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# THE HINDU

## Spices Board to open signature outlets in foreign markets



*Designed in Indian ethnic style, the signature stalls sell wide range of products consisting of more than 30 spices and culinary herbs*

The spices Board is gearing up to open premium retail outlets in key countries to sell the choicest spices and value-added products under brand names ‘Spices India’ and ‘Flavourit’ as a part of broadening its brand-building exercise beyond the nation’s boundaries.

The products will be sold through signature stalls set up in overseas market in partnership with private investors, says Spices Board Chairman A. Jayathilak.

It is expecting that those stalls would help the board to gain access to more international markets and further promote the popularity of Indian spices abroad.

Stating that the Board has chalked out a major expansion plan for the retail stores, Mr. Jayathilak said it had already set up a few signature stalls within India. “Apart from the domestic market, we now want to focus more in foreign markets,” he added.

Flavourit Spice Trading Ltd. (FSTL), a Spices Board enterprise, has invited expression of interest (EoI) from prospective investors to take up franchises for ‘Spices India’ signature stalls in foreign markets. “The stalls are part of the board’s

efforts to bring about systematic diversification and sustainability of the industry,” Mr. Jayathilak said. Designed in Indian ethnic style, the signature stalls sell wide range of products consisting of more than 30 spices and culinary herbs. Apart from whole spices, the store also has a line of lifestyle and personal care products such as beauty creams, clearness oils, bathing bars, shower gels and shampoos all flavoured with spices. Spice-flavoured chocolates are added attractions.

FSTL is currently offering three different franchisee operating models — COFO (company-owned, franchise-operated), FOFO (franchise-owned, franchise-operated) and SIS (shop-in-shop) retail concept wherein retail stores share a dedicated space for Spices Board products.

### **Sustainable agricultural practices**

Solvay, an international chemical group and a leader in guar derivatives has teamed up with L’Oréal in a scalable three-year project to teach and promote sustainable agricultural practices among 1,500 guar bean farmers across ten villages in India’s desert region of Bikaner, Rajasthan state. Solvay is a world leader in guar derivatives and supplies its customers who formulate these ingredients in a variety of applications such as in food, cosmetics, oil & gas extraction and textile industries.

Grown mainly in India’s semi-arid regions, guar is the main resource for many farming communities but its production is volatile as it relies on monsoon rains. Solvay’s ‘sustainable guar initiative’ aims to empower countless farmers with the tools and knowledge to cultivate the crop through good agricultural practices in accordance with United Nation’s Food & Agricultural Organisation), resulting in more continuous, high-yield production. L’Oreal, with its unique international portfolio of 32 diverse and complementary brands, has generated sales amounting to 22.5 billion euros in 2014 and employs 78,600 people worldwide. As the world’s leading beauty company, L’Oréal is present across all distribution networks.

India is the world’s top guar producer with about 80 percent of total production.

## **Karnataka to approach Mahadayi water tribunal**

The Karnataka government would file an application before the [Mahadayi Water](#) Dispute Tribunal seeking interim award on sharing of the river water between Karnataka and Goa, said Minister for Water Resources M. B. Patil.

Mr. Patil said the government was holding talks with the State Legal Committee comprising senior counsel Fali S. Nariman in this matter and the final call would be taken on September 12.

In its interim application, the State Government would appeal for awarding 7.56 tmcft to meet the [drinking water demands](#) of the four districts of north Karnataka — Gadag, Dharwad, Belagavi and Bagalkot. Besides, an additional of 7 tmcft water for agriculture and 1.56 tmcft for Khanapur taluk in Belagavi district.

## **You can find the sparrows here!**

*Bhitarkanika has become a congenial habitat for these delicate birds*



The picturesque wetland and meadows of Bhitarkanika National Park in Odisha's Kendrapara district has emerged as a congenial habitat for house sparrows.

At a time when these species are fast disappearing, the sighting of these delicate birds is a positive development.

Identified habitations of these winged species are Dangmal, Dakhin Mahinsamunda, Kalibhanjdiha, Pataparia, Durgaprasad Diha, Satabhaya and Angari forest blocks. Sparrows were earlier sighted in villages situated on the fringes of the national park.

But these birds have left the human habitations, now seem to prefer human-interference free forest areas of Bhitarkanika, said forest officials.

About, 440 nesting sites were sighted during the course of headcount of monsoon birds that was taken up earlier this month, said Bimal Prasanna Acharya, divisional forest officer (DFO), Rajngar Mangrove (Wildlife) Forest Division. However, over a thousand house sparrows might have made Bhitarkanika their permanent home. These pint-sized birds are incidentally not listed in any schedule of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Over the years, they are disappearing fast and its sighting has become rare. In most other areas grains and insects the sparrows feed on have gone out of sight due to man-made factors. The increasing use of pesticides in agriculture fields mainly has spelt doom. These birds steadily perished as grain-feeding birds failed to withstand toxicity. Fast disappearance of straw-thatched house have contributed to the shrinkage of their habitat. Farmers in Bhitarkanika grow saline-resistant paddy and there is less use of pesticides here

#### ***WHY HAS SPARROW SIGHTING BECOME RARE?***

***Grains and insects the sparrows feed on have gone out of sight due to man-made factors. The increasing use of pesticides in agriculture fields mainly has spelt doom. Urbanisation and fast disappearing traditional straw-thatched house have contributed to the shrinkage of their habitat.***

#### **Rains may salvage some crops**



The rains of the last couple of days will now help in taking up alternative crops under the contingency plan.- PHOTO: R.V.S. PRASAD

