survey at Maktha Anantharam village where dozens of farmers have been cultivating paddy using Musi water in about 300 acres land.

Onions likely to cost less in coming weeks, say traders in Vellore



Traders say the supply from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka is likely to increase soon.-Photo: C. Venkatachalapathy

After going through weeks of spending a lot on onions, consumers might get some relief in the coming weeks. Traders said that the skyrocketing rates are likely to dip due to increase in supply from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Being one of the staple vegetables in every kitchen, the rate shot up from Rs. 20-Rs. 30 to Rs. 70, making spending on vegetables expensive, A. Balu, president of Vellore Town Nethaji Market Kaikari Vyabarigal Sangam said.

“The reason for this hike is continuous export of the vegetable. Steps should have been taken to either stop the export or bring down the rates,” he said.

Consumers apprehensive

As a result of the high rates, consumers were apprehensive in buying onions. A few shopkeepers said that some consumers continued to buy onions as usual, while some bought lesser than usual.

“Cooking a meal at home without onions is difficult. Some persons cut down the quantity. For instance, if they usually bought one kilo of onions, they reduced it by half,” said a vegetable shopkeeper at Sathuvachari.

Mr. Balu said now, a kilo of onions were priced from Rs. 40 to Rs. 70 depending on the size and variety. “New load of onions from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are priced at Rs. 40. They are medium in size and rose in colour. The old load of onions from Maharashtra cost Rs. 50 to Rs. 70 depending on the size,” he pointed out.

Crop failure

Usually, supply of onions from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu start this month. But TN was facing crop failure due to lack of rains, he noted.

“However, the supply from AP and Karnataka will increase in the coming weeks. So, there are chances that the prices will dip. It could drop by Rs. 10-Rs. 20 next week,” he added. A vegetable vendor at Nethaji Market also pointed out to the better supply of onions now. “When compared to last few weeks, people have started to buy onions as they used to. Sale of onions was less when it cost Rs. 70 per kilo,” he said.

Training programme from September 7

A free one-day training programme on cultivation of fodder crops, and fodder seed production techniques would be conducted at Krishi Vigyan Kendra at Veterinary College and Research Institute here on September 7.

A press release from B. Mohan, Programme Coordinator, said that the programme will cover selection of the best suitable fodder types for cattle, cultivation even during drought conditions, crop management, and drip irrigation methods. Those interested can register their names over phone numbers 04286 266345, 266244, and 266650. For registration, mentioning of Aadhaar number was mandatory, the release added.

Coconut farmers at the receiving end

Multiple broker system denies them remunerative prices



Toys made from coir products on display during the World Coconut Day celebrations organised by the Coconut Development Board in Vijayawada on Wednesday.—Photo: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar

World Coconut Day was celebrated with pomp here on Wednesday but the farmers in the Godavari districts known for coconut cultivation, especially those in Konaseema region in East Godavari, are in dire straits as they are unable to get remunerative price for their produce. Reason: The multiple broker system prevailing in the State. The coconut changes hands thrice before it reaches the customer.

According to a farmer P. Lakshmipathi Raju from Mamidikuduru in East Godavari, the yield changes hands three times before it enters the market.

The agents will first purchase coconuts from the farmer ranging from Rs.8 to Rs.10 and sell to other two agents before the produce reaches the market.

“When we ask agents why they are paying smaller amounts, they claim that they have to bear transportation, labour and other charges by time the product reaches the end customer,” he explained.

“Our counterparts in Kerala are getting Rs.25 a coconut and they are also able to utilise 33 by-products effectively,” another farmer T. Raju from Sakhinetipalli in Konaseema said.

Horticulture Department Deputy Director B. Panduranga said coconuts were being cultivated in 30,000 hectares in East Godavari and 20,000 hectares in West Godavari district.

Areas like Amalapuram, Ainavilli, Sakhinetipalli and Ambajipet in East Godavari district were famous for coconut cultivation. A senior official said Coconut Development Board has initiated formation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPO) in a three-tier mode with the concept of aggregating small and marginal farmers into legally registered entities to undertake production, harvesting, processing and marketing of the product in a remunerative manner. Farmers can use this facility, he added.

Coconut farmers are unable to get remunerative price for their produce due to the multiple broker system prevailing in the State. The coconut changes hands thrice before it reaches the customer

Modern market to replace Kanni Market

Though Kanni Market is popular with residents, it creates a hindrance for traffic on the busy Afzalpur road in Kalaburagi.— Photo: Arun Kulkarni

The old makeshift vegetable market, popularly known as Kanni Market, near the City Central Bus Stand on both sides of the Afzalpur road will soon be shifted to a modern vegetable market proposed to be constructed on more than 3,187 square metres in the second phase of MSK Mill layout of the Kalaburagi Urban Development Authority (KUDA).