The late showers will help in improving prospects for crops sown in late July and August and also for horticulture crops in Rayalaseema districts, say Agriculture officials

## DEFICITS DOWN

Rainfall departures (%) from normal in coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema			
<b>COASTAL AP</b>		Vizianagaram	<b>+23</b>
E. Godavari	<b>+24</b>	W. Godavari	<b>+6</b>
Guntur	<b>+7</b>	<b>RAYALESEEMA</b>	
Krishna	<b>+6</b>	Anantapur	<b>-7</b>
Nellore	<b>-4</b>	Chittoor	<b>-50</b>
Prakasam	<b>-2</b>	Cuddapah	<b>-44</b>
Srikakulam	<b>+1</b>	Kurnool	<b>0</b>
Vishakhapatnam	<b>+3</b>		

Thanks to rains across coastal Andhra Pradesh and parts of Rayalaseema under the impact of a low pressure area this week, hopes have partly revived in the rain-deficit districts that they can salvage at least the alternative crops they have sown in this bleak monsoon.

Significant improvement cannot be expected at this late hour, but the prospects do not seem as bad as they were before this week's rains. Moreover, rains are expected for two more days, Agriculture Department officials said.

The late showers will help in improving prospects for crops sown in late July and August and also for horticulture crops in the Rayalaseema districts, they said.

As of September 5, the total sown area in the State was about 29 lakh hectares as against the average sown area of 35 lakh hectares. Sowing did not take place in 17 per cent of the cultivable area due to deficit rains and long dry spells.

The rains of the last couple of days will now help in taking up alternative crops under the contingency plan. The rainfall deficits have come down in Kadapa, Prakasam, Nellore, Guntur and to some extent in Srikakulam and Chittoor as well. But the situation is still serious in Kurnool with a rainfall deficit of 43 per cent.

However, the recent rains bode well for the black cotton soils in Kurnool for taking up Bengal gram and jowar cultivation. Adequate quantity of these seeds have been kept ready, officials said. Though some shortage was reported for black gram, they will be available for distribution to farmers in one or two days, officials said.

While this is temporary relief, the situation will improve only when heavy showers occur in the catchment areas in Maharashtra and Karnataka to bring copious inflows into the reservoirs in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

*The late showers will help in improving prospects for crops sown in late July and August and also for horticulture crops in Rayalaseema districts, say Agriculture officials*

### **Central team to study crop loss in HK from tomorrow**

The Central study team to assess crop loss due to scanty rainfall is likely to visit the affected areas in Hyderabad Karnataka districts for three days from September 9.

Official sources told *The Hindu* in Kalaburagi city on Monday, that the tentative tour programme had been fixed for the Hyderabad-Karnataka region and the final itinerary of the team and the names of the officers who would be visiting would be known by Tuesday.

Deputy Commissioner Vipul Bansal chaired a high-level meeting of officers of the Revenue, Horticulture, and Agriculture Departments in the city on Monday to finalise the names of the villages and route map of affected areas for the study team to visit and examine the devastation caused by deficient rainfall.

Sources said the joint survey conducted by 220 teams consisting of officials from the three departments, of crop loss throughout the district, had said that the crop in 65.58 per cent of the sown area had suffered more than 33 per cent loss and was eligible for compensation payment as per the new norms of the Natural Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF).

According to a rough estimate, the government, as per the NDRF norms, would have to release more than Rs. 300 crore exclusively for compensation to farmers who had lost their crops.

The survey report presented a shocking picture of more than 99 per cent of crop loss in Aland taluk of Kalaburagi district and more than 80 per cent crop loss in Jewargi taluk. Out of the total sown area of 6.28 lakh hectares in the kharif season, crops in 4.12 lakh hectares had suffered more than 33 per cent loss.

Out of the total sown area of 1,07,516 ha in Aland taluk, crops in 99,230 ha suffered more than 33 per cent loss; in Jewargi, out of the total of 1,39,749 ha, crops in 1,07,209 ha suffered more than 33 per cent loss; in Afsalpur, out of 42,242 ha, crops in 24,636 ha was lost; in Chincholi, out of 70,791 ha, crops in 49,429 ha suffered loss of more than 33 per cent; in Kalaburagi taluk, out of 1,05,236 ha, crops in 58,854 ha suffered loss of more than 33 per cent; in Sedam, out of 74,431 ha, crops in 16,532 ha suffered a loss of more than 33 per cent; and in Chitapur, out of 89,319 ha, crops in 55,645 ha suffered a loss of more than 33 per cent.

*A survey said crop in 65.58 per cent of the sown area had suffered more than 33 per cent loss*

### **‘Samba’ cultivation in full swing in Mayiladuthurai block**

‘Samba’ cultivation has been in full swing in parts of Mayiladuthurai sub-division with farmers raising the nurseries using mechanical transplantation strategy because of acute shortage of workers.

As many as 15,000 acres of land had been brought under the crop — about 7,500 acres each in Kutthalam and Mayiladuthurai units.

A majority of farmers has raised “ADT 38” and “ADT 46”, besides “BPT 5204” in about 80 per cent of the area while the balance 20 per cent was brought under “CR 1009” variety.

Officials said that the recent showers parts of Mayiladuthurai experienced had facilitated the transplanting operation to a great extent. Most farmers preferred mechanical operation as it ensured speedy transplanting of the nurseries.

The Agriculture Department, in co-ordination with other departments and agencies has taken steps for supplying mechanical transplanters to farmers.

### **Focus on increasing coconut production using modern technologies**

Dr. N. Sriram, Programme Coordinator, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Sandhiyur, explaining the coconut leaf disease during the World Coconut Day celebrations on the KVK premises at Akaraipalayam village, Salem district.

Akaraipalayam village in Veerapandi block is famous for adopting coconut based cropping system in toto. Coconut is the primary and main crop of the farmers here. Despite this, the farmers here are lagging behind in adopting the latest farm technologies, much to the surprise of the farm scientists' community.

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University – Krishi Vigyan Kendra at Sandhiyur took advantage of the World Coconut Day celebrations held in Akaraipalayam recently to organise different programmes and field demonstration to create the much needed awareness on the modern technologies involved in coconut cultivation.

The final year B. Sc Horticulture students of the TNAU Government Horticulture College and Research Institute for Women, Tiruchi, joined hands with the KVK scientists in convincing farmers of this village on the need for adopting scientifically proven modern technologies for increasing coconut production in the country.

The theme of the World Coconut Day 2015 was 'coconut for family nutrition, health and wellness'. Coconut related quiz programme, demonstrations on coconut tonic, identification of pest and diseases and nutrient deficiency symptoms were organized during the celebrations held recently for coconut growers by the students with the assistance of the KVK scientists.



N. Sriram, Programme coordinator, KVK Sandhiyur, led the scientists who involved the farmers in various activities on that day. Dr. Sriram while explaining the need for according priority in selecting the mother palms as per the required characters, said that crown should be spherical, semi spherical, should have 30-40 fully opened leaves, 12-15 bunches with high setting of female flowers etc.

The coconut tree should be in the age of 25-50 years. The nuts from each selected mother palms attain full maturity in a year. Only the trees with above characters should be selected as mother palm for raising the coconut nursery. The Horticulture students explained the latest nursery techniques and planting of seedlings and also the Integrated Nutrient Management practices for coconut. The scientists and the Horticulture students jointly conducted a demonstration on coconut tonic application. They also demonstrated on finding good roots for applying the coconut tonic. They informed the farmers said that the coconut tonic invented by TNAU gives better result in increasing coconut production.

The farmers also got useful tips on intercropping for coconut garden for increased profit. A variety of intercrops like pineapple, banana, groundnut, chillies, sweet potato, and tapioca can be raised in coconut garden after the palms attain a height of 5-6 metre. In older plantations; cocoa, pepper, clove, cinnamon, nutmeg can be grown as mixed crop.

Sudha, subject matter specialist – plant pathology, KVK Sandhiyur, demonstrated the integrated pest and disease management techniques for coconut plantation. Training was also imparted on suitable management practices for each pest and disease.

The farmers commended both the scientists and horticulture students for coming to their assistance at the right time.

## Heavy showers bring succour to farmers in Vijayapura



The heavy rain that lashed the district in the last over 30 hours from Saturday evening to Monday morning has given much-needed relief to the farming community. According to statistics given by the Agriculture Research Station coming under University of Agriculture Sciences, Dharwad, here, the district received around 70 mm rains in nearly 30 hours.

While check dams and bunds in rural areas are getting filled as a result, the rain led to flooding in many parts of Vijayapura city. Low-laying areas were the worst affected as water entered houses.

The road between Mehetar Mahal and Jama Masjid was flooded with knee-deep water. According to officials, the rain has come as a boon for farmers whose crops were withering. “This rain will not only help to save those crops which were drying, but also help the rabi crop,” the sources said.

More showers are expected in the next two days.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Ashok Timmashetty, a farmer of Kakhandaki village in the taluk, said the rain would enable farmers to cultivate white jowar, toor, sunflower, groundnut and other pulses.

He said though the kharif crop was largely lost, he hoped the rains would, to some extent, help farmers recover the loss in the rabi season.

Over 50 per cent of the kharif crop has already been lost. According to a preliminary assessment, over Rs. 1,000 crore-loss has been incurred by farmers in the district. The government has already declared the district drought-hit. The Department of Agriculture, which had set a target of 4.51 lakh ha sowing for kharif, has now set a target of sowing on 5.24 lakh ha for the rabi season.

Officials said there was a demand for 12,500 quintals of seeds for rabi sowing, and the department had made arrangement to store adequate quantity of seeds and fertilizers to supply through Raita Samparka Kendras.

### **Symposium on crop diseases**

The 3rd international symposium on ‘Phytophthora: Taxonomy, Genomics, Pathogenicity, Resistance and Disease Management’ will be held from September 9 to 12 at the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Hesarghatta, here. Organised by the Indian Institute of Research and the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kasaragod, the symposium is intended to discuss phytophthora, a devastating disease that affects agricultural crops, natural vegetation and forestry and develop an action plan to reduce consequences of disease at the global level. More than 150 delegates will take part.

### **‘Expedite crop loan renewal for kharif’**

The State Level Bankers’ Committee (SLBC), Telangana, has advised the banks to expedite renewal and rollover of crop loans for the kharif season.

Urging them to avoid inconvenience to the farmers, the Committee president Santanu Mukherjee said Agriculture Minister P. Srinivasa Reddy, at the SLBC meeting on

September 4, had said that the pace of renewals, post release of the second instalment of crop loan waiver to bank by the government, is “very slow.”

The Minister had requested the bank to step up lending as the kharif season is coming to an end this month.

Mr. Mukherjee, who is also Managing Director of the State Bank of Hyderabad, said some banks and branches were adopting different procedures for rollover for crop loans.

“As assured to the Minister, banks are requested to renew/rollover crop loans without causing inconvenience to the farmers and complete renewals by the time kharif season ends,” he said in a communication.