The market functioned in front of the main gate of the now defunct MSK Mill till the land was acquired by KUDA few years ago and then shifted to both sides of the Afzalpur road with vegetable vendors, mostly vegetable-growing farmers in nearby villages, occupying vacant space on both sides of the road and even commercial plots of KUDA which had already been sold. Although the market is popular with residents of Kalaburagi for selling its fresh and affordable vegetables, it had been a hindrance to traffic on the busy Afzalpur road.



There had been a pending demand for shifting the market and ending the uncertainties of vegetable vendors by offering them a permanent space. Chairman of KUDA Mohammad Azgar Chulbul said that the KUDA had submitted a proposal to the State government in July seeking permission to construct a multi-storey building to house a modern vegetable market in an area of 3187.58 square metres reserved for commercial space in the second phase of the MSK Mill layout developed by the KUDA. The Urban Development Department, which scrutinised the proposals, has given its approval and since the cost was more than Rs. 16.32 crore it would not be placed before the Cabinet for a formal approval.

Mr. Chulbul said that all the conditions of the department for taking up such a project had been fulfilled and the entire cost of the construction of the market would be borne by KUDA and 30 per cent of the cost of the project had already been earmarked in the 2015-16 budget of the KUDA as required.

Mr. Chulbul said that shops of different sizes, 120 and 100 platforms of different sizes would be sold directly to the vegetable vendors who are now marketing their produce in Kanni Market.

He said that while the total expenditure, including the construction of the building, providing electricity and a lift, water supply and sanitation, protective compound wall with parking space was Rs 15.60 crore, the KUDA proposed to sell the constructed shops and platforms at a cost of Rs 16.32 crore earning a profit of Rs. 72 lakh.

People's movement needed to help deliver pure milk: farmers

Defining the term adulteration, Progressive Dairy Farmers' Association official K. Bal Reddy said it could be anything from just water to dilute to adding chemicals.

If concerned citizens do not raise their voice and rise up as one in protest and if Government agencies do not step up vigil and dole out deterrent punishment, the chances of people, especially children, getting 'pure', chemical-free milk are very, very bleak.

An analysis by Government of India, of 1,700 samples of milk obtained from across the country in 2011-12 revealed that those from Goa and Pondicherry were the only ones that could be termed 'pure' and unadulterated, while 70 per cent of the samples were adulterated. Across South India it carried between three and seven per cent, while three from erstwhile Andhra Pradesh were found to be 'unadulterated'.

Defining the term adulteration, Progressive Dairy Farmers' Association General Secretary K. Bal Reddy said it could be anything from just water to dilute the purity of milk and increase quantity, to addition of chemicals. There was a shocking incident of Kerala banning a particular brand of milk from Andhra Pradesh when they found it contained traces of formaldehyde, a chemical that is used on dead bodies too, he said.

So nothing short of a concerted drive, regular testing and analysis of samples and strict punishment of offenders was the only way to tackle adulteration. This was the message that progressive farmers had to give at a press conference held here on Wednesday to announce the conduct of a 3-day, 4th edition of ‘Dairy Show-International Dairy Conference’ at the HITEX on September 5, 6 & 7.

Association President Jithendar Reddy said that there was a dire need for dairy and agriculture to be given equal importance. Government offers so many incentives for agriculture farmers but does not give the same treatment to dairy farmers. “For any crop, it is only a 3 to 6-month cycle, but for a dairy farmer to get a litre of milk, it takes an average of three years from the time a calf is born and it grows enough to produce milk,” he pointed out.

Mr. Reddy recalled his own experience and said that everyday he sent about 450 litres of cow milk to the market at Rs.27 a litre. “The same cost almost double by the time it goes to the end-user. We need more marketing facilities and a strong linkage between producer, seller and consumer is definitely needed,” he said.

The 3-day show would see over 90 exhibitors showcasing their technologies, equipment and services related to the dairy sector, said Director of Active Group, P.S.L.N. Rao, who is organising the event with the active support of the Department of Animal Husbandry.

The Vizag connection to Nagarjunasagar dam



People, who migrated in the 50s to work as construction labourers, feel totally at home in Vizag Colony at Nalgonda district in Telangana.— Photo: Singam Venkataramana

Signing the Immigration and National Act of 1965, the 36th President of the US, Lyndon B. Johnson, said their land flourished because it was nourished by so many cultures and traditions and people.

Telangana has been no different with people from various parts of country and the world making it their home over the years. In the same way, two dozen families which migrated from Vishakapatnam district about 60 years ago to work on Nagarjunasagar dam, had built a village for themselves in Chandampet mandal in Nalgonda district and named it Vizag Colony.

The residents of Vizag Colony, a hamlet under Chinna Munigal Grama Panchyat, are from Pedda Teenaarla, Bangarupalem and a couple of other villages in Nakkalapalli mandal.

They had migrated to Nagarjunasagar in the early 1950s when work on the construction of the masonry dam had begun.

Since most of these families belong to the fishermen community, they started fishing in the reservoir on completion of dam work. The backwaters of the project were located in the forest area and hence the fishermen choose hilly terrain and built a village for themselves.

Since then the population of the colony has increased to 1,000 and the number of voters now stands at 618. Only about a dozen people, those who actually migrated, are alive today and the rest were born and brought up here.

The villagers have been maintaining cordial relations with local people and a person from this village — Ch. Devudu — was elected Sarpanch of Chinna Munigal seven years ago. Speaking to *The Hindu*, Y. Appa Rao (65), said their families had migrated to Nagarjunasagar when he was an infant. All his children and grandchildren were born here and have become part of

Telangana. “We had deep connections with the reservoir since they came here to work as labourers on the project and now fishing is the main activity of each and every family in the village,” he said.

Interestingly, these villagers still maintains marital relations with people from Nakkalapalli and other parts of Andhra Pradesh. Since people living in neighbouring villages do not belong to their community, Mr. Appa Rao said they were forced to go all the way to Vishakpatnam and other places for matchmaking.

The villagers have been actively participating in all the programmes taken up by the government here. It stood first in the Haritha Haram plantation programme and also appointed two volunteers at its own expense to run the local government school as the local school did not have sufficient staff.

The local tribal persons were largely dependent on agriculture and cattle rearing but now have taken to fishing, motivated by Vizag Colony people.

They export fish to Kolkata, Kerala, Hyderabad and Devarakonda and other places. When asked about the division of the State, Mr. Devudu said he said it had no impact on them.

Joining pesticide-free vegetable mission



Vegetable saplings being planted on the premises of the house of Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala.

As part of the Gandhi Haritha project of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee, Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala and family planted vegetable saplings on their house premises.

The project envisages increased production of pesticide-free vegetables within the State.

The planting was done with the help of the Kudappanakkunnu Krishi-Karshaka sena. Mr. Chennithala said that though there was limited space on his house premises, he decided to be part of the Gandhi Haritha project to encourage others to take it up.

“The vegetables coming from other States are sprayed with poisonous pesticides. This could lead to serious health issues. To avoid such a situation, it is best to cultivate the vegetables we need on our house premises. Now, vegetable saplings are being planted at all available space in jails. If the land under all the departments are similarly utilised, we can achieve self-sufficiency in the production of pesticide-free vegetables,” he said.

Gandhi Haritha project to enhance vegetable production.

Bamboo tree guards for Haritha Haram saplings

Forests will be short of 1.2 lakh bamboo poles by the time avenue plantation in 3,500 km ends



Bamboo used to support plastic tree guards on the Jainoor-Mamidipalli road in Adilabad district.— Photo: S. Harpal Singh

In a paradoxical situation, naturally grown bamboo is being sacrificed for protection of saplings planted under the 'Telanganaku Haritha Haram' (THH) in Adilabad district. By the time the 3,500 km of avenue plantation under the programme ends in another three years, the forests here will be short of a precious 1.2 lakh bamboo poles, all of which would have been used to support the plastic tree guards.

"There is no harm in bamboo being used for the purpose as it is a fast growing species. In fact bamboo needs to be cut regularly for new clumps to sprout," argues Adilabad Social Forestry Divisional Forest Officer M. Janaki Ram who is the nodal officer for 'Telanganaku Haritha Haram' in the district.

The 'Telanganaku Haritha Haram' originally envisaged brushwood fencing for protection of the saplings but it turned out to be rather impractical. The Forest Department came up with plastic tree guards as a practical and economically viable alternative, which being collapsible, need some stiff support.

"We are using those bamboo poles are left unused by the Burud community, the main consumer in this district," explains Mr. Janaki Ram. "We are paying the Forest Department Rs. 25 for each pole, the price at which it sells the product," he adds.

Every year, over one lakh mature bamboo poles are extracted from bamboo forests spread in Kagaznagar, Bellampalli, Mancherial Divisions and to some extent in Jannaram now figuring as the core area of Kawal Tiger Reserve. Notwithstanding arguments, this number has still to be extracted in addition to the ones being used in 'Telanganaku Haritha Haram' as the Kolam tribe and the Burud community entirely depend upon this forest produce for their livelihood.

Another issue which is dogging the Forest Department is the planting of saplings under mature and big trees which would deprive the new ones of growth. "This has come to our notice and we will rectify the mistake by

removing such trees seen mainly on the Gudihatnoor-Utnoor avenue plantation,” the Nodal Officer commits. Meanwhile, Adilabad stood on top of the list of districts so far as implementation of THH is concerned with about 1.1 crore of the 1.68 crore target of plants having been planted.