Mr. Mukherjee also asked the banks to claim the four per cent interest subvention, on all eligible crop loan, offered by the Department of Agriculture under the State government’s Vaddileni Panta Runalu programme.

The scheme has been extended for the kharif and rabi 2014-15 too, for farmers who have already repaid the crop loans.

### **Rain in Tuticorin**

Continuous rain for an hour on Monday brought relief to the residents of Tuticorin from the hot weather conditions. The rain started around 10.45 a.m. The sky remained overcast throughout the day, bringing down the temperature.

The rainwater inundated several low-lying areas in the city, and disrupted vehicular movement.

Anticipating more rains during the northeast monsoon season, mainly in October, pre-monsoon sowing was taken up in agriculture fields in various parts of the district. “Tuticorin is largely dependent on northeast monsoon that begins in mid-October and ends by December 15.

Northeast monsoon rainfall accounts for two-thirds of the district's average annual rainfall of 661.2 mm," sources from the Department of Agriculture said.

### **National Nutritional Week programme**

The National Nutrition Week (NNW), celebrated by the National Service Scheme Unit of Agricultural College and Research Institute (ACRI), Killikulam, concluded on Monday.

T. Padmini, Professor and Head, Department of Home Science, Home Science College and Research Institute, Madurai, who addressed the programme, said that better nutrition was the key to human development. She called upon the youngsters to avoid westernised fast food items that often proved unhealthy and asked them to have traditional nutritious foods that would be helpful for physical as well as intellectual development.

V. Subramanian, Dean (in-charge), ACRI, Killikulam, in his presidential address stressed the importance of balanced diet and the need for nutritious food for the growth and economic development of the country.

Various competitions such as quiz, elocution and painting on creating awareness of the importance of nutrition were held during the week. Dr. Padmini distributed prizes and certificates to the winners of competitions.

The programme was coordinated by P. Sengottaiyan and S. Kanaka, NSS Programme Officers.

### **Paddy production hit in Nalgonda district**

A woman farmer sprinkling fertilizer in her paddy field in Nalgonda district.- File photo Singam Venkataramana

It appears that paddy cultivation in Nalgonda district is more dependent on rainfall in the Krishna's catchment areas in Karnataka and Maharashtra rather than the rainfall in district. One can come to this understanding when compared to the last year and current year's area of cultivation and rainfall statistics.



As on today, during the current monsoon season, the district witnessed 425.5 mm rainfall against the proportionate normal rainfall of 439.5 mm. The district recorded a negligible 3.2 per cent deficit rainfall.

During last year, the entire South-West monsoon (which began on June 1 and concluded on September 30), the district witnessed just 321 mm of rainfall. With 24 days left in September, the district has already received 104 mm more rainfall than last year's. Surprisingly, last year paddy cultivation was 1.77 lakh hectares, which is down to 66,600 hectares this year. '

The area of cultivation not only declined under the ayacut of Nagarjunasagar and other projects but it also came down drastically even under bore well cultivation. According to Irrigation officials, the only difference is that Karnataka and Maharashtra witnessed heavy rains last year when they were forced to lift crest of Nagarajunasagar in September to allow the excess water flow down the river, but this time the water is at minimum draw down level (MDDL) . Officials are of the opinion that the area under bore wells also came down due to lack of water in Nagarjunasagar. The water released from Nagarjunasagar passes through most part of the district which used to fill the ground water table. Since they had released no water to irrigation purposes this year, the ground water also gone down compared to previous year. Only 37 per cent of paddy was cultivated compared to normal area which the irrigation officials attribute to poor rains in the Krishna catchment area. The sowing operations of other rain-fed crops was completed on 3.65 lakh hectares, which is 8 per cent more than normal area.

The agriculture officials expect just 3 lakh metric tonnes of paddy production during this kharif, compared to previous year's of 10 lakh metric tonnes.

## **Andhra Bank to extend loans to small manufacturing and service entrepreneurs**

Andhra Bank Zonal Manager V. Venkateswar Rao said that the bank will extend loans under the Micro Units Development and Regulatory Authority (MUDRA) which commenced in April last, at an affordable and cheaper rate to small manufacturing and service entrepreneurs.

The assistance would be given up to Rs.50,000 under SISHU, from Rs.50,001 to Rs.5 lakh under Kishore and above Rs. 5 lakh to 10 lakh under Tarun categories. These loans would be extended without collateral and third party guarantee by all branches of the bank. Entrepreneurs were requested to approach the nearby bank branch for finance.

The month long campaign launched on August 25 on the scheme will conclude on September to mobilise Sishu loan applications for the special MUDRA camps to be held from September 25 to October 2. All banks throughout the country, except agriculture and consumer finance, will extend the MUDRA loans, he said.

Persons undertaking self-employment activities, trained in RSETIs, DICs , Skill Development Institutions, ITI trained students, small and marginal traders, vegetable vendors, street hawkers are eligible to get finance at the interest of 12 per cent per annum, said Mr. Rao at a press conference here on Monday.

Andhra Bank, Nizamabad zone, comprising the district and Medak, has targeted the extension of Rs. 155 crore loan under the MUDRA during the current financial year. Already, it disbursed Rs. 7 crore to 160 beneficiaries, he said. Under the scheme at the special camps, the bank will disburse Sishu loans to 8,000 persons.

Bank Assistant GM J.S. Sudhakarudu and Chief Manager V. Shambhasiva Naik were present.