Tree plantation drive at Indira Priyadarshini stadium



Adilabad Olympic Association president B. Goverdhan Reddy (right) planting a sapling at the Indira Priyadarshini stadium in Adilabad on Tuesday.-Photo: S. Harpal Singh

A tree plantation drive was taken up at the Indira Priyadarshini stadium here on Tuesday with officials planting bamboo saplings around the upcoming 1,000 metre track. The drive was initiated by Adilabad district Olympic Association president B. Goverdhan Reddy and District Sports Development Officer N. Sudhakar Rao.

The 1,000 metre track was being laid in the stadium at a cost of Rs. 10 lakh and the venture is being funded from the MPLADS of Adilabad Lok Sabha member G. Nagesh, Mr Reddy said.

“The plan to lay the track also envisages raising bamboo around it. Not only is the species fast growing but it emits about 35 per cent more oxygen than other trees,” Mr. Reddy said.

IISc. report puts availability of water at 0.85 tmcft

| YETTINAHOLE RUNOFF YIELD; STATE GOVT. REPORT VS IISc REPORT | | RAINFALL IN MM | | RUNOFF YIELD IN TMCFT | |
|---|-------------------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| CATCHMENT | NAME OF CATCHMENT | DPR of KNNL | Data compiled from IMD | DPR of KNNL | Computation based on field study by IISc |
| 1 | Yettinahole | 6,280 | 3,539.7 | 6.62 | 2.62 |
| 2 | Yettinahole tributary 2 | 6,280 | 4,311.4 | 1.4 | 0.58 |
| 3 | Yettinahole tributary 1 | 6,280 | 4,110.0 | 1.02 | 0.57 |
| 4 | Kadumanehole 2 | 6,280 | 4,364.8 | 1.73 | 0.53 |
| 5 | Kadumanehole 1 | 6,280 | 4,725.5 | 0.98 | 0.70 |
| 6 | Hongadahalla | 6,280 | 4,000.8 | 7.76 | 2.68 |
| 7 | Kerihole | 6,280 | 4,013.1 | 2.01 | 1.17 |
| 8 | Yettinahole lower reach | 6,280 | 4,385.3 | 2.51 | 0.69 |
| Total | | | | 24.03 | 9.55 |

LEGEND: DPR Detailed Project Report, KNNL Karnataka Neeravari Nigam Ltd., IMD — India Meteorological Department, tmcft: thousand million cubic feet. **Source:** Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru

Let the government answer the 10 questions accurately. We will drop the agitation the next day ven as environmental activists have been raising their voice against the Yettinahole diversion project or what they call Nethravati diversion project, a report by the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science (IISc.), Bengaluru, has said that only a meagre quantity of water will be available for diversion.

Ramachandra T.V., professor, Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc, who led a team of experts of the study and who prepared the report, told *The Hindu* on Wednesday that only 0.85 tmcft of water could be diverted from the project. It is not a feasible project and the State should re-consider its decision seriously, he said.

Now, the question is: should the government spend about Rs. 13,000 crore for that amount of water by damaging environment and ecology, said Dinesh Holla, an activist who is spearheading the campaign against the project.

The IISc. report has questioned the total runoff yield from the catchment areas estimated at 24 tmcft by Karnataka Neeravari Nigam Ltd. (KNNL) and at 22 tmcft by Karnataka Power Corporation (KPC) Ltd.

In contrast, the IISc report, released this April, has estimated runoff yield at 9.55 tmcft. Of this, the requirement for domestic purposes, crops, and livestock would be 5.84 tmcft, and for sustaining eco systems, 2.86 tmcft, it said.

The report noted that there is a “deliberate attempt to indicate higher water yield” in the catchment area and the project is “bound to fail due to lack of water” and hence, it is better to drop it. “This would help save the State from spending unnecessarily on the project,” the report added.

The report, “Environmental Flow Assessment in Yettinahole: Where is 24 tmc[ft] to divert?”, said that KNNL has proposed to construct eight weirs across the eight streams and divert the water uphill by pumping it to a common storage point, then allowing the water to flow by gravity to supply water for agricultural and industrial usage and also to fill the major tanks to cater to the domestic needs.

The report warned that the project “will lead to water scarcity in Hassan and Mangaluru and will not benefit Chikkaballapur, Kolar and Tumakuru”.

It said: “Livelihood of those in the Yettinahole and Gundia catchment areas would be affected severely due to lowered agricultural and fisheries yield.”

Let the government answer the 10 questions accurately. We will drop the agitation the next day.

~ Dinesh Holla,

Convener, Sahyadri Sanchaya



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Spurious insecticides recovered from Rama Mandi

The agriculture department recovered large quantity of spurious insecticides from a godown in Rama Mandi town of Bathinda on Wednesday evening. The department officials got a tip-off and raided the place. The raid was on till the time of filing of this report.

Talwandi Sabo sub-divisional magistrate Vanit Kumar said, "I got an information about spurious insecticides stored in a godown. Taking along

agriculture officials, I reached the spot. The godown owner was not there. We broke open the lock and found the spurious insecticides in large quantity in plastic cans and cartons in powder form. We found that the insecticides of many brands were stored in the godown and pesticides manufactured locally were also there. The owner of the godown had stored these in illegal manner."

He said that a case would be registered against the owner under the Essential Commodities Act and the Fertilizer Act. The pesticides and insecticides recovered from the godown would be sent to laboratory for chemical examination and quantity of the recovered chemicals would be ascertained after the completion of the raid, the SDM said.

Onion prices up marginally, arrival of fresh crop begins

The average wholesale onion prices at the country's largest wholesale onion market at Lasalgaon Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) increased by Rs 100 a quintal on Wednesday following a decline in supply as compared to demand.

In the retail market of Nashik, onions were sold at Rs 60 a kg on Wednesday. The retail prices have declined by almost Rs 20 a kg in the past couple of weeks. According to sources, the decline in arrivals led to marginal rise in average wholesale onion prices. Last week, the daily arrival of onions had increased up to 5,000 quintals at Lasalgaon, but declined to 2,000 quintals on Wednesday). The arrival of fresh kharif crop has also started, but the amount is negligible.

On Tuesday, 5 quintals of fresh kharif crop arrived at Lasalgaon, but there was no fresh arrival on Wednesday. The prices may stabilise if arrivals of fresh kharif crop increase.

An official from the National Horticulture Research & Development Foundation (NHRDF) said, "The average wholesale onion prices have declined a lot from Rs 5,700 a quintal on August 22 to Rs 4,500 a quintal on Wednesday). The arrival of fresh kharif crop has increased in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, while its arrivals have also started in Pune and Yeola in the district, but in a very low quantity. Some private traders are also importing onions from Egypt and Afghanistan. This has overall led to decline in average wholesale onion prices. Although, an average wholesale onion prices have increased by Rs 100 a quintal at Lasalgaon on Wednesday, but it is marginal and fluctuation of Rs 100 to Rs 200 a quintal is expected in the market. After all, the price trend will be downturn."

The average wholesale onion price at Lasalgaon was recorded at Rs 4,500 a quintal on Wednesday, against Rs 4,400 a quintal on Tuesday. The minimum and maximum prices were recorded at Rs 2,500 and Rs 4,900 a quintal, respectively. Around 2,000 quintals of onions were auctioned at Lasalgaon on Wednesday.

The average wholesale onion prices at another major market at Pimpalgaon was recorded at Rs 4,450 a quintal on Wednesday, against Rs 4,351 a quintal on Tuesday. The minimum and maximum prices were recorded at Rs 3,251 and Rs 4,660 a quintal, respectively.

India may be grilled at WHO meet on failure to implement larger pictorial warnings on tobacco packs

India may have to face tough questions on tobacco control at the upcoming south-east Asia regional committee meeting of the World Health Organization next week.

Assessment of tobacco control measures taken by various countries in the

region is among the top agendas to be taken up for detailed discussion during the meeting, sources said.

The meeting, which will take place in Dili in Timor Leste, will be attended by health ministers from 11 countries of the south-east Asia region including Indian health minister J P Nadda.

"Accelerating efforts to protect people against tobacco is one of the key topics for discussion at the meet. It is most likely that India will have to explain its position in the context of delay in implementation of the larger pictorial warnings on packs of tobacco products," said an official, who is going to attend the WHO meeting.

The health ministry had earlier set a deadline of April 1 to increase the size of pictorial warnings on packs of tobacco products. A notification to this effect was also issued allowing time to manufacturers to prepare for the implementation. However, following interim recommendations by a Parliamentary Committee on Subordinate Legislation examining the proposed amendments to the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2008, the ministry had put the final notification for the implementation on hold. The committee had sought more time to do stakeholder consultation and submit its final report to the health ministry.

Though, the ministry has maintained all through that it is determined to take stringent measures in order to control consumption of tobacco products, the delay in implementing larger pictorial warnings triggered criticism against the government.

Despite pressure from the civil society as well as the international community, the government has also failed to indicate a deadline for the committee to submit its recommendation or to say how long the ministry will wait before issuing its final order.

Though, the committee recently held consultations with civil society as well as industry players, no resolution has been arrived at so far. Meanwhile, the agriculture ministry has also given its consent to the proposal for larger pictorial warnings.



Sources said now India may again have to explain its move to satisfy queries and concerns from the international community at Dili.

Apart from tobacco, the meeting will also witness discussions on post-2015 Global Sustainable Development Goals, and expanding effective services with stronger health workforce.

The Regional Committee, the highest policy making body of WHO in the region, will also deliberate on anti-microbial resistance, an issue which needs urgent attention and action.