## Aqua exporters skip meet on shrimp pricing



Health Minister Kamineni Srinivas and Commissioner (Fisheries) Ram Shankar Naikat a meeting in Vijayawada on Monday

Agriculture Minister Prathipati Pulla Rao and Health Minister Kamineni Srinivas on Monday expressed displeasure over the absence of aqua exporters at a meeting got up to discuss the pricing of shrimp.

The Fisheries Department officials had arranged a meeting with farmers, hatchery owners, feed manufacturers, packers, exporters and technicians here. However, when none of the exporters turned up for the meeting, the Ministers were upset even though the officials maintained that invites had been sent to the aqua exporters much in advance.

Aqua farmers who attended the meeting alleged that exporters skipped the meeting deliberately. They complained that traders were paying less for their produce though the price was high in the international market. The Ministers promised to discuss the issue with the officials concerned and asked the growers to increase production.

Aquaculture farmers from Guntur, West Godavari, Prakasam, Krishna and Nellore districts participated in the meeting. Officials of Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) spoke on diversified aquaculture, GIFT Tilapia fish cultivation and mud crab cultivation being taken up in the State.



## Very little funding from abroad, say NGOs

**FOREIGN CONTRIBUTIONS**


NGOs can now apply for FCRA online at [www.fcraonline.nic.in/](http://www.fcraonline.nic.in/)

**There are two ways to apply for FCRA**

- **Regular registration** (Form F.C 8) Through this registration, there is no restriction in the amount to be received as foreign contribution
- **Prior permission** (Form F.C 1A) This registration grants a specific amount from a specific donor, and will need a letter of intent from the donor along with the application form

- The foreign contribution should not incite offences, or endanger the life or physical safety of anyone
- They will need a separate bank account for foreign contributions
- NRIs are not considered a foreign source, so any amount received from NRI will not be considered as foreign contribution

The NGO should be in existence for at least 3 years, should have been working for the benefit of society and have spent Rs. 6,00,000 over the last 3 years on its activities



IMAGINE: L. BALAJI/REUTERS

Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) cancelled the registration of Greenpeace under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), leading to a debate on funding of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

For many NGOs in the city, the FCRA, combined with drying up of local funding, has meant that many projects have to be cancelled.

While they say that registration for the FCRA was easy a few years ago, it has now become a lot more stringent. “Often, the larger NGOs do not face a problem when it comes to funding, but smaller ones have an issue,” says V. Nagarani from HOPE Public Charitable Trust. The organisation received their FCRA certification five years ago, but not much funding has come in from foreign sources, she adds.

There are several NGOs that exist only on paper. “These have given others too a bad name and so the funding has dried up for many sectors,” she points out, adding that only around 10 per cent of their funding comes through government schemes. They rely on the goodwill of people and philanthropists for the rest.

Other NGOs that registered for FCRA over a decade ago too say very little foreign funding comes in now. According to V. Vedanayagam, who runs Greater Love Children Home in Ayanavaram, registered for the FCRA in 2003. “In the past two years, although I have not got much money from foreign funding, I have had to

submit annual returns on the account. Initially, there was a lot more funding coming in to the State, but now this seems to have dried up,” he says.

Virgil D’ Sami, executive director of Arunodhaya, too agrees. “In general, since the social indicators in Tamil Nadu are high, international agencies tend to concentrate on other States such as Bihar,” she says. Her organisation registered for FCRA in 2000, and needs to renew it now.

“Recently, a number of organisations, including People’s Watch, had their FCRA registration suspended for halting development activities. Some organisations did not update their addresses while others had not filed tax returns,” she said, adding that most of her funding came from the government, and some from organisations such as Childline.

“We have a few regular funders from abroad, including Action Aid, but these projects are ending soon, and we will have to find new agencies for our projects,” she said. According to Sudha Ramalingam, who runs an old-age home at Perungulathur through Manonmani Trust, funding, especially for organisations dealing with the elderly, is a problem.

“Although we have registered for FCRA recently, we have received less than \$2,000 and even that is only from people we know,” she says. Currently their home has around 15 people, but they are looking to expand.

“All our funding has come from friends and people who know us, and it has been difficult to raise funds for even small projects,” she says. Her organisation even tried crowdfunding, but it was not very successful. “Eventually, I asked people I know to fund our campaign through a crowdfunding site, which I could have done even otherwise,” she said.

According to a senior chartered accountant, however, many NGOs did not file their returns on time. “Tamil Nadu has the second highest number of NGOs that have not filed their returns, next only to Andhra Pradesh. Many organisations only focus on their social cause, and do very little to ensure that their papers are in order,” he said.

## **Small tea growers plan Tea Park**

The Nilgiris Tea Development Foundation, which consists of micro and small tea growers from The Nilgiris, plans to set up a Tea Park in Coimbatore on about five acres.

H.N. Sivan, chairman of the foundation, told *The Hindu* that the park will have facilities to blend, grade, weigh and pack the teas.

The primary production will be at the tea gardens in The Nilgiris. This will be brought to the central processing unit at the park.

All the teas will be blended and graded (automatic). The packed tea will be sent to the Ooty Fresh tea points across the State.

### **Total cost**

The total cost of the project is estimated to be Rs. 10 crore. The Tea Board has provision to provide 40 per cent subsidy for the proposal.

The land will be finalised soon, he said.

Of the 65,000 micro and small tea growers in The Nilgiris, nearly 2,000 are expected to be part of the Tea Park project in the next 12 months. Apart from the tea points, customers can taste the teas at the park and buy it at the park and also place orders online, when the project is commissioned.