Eliminating neglected tropical diseases like kala-azar, leprosy and yaws; adapting and implementing the End Tuberculosis strategy; the way forward for preventing and controlling cancer; and sustainable universal health coverage will be other areas of focus at the meeting.

Experts discuss climate change

Eminent environmentalists and experts on climate change on Wednesday held a brainstorming session at the Central University of South Bihar (CUSB) campus on major issues relating to climate change and its impact on Bihar.

Members of the Climate Change Innovation Programme (CCIP) and Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK, led by Simon Croxton, and the faculty members of CUSB's centre for environmental sciences headed by Pradhan Partha Sarthi discussed the existing scenario in detail. They decided to develop impact models for agriculture, water resources and health sectors.

The visiting team members advised the CUSB to lead the science and modelling part of the climate change study and share its results with the agriculture, water resources, forest and health departments. The CUSB was also assigned the responsibility of generating high-resolution climate data for extreme events like droughts, floods, heavy rainfall and temperature rise.

Sarthi said the DFID is helping in implementation of Bihar State Action Plan on climate change. The Centre for Environmental Sciences of CUSB is playing a major role in this activity.

Those who participated in the deliberations included CUSB vice-chancellor Harish Chandra Rathore and faculty members Joy, Sumana Bhattacharya, Ajay Kumar Singh and Abhishek.

15 agriculture science students on two-week study tour to US

A team of 15 students from the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad (UASD) has headed to a US university on a two-week tour to get more exposure on agricultural science and the developments in the field.

This novel initiative is partially funded by UASD too.

Speaking to TOI, DP Biradar, vice chancellor, said that the team of 15 students and two faculty members has been sent to Iowa State University, Ames, US for academic exchanges, as part of Study Abroad Programme (SAP).

"The team is assigned to conduct study on agriculture and the food scenario in North America. We have signed a memorandum of understanding with Iowa University," he said.

Biradar added that usually students from US, Australia, Canada visit UASD every year. "We thought why not extend the opportunity to our students as well. As per existing norms, university can pay only visa and local transport charges. However, we included two SC/ST students by spending amount from SC-ST grants. We will make arrangements to make an entry about the tour in marks cards so that students get some weightage in admission for higher studies or job recruitments. This initiative has long-term intention of attracting many more meritorious students for agricultural courses," he added.

Hemalatha S, professor of Food Science and Nutrition, and Shoba Naganur, professor of Extension Communication Management, who are leading the team and have reached Ames, told that they will also visit neighbouring places during their visit and collect more details on the food scenario. "Our study is scheduled up to September 14. We will also have cultural exposure and other learning activities in US."

Rajendra Poddar, head, Project Planning and Monitoring Cell, told that technical programme and logistic support have been worked out by the university in consultation with the authorities of Iowa State University.

"The 15 undergraduate students are doing their seventh semester. But UASD has taken this initiative to expand the horizon of knowledge of students," he said.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

‘3-4 million tonnes of onions wasted each year due to poor storage’



As much as 3-4 million tonnes (mt) of onions are wasted every year due to lack of adequate storage facilities, said senior government officials at an event here on Wednesday.

The statement is significant considering the high retail price of the bulb that consumers have been shelling out over the last month due to supply shortages around the country.

“India produces 19 mt of onions each year of which 15-16 mt reach consumers. The rest gets wasted due to lack of storage facilities and cold chains,” said Santosh Sarangi, Joint Secretary in the Commerce Ministry, at a seminar on agricultural and horticultural exports organised by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The Ministries of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs have attributed the supply crunch since late July to the damage caused by unseasonal rain during the Rabi season harvest period. “Onions cannot be stored in a cold climate. The vegetable needs to be kept in a dry place after harvest, for longer sustenance. We need more space for storage of the Rabi crop as it is used to meet consumer demand throughout the year,” said SK Malhotra, Horticulture Commissioner.

The Rabi season accounts for 60 per cent of the total onion production while the kharif and late kharif varieties make up the rest.

In New Delhi, average retail prices dropped from Rs. 67/kg a week ago to Rs. 59 as on Wednesday due to the arrival of the early Kharif crop from Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Though down, prices are still 97 per cent higher than at the same time last year when the average price was Rs. 30, according to Consumer Affairs Ministry data.

An additional round of sowing has been advised by the Centre to ensure adequate supplies with northern States following the directive.

“The vegetable has been sown across 150,000 hectares so far in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand combined. The result will be seen at the beginning of next year,” Malhotra said.

Onion production is estimated to have slipped to 18.92 mt in 2014-15 from 19.4 mt the previous year.

Trade body calls for rubber export promotion council

The All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA), the apex body of the sector, has called for formation of an exclusive export promotion council for rubber products.

A Rubber Products Export Promotion Council needs to be set up under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to ensure more focussed support to export of rubber products, says Mohinder Gupta, President of the Association.

MSME contribution

Currently, export of rubber products is being promoted through the Chemicals and Allied Products Export Promotion Council (Capexil) with its 17 Chapters.

The export turnover of rubber products reached Rs. 17,500 crore in 2014-15. As much as 30 per cent of the rubber products manufactured by the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) is exported.

There are around 5,000 MSME rubber units in the country manufacturing over 35,000 products and providing employment to around 30 lakh people.

“New missions including ‘Make in India’ and ‘Skill India’ can be successful only through a sharper emphasis on labour-intensive and widely spread-out sectors such as rubber products,” says Gupta.

Better environment

By managing 15-per cent CAGR in export of rubber products over the last one decade, the industry has already proved its credentials. Through a sharp emphasis on quality and delivery, manufacturers have created a niche for themselves in several competitive markets across the world.

“This achievement by the rubber industry, notwithstanding challenges both nationally and internationally, needs to be appreciated.

The industry needs to be provided a better environment for export which can happen if a separate export promotion council is created.”

Over the last four years, the industry body has been organising national rubber conferences in all four regions of the country with a view to disseminating new practices and sharing success stories.

Relook at FTAs

Such interactions undertaken have helped in raising competitiveness of the industry internationally, Gupta said.

The Association has also called for a relook at India’s Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with some of the South-East Asian nations that have led to an increase in import of rubber products despite adequate domestic capabilities.

Many of the rubber producing countries are working to go up the value chain by exporting finished rubber products instead of raw rubber.

That is likely to increase competition for India in the international market. Promotion of rubber products export therefore assumes all the more importance, Gupta added.

Wet weekend predicted for South; rain deficit grows in North

South India can look to some organised rainfall during this weekend even as the deficit over North-West and Central India has started climbing further.

The all-important monsoon trough, the backbone of the weather system, lay in a shambles along the foothills of the Himalayas.

It has broken up into two, which speaks of the severity of the situation with rising surface temperature in North-West India.

Trough breaks up

The parent trough lies nestled along the foothills while the breakaway half is left stranded in the East of the country, its southern end dipping into East-central Bay of Bengal.

Now, the tip of a trough dipping into the warm waters of the Bay is always a potential area of ‘cyclogenesis’ (formation of low-pressure area) and will be watched with interest.

The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts initially saw possibility of a ‘low’ developing under the benign influence of a building typhoon racing in from the Pacific.

A western disturbance with its comparatively cooler air is seen delaying the process, though it will not take much longer for the announcement to come.

Southern comfort

In the South, a fresh rain-driving trough has materialised along the East Coast from Rayalaseema to Gulf of Mannar (off Sri Lanka) across Tamil Nadu.

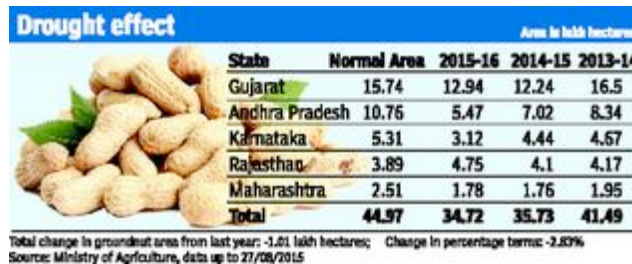
Moisture-laden winds are blowing into the trough from around Sri Lanka into the trough which is already bringing rainfall into parts of the peninsula.

Most parts of Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, south interior Karnataka and Kerala are forecast to receive rainfall during the weekend.

The US Climate Prediction Centre says above normal rainfall would be the theme here during the period right until the middle of September.

Poor rains to spoil party for Gujarat groundnut farmers

No gain from jump in acreage in State; strong export demand may buoy prices, say experts



| State | Normal Area | 2015-16 | 2014-15 | 2013-14 |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Gujarat | 15.74 | 12.94 | 12.24 | 16.5 |
| Andhra Pradesh | 10.76 | 5.47 | 7.02 | 8.34 |
| Karnataka | 5.31 | 3.12 | 4.44 | 4.67 |
| Rajasthan | 3.89 | 4.75 | 4.1 | 4.17 |
| Maharashtra | 2.51 | 1.78 | 1.76 | 1.95 |
| Total | 44.97 | 34.72 | 35.73 | 41.49 |

Total change in groundnut area from last year: -1.01 lakh hectares; Change in percentage terms: -2.83%
Source: Ministry of Agriculture, data up to 27/08/2015

Many farmers in Gujarat shifted to groundnut this year, but the sluggish monsoon in key growing regions is likely to spoil the party for them.

A section of Gujarat farmers moved to groundnut from cotton this year due to poor realisations from the fibre crop last year; the cotton acreage in Gujarat has dropped this year to 27,53,100 hectares against 30,02,600 hectares last year.

In contrast, the area under groundnut in Gujarat has increased by about 70,000 hectares over last year.