In the next one year, the foundation plans to set up Ooty Fresh tea points across the State. Already there are about 50 requests from different parts of the State for setting up tea points.

These will be mainly in the colleges and on the Highways.

The project will benefit the farmers by giving them better realisation for the tea leaf, he said.

## 2,000 saplings planted to honour Kalam



Over 2,000 saplings were planted in Perumbakkam village on Sunday as a mark of respect to former President of India A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

The event, organised by TIST Tree Planting India in association with Wipro Care Trust, a corporate social activity arm of Wipro Limited, Bengaluru, marked the launch of the program to plant 25,000 saplings sponsored by WCT for the current year.

### **Creating biodiversity**

Speaking to *The Hindu*, B. Praveen, programme manager, said Wipro sponsors 25,000 saplings every year and plants them in five northern districts of Tamil Nadu through local groups formed by TIST-TPI.

The main objective of TIST India's programme is to create islands of biodiversity in an already fragmented landscape to help farmers said A. Joseph Rixon, director, TIST-TPI. He said around 1.8 million saplings were planted in Kancheepuram, Tiruvallur, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai and Villupuram districts since 2003.

Over 5,500 farmers have been enrolled as members of this program that is sponsored by Corporates including Wipro. Mr. Rixon said participants were also entitled to avail greenhouse gas (GhG) credits after 20 years.

This would be paid based on the World market price of GhG credits, as on December 1 of the year for which payment was made, he added.

## **CM inaugurates health facilities in Erode**

Health facilities worth over Rs. One crore was inaugurated in Government Hospitals in the district by Chief Minister Jayalalithaa on Monday through video-conferencing. At the Government Headquarters Hospital in Erode, the Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care unit established at a cost of Rs. 70 lakh was commissioned.

### **New office**

Another facility inaugurated in Erode was the new office of the Deputy Director of Health Services constructed at an expenditure of Rs. 45 lakh at Thindal.

The SNCU (Sick Newborn Care Unit) constructed at a cost of Rs. 33.5 lakh was dedicated to the Government Hospital, Gobichettipalayam.

### **Modern kitchen**

In Perundurai Government Hospital, a modern kitchen was inaugurated by Environment Minister Thoppu N.D. Venkatachalam.

District Collector S. Prabakar, Joint Director of Medical Services S. Mani, Deputy Director of Health Services Balusamy and other senior officials took part.

## **A viable crop**

Coconut is a viable crop for the production of many value added by-products. Virgin coconut oil, coconut honey, coconut sauce, coconut milk, coconut chips, neera, coconut syrup, coconut candy, coconut milk are some of the coconut based value added products.

P. Geetha, scientist, KVK Sandhiyur, explained the simple preparation techniques of these value added products and said that farmers could get adequate additional income from the coconut based entrepreneurship. By-products like coconut shell, handicrafts, coconut shell powder, coconut wood handicrafts, coir pith briquette, coir bricks could also be manufactured from coconuts.

The coconut related schemes implemented by both the Central and the State Governments, particularly the Coconut Development Board, were also highlighted.

Besides, coconut has other benefits like prevention of obesity, improve heart health, improves insulin secretion, slowdown blood sugar level and improves digestion and also has antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal, and anti parasitic healing properties.

### **150 more poultry farms to come up in Perambalur**



Collector Darez Ahamed inspecting a poultry farm at Aranarai near Perambalur. The State government has allocated Rs. 4 crore for creating 150 poultry farms in Perambalur district for 2014-15 and 2015-16. It included Rs. 1.34 crore allocated this year. It is aimed at developing poultry clusters in the non-poultry backward regions such as Perambalur, Tiruch, and Karur.

Collector Darez Ahamed said out of 150 poultry farms, the Department of Animal Husbandry had identified farmers for setting up poultry units.

It had started the process of constructing poultry farms for 2015-16.

For raising a farm with 5,000 chicks, the State government would give a subsidy of Rs. 2,68,750.

The beneficiaries would avail bank loan to the tune of Rs. 10,75,000.

Farmers in Veppur panchayat unions had shown interest to set up poultry units. He said the scheme had been implemented in the district since 2012-13. Of the target of 413 units, 313 farms had been established.

Most of them had been functioning well. Out of remaining 100 farms, construction had been taken up for 70 farms.

Steps were taken to release bank loan for 30 farms.

Mr. Ahamed visited various parts in the district and met the poultry farmers, who have been rearing chicks.

They told that they got an average of Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 60,000 for rearing chicks for a batch in 42 days.

### **Training in azolla cultivation**



Farmers being trained in azolla cultivation at Veterinary College and Research Institute in Tirunelveli.

A training programme on azolla cultivation for the benefit of dairy farmers was conducted at Veterinary College and Research Institute here on Monday.

Though dairy farming is a sustainable income generation activity for the farmers, availability of green fodder has become so difficult in the recent past. When a field survey was recently conducted among the dairy farmers of the district, it was found that the level of green fodder production was low and the feeding cost for concentrate was high for the milch animals.

To overcome these problems, the farmers were trained by Department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Extension Education, Veterinary College and Research Institute, in cultivating 'azolla', a protein-rich floating fern under the NABARD-funded scheme on 'Popularization of azolla as low-cost supplemental cattle feed among the dairy farmers of Tirunelveli district'.

Members of the NABARD Farmers' Club in Maanur, Radhapuram, Alangulam, Tenkasi, Nanguneri, Palayamkottai, Cheranmahadevi, Melaneelithanallur, Keezhapaavor areas in the district were selected as beneficiaries of the training programme. Classes on importance of feeding management in dairying, fodder varieties, azolla as low-cost feed supplement in cattle feed, disease management in dairy cattle and method demonstration on azolla cultivation were conducted.

S. Prathaban, Dean, Veterinary College and Research Institute, delivered the presidential address and distributed the inputs Azolla Inoculum to the beneficiaries to be grown in their farms.

S. Senthilkumar, Principal Investigator of the scheme and Assistant Professor, Department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Extension Education, Veterinary College and Research Institute, explained the modus operandi of the scheme to the beneficiaries.

### **“Prevent wild animal invasion into farms”**





A group of farmers from Sivalaarkulam and Ayyanarkulam village panchayats near Alangulam submitted petitions to Collector M. Karunakaran on Monday seeking steps to prevent wild animal invasion into their farms.

In separate petitions, the farmers said wild animals such as spotted deer, sambar, wild boar and peacock, all living in the Kottamalai and Kaavukutti reserve forests, were entering cultivable lands around Sivalaarkulam and Ayyanarkulam areas in search of food and water and damaging crops every day.

If special arrangements were made to ensure the availability of food and water inside the reserve forest area itself, it would effectively prevent the wild animal invasions and consequent crop damage.

Though repeated appeals had been made in the past to the forest officials, no such arrangement had been made so far, they pointed out.

Moreover, fence should be created around the reserve fore

### **Seed samples taken for quality check in Tuticorin**

A total of 659 seed samples have been lifted from private dealers across the district this year for germination and genetic purity test to the notified seed testing lab.

There is no compromise on the quality of seeds and stringent action will be taken against any dealer found guilty of selling sub-standard seeds to farmers, according to Deputy Director of Seed Inspection C. Krishnakumari.

Farmers have been advised to use only certified seeds to ensure good cultivation and harvest. Last year, a total of 1,700 samples of seeds, including maize, sorghum, cumbu, cotton, pulses and vegetables, were collected from private dealers in the district and six cases were filed against dealers for selling substandard seeds after the quality of maize, cotton and coriander was not assured in the test, the Deputy Director told *The Hindu* on Monday.

She said dealers should sell seeds with label containing relevant particulars such as their colour, number, variety, expiry date, month and year of testing, germination

details, physical purity, genetic purity, season and adoptability, weight and name of the chemical used for seed treatment.

Even certified seeds should have the proper label along the certification tag. Farmers should check it and get bills for the seeds purchased and keep it safe, she said.

Referring to stock position of seeds suitable for rainfed cultivation, the Deputy Director said 15 tonnes of sorghum of 'K-8' variety and 16 tonnes of hybrid sorghum, 40 tonnes of hybrid maize seeds, five tonnes of hybrid cotton and pulses seeds of 26 tonnes were available.

As for hybrid sorghum of 'PAC 501' variety, 40 tonnes of seed was sold to farmers.



### **Egyptian, Pune local onion bring little cheer**

PUNE: Onion prices in the city are so high now that the pinch is hurting. The retail price of onion on Monday hovered between Rs 70 and Rs 80 per kg in most parts, even though there was a steady inflow of the bulb in the wholesale market.

Traders said the quality of the old stock being released by farmers into the market is inferior, hence the prices are high. With the new crop of onion not of good quality because of the poor monsoon, traders holding up the superior and dry variety are making a killing. The situation, traders said, is unlikely to change unless the new crop arrives.

Pashan vegetable retailer Anup Verma said, "Most onion available in the market is the red and the wet one, which does not command a good price. Some stock held back by farmers is blackened and rotten. Traders with the good variety are charging a premium to capitalise on shortage."

Onion supply to the city is adequate, said N D Gule, in-charge of the fruits and vegetables sub-section of the Agriculture Produce Market Committee. "We have

received four truckloads of the Egyptian variety which sells for not more than Rs 40-45 per kg. The local variety is also not commanding more than Rs 50-52 in the wholesale market. Retail prices should not be more than Rs 55-60 in the city. However, traders are taking advantage and hiking the prices," he said.

### **Centre plans media blitz on climate action ahead of Paris meet**

NEW DELHI: In the run-up to the global climate conference in Paris later this year, the Modi government will launch an extensive media and public campaign for three months on efforts being made to reduce greenhouse gases and mitigate climate change in India.

The programme, to be launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in mid-September, will involve 15 ministries including environment, road transport and highways, urban development, power and renewable energy, aviation, agriculture, water resources and science and technology. The campaign will continue till mid-December, sources said.

They said the Prime Minister's Office has suggested around 50 themes that the ministries can work on and they have got a week's time to finalize the themes. To expedite the process considering its importance in the global meet, the PM's principal secretary Nripendra Mishra held a meeting with the secretaries of the identified departments on Friday.

According to government officials, the suggested themes include hydropower, harnessing solar and wind energy, practicing smart agriculture to face the challenges of climate change, smart cities, fuel efficiency, green highways and Namami Gange.

These campaigns are aimed at telling the world what all India has been doing to face the challenges of climate change. All these initiatives will also be part of India's climate action plan, which is to be submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC) by the end of this month.

This will also send a message to the rich nations, who are historical polluters that India has taken a number of adaptation and mitigation measures ahead of the crucial climate talks in Paris where a global climate deal is expected to be signed.

### **Agriculture expert Ramesh Chand appointed to Niti Aayog**

Agriculture expert Ramesh Chand has been appointed as new member of the Niti Aayog.

Chand is the third member to join the government's think tank which has replaced the erstwhile planning commission.