“Though the groundnut acreage has increased in Gujarat, the rise is not significant enough to lead to a bumper crop. On the contrary, the deficient rains may affect the crop, thereby squeezing supplies,” said Govindbhai Patel, a commodity expert of Rajkot.

Bleak prospects

As of September 1, the heartland of the country’s groundnut cultivation, Saurashtra had about 11.50 lakh hectares (lh) under the crop out of the 12.95 lh in Gujarat.

India’s total groundnut acreage is estimated at 34.72 lh.

Patel believes that even if there has been an increase in the groundnut acreage in Gujarat, the national scene continues to be bleak, casting a shadow on crop's prospects.

Nationally, the acreage is down by about one lakh hectares. The decline is mainly in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, where deficient rainfall has hit sowing.

Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu account for close to 90 per cent of the total groundnut output.

“We are currently, hand-to-mouth with regard to groundnut inventory. We see a situation very similar to last year when production dropped due to a drought-like situation,” added Patel. Dilip Parmar, a senior research analyst at Kunverji Commodities, maintained that exports are likely to surge from September and may give a boost to prices.

Export boost

“Normally, export demand for peanuts is more during November-December. This year, we expect the demand to be ‘steady to positive’ but the yield outlook remains on the lower side due to the weak monsoon. This will help maintain a firm price trend,” said Parmar.

Price outlook

According to a report by Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University in Hyderabad, the agriculture market intelligence committee of SV Agricultural College, Tirupati, has forecast (using econometric analysis of modal prices of Kurnool market) that groundnut prices at harvest would be around Rs. 4,000 a quintal.

Normally, groundnut sowing takes place during June-July, while flowering takes place in August and yield starts showing from September onwards.

“This year, due to weak monsoon, the season has got extended. The Solvent Extractors Association will take up the crop survey for groundnut in October. Only after that can production projections be made,” said BV Mehta, Executive Director, SEA of India.

Kerala to launch app for food safety law

Will speed up response time of the administration to instances of violation

Kerala is tipped to become the first State to enforce food safety laws online with a pilot being scheduled for launch here on Monday.

TV Anupama, Commissioner, Food Safety, told *BusinessLine*, a computer application has been developed and undergone trials.

Tablet-based app

“We are now looking to develop a tablet-based app so that officers can take on-the-spot assessment and even keep the office of the Commissioner informed in almost real-time.

“Wi-fi connectivity can help them run through the procedures the same day,” Anupama said. This will help speed up the ‘response time’ of the administration to instances of violation of food safety laws, bring those involved to book, and most importantly, fast track information to the public.”

Tablets distributed

Currently, it takes 4-5 days to get through with procedures ranging from sample collection to lab testing; issue of show-cause notices; punitive action; and appeals.

Anupama said that officers at the district level have already been given tablets. A primary level of training has already been given to them.

The tablet application will decide the success of the online initiative, Anupama said. “We will keep a watch and try to get a feel of the app as we go along.”

Limited capabilities

Currently, use of technology is limited to the laboratory-level testing of samples collected.

The new application will take it further upstream to the spot where the sample is sourced.

Those who worked on the application had a tough job assimilating the myriad provisions of the Food Safety Act — more than 100 of them with sub-sections, rules and regulations. State government-owned Sidco was roped in with a mandate to find a one-stop IT solution for both lab testing and enforcement.

Sidco-Invis effort

It was in turn entrusted to the software division of Invis Multimedia, which specialises in digital content generation, software development and multimedia solutions.

The latter is also the IT consultant for the Kerala Tourism Department since 1998.

A five-member software team got on the job with the guidance of Food Safety Joint Commissioners K Anil Kumar, D Sivakumar and D Ashrafudeen, and Research Officer G Gopakumar.

Currently, use of technology is limited to the laboratory-level testing of samples collected. The new application will take it further upstream to the spot where the sample is sourced.

Urban Tree announces residential project in Chennai

Chennai-based Urban Tree Infrastructures Private Limited has launched a residential project and announced a commercial project that provides automobile services. The residential project, Superb, will have 284 houses spread over 3 acres in Urapakkam. The gated community will comprise one, two and three Bedroom Hall Kitchen type flats. The price ranges from Rs.29.5 lakh to Rs. 60 lakh for two and three bedroom units. The project is expected to be completed by December 2016.

In a press statement, Abhishek Mehta, Director, Urban Tree, said, “In all our projects, we are focussed on the concept of green building – minimal use of non-renewable energy and low pollution.” Urban Tree has also launched a

commercial project, Popular Auto Zone, which provides all car-related services to its customers. Built on an area of 14,400 sq ft, the zone will have car parking, dedicated cargo lift, specialised loading and unloading bay and RCC structure with granite flooring. Mehta said the project, is an automotive mall that will house close to 40 players who would provide services like sun films, stereo fitting and sun-roof in cars.