The Aayog, which is headed by eminent economist Arvind Panagariya, has two other members—economist Bibek Debroy and former DRDO chief V K Saraswat.

Chand's appointment came at a time the Modi government is keen to revive the agriculture sector and reaffirm its commitment to farmers.

The BJP government has already formed a task force to suggest ways to boost agriculture sector in a follow up to first meeting of the Niti Aayog chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The task force, under the aegis of Aayog, is mandated to recommend ways to reinvigorate agriculture, strategies for reforms and identify successful experiments from which all states can learn.

Faced with the Congress-led opposition's onslaught, the BJP government has been trying to project an image of being pro-farmer and pro-poor.

## **SLBC asks banks not to collect interest from farmers**

The state-level bankers' committee (SLBC) has instructed banks not to collect interest component from farmers eligible for renewal of loan under 'Vaddileni Panta Runalu'

( VRL) or interest-free loan scheme implemented by Telangana government.

Lead bank of the SLBC, State Bank of Hyderabad, sent out a circular to the banks on September 5, and advised them not to insist the farmers to pay 4 per cent interest on fresh crop loans. The lead bank has asked the banks to follow 4 per cent interest subvention provided under the interest-free crop loan scheme.

The lead bank's circular comes in response to agriculture minister Pocharam Srinivas Reddy's instruction that the banks must not ask the farmers to pay 4 per cent interest while disbursing loans for kharif and rabi.

Srinivas Rao had raised objections during the SLBC meeting held last week, that some banks were imposing 4 per cent interest notwithstanding interest subvention under VRL.

## **23rd foundation day at IIPR**

KANPUR: The 23rd foundation day of Indian Institute of Pulses Research (IIPR) was organised here on Saturday. JS Sandhu, deputy director general (Crop Science), ICAR, New Delhi, was the chief guest while vice-chancellor of Chandra Shekhar Azad University of Agriculture and Technology, Kanpur SL Goswami was the guest of honour on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, JS Sandhu said that in comparison to 1950, the crop production had increased five times but still people were suffering from malnutrition.

He expressed concern over the declining availability of pulses to each individual and suggested that fertilisers should be used with constraints. He also expressed concern over changing climate scenario and the bad effects of rising pollution levels on crops. " If hybrid quality of seeds and production techniques are made available to the farmers, the production of pulses is likely to go up by 30%", he said. He urged the scientists to work in the direction of benefiting the farmers. SL Goswami in his address expressed concern over difficulties being faced by farmers in getting high quality of seeds and advanced production techniques.

### **Encourage farmers to adopt multiple crops system: Expert**

MYSURU: DK Maheshwar, vice-chancellor of University of Horticultural Sciences on Sunday said that farmers' suicides can be prevented by encouraging them to adopt modern agricultural methods and multiple crop system.

Addressing a gathering at a workshop on 'Homa an agricultural method' organized by Anantha Bharatha Charitable Trust and Asha Kirana at Mahajana College, he said, "Farmers can get good returns if they adopt advanced farming methods and opt for a system of multiple crops. They must go for crops where investment is less and profit is more. In this system, if one crop fails, farmers can make money from other crops."

German agriculture scientist Karen Heschel and former minister SA Ramadas were present.

THE HINDU  
**BusinessLine**

## Oilmeal exports dips 42% on low crushing



Oilmeal exports dipped 42 per cent in August to 91,834 tonnes against 156,942 tonnes recorded in the same period last year. This was largely due to low realisation from processing soyabean and other oilseeds being sold at high prices in the domestic markets.

Export of soyameal, once the largest constituent of shipments from India, has been sliding consistently and touched a low of 768 tonnes in August against 928 tonnes in July. The country's export of soyameal was down at 2,098 tonnes in June against 14,046 tonnes in May, while in April it was at 18,017 tonnes.

In the first five months of this fiscal, the overall exports were down 33 per cent at 609,748 tonnes against 914,849 tonnes in the same period last year, according to the Solvent Extractors' Association statement.

Capacity utilisation is at the lowest level and many of the oil mills are planning to shut down plants due to lower realisation both from oil and meals produced with raw material sourced domestically, said BV Mehta, Executive Director, SEA.

South Korea remained the largest importer of oilmeal between April and August though its shipments were down by nine per cent at 384,956 tonnes. Korea shipped in 184,555 tonnes of rapeseed meal, 199,716 tonnes of castor meal and 685 tonnes of soyabean meal.

Exports to Vietnam were up 33 per cent at 124,644 tonnes (93,586 tonnes) consisting of 392 tonnes of rapeseed meal, 480 tonnes of soyabean meal and 123,772 tonnes of

de-oiled rice bran extraction. Thailand, Taiwan and Oman were other importers of oil meal from India.

Kandla handled 409,212 tonnes of oilmeal, accounting for 67 per cent of shipments from India. Kolkata and Mumbai (including JNPT) shared 23 per cent (141,406 tonnes) and 4 per cent (23,603 tonnes) of total volumes, respectively.

### **Drought set to hit onion output in Maharashtra**



Maharashtra is set to see a fall in both area and production of onion this Kharif season on account of drought conditions in the State with the failure of the monsoon. The State is the largest producer of onion in the country.

However, increased area under the bulb in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat, is likely to make up for the loss, said officials, even though estimates were yet to be confirmed.

Higher retail prices are expected to cool off when arrivals begin in early-October. “Onion production in Maharashtra will be down this Kharif season due to the lack of rains. Area under the crop is lower by about 20 per cent for the season in Nashik, Ahmednagar and Pune, among other districts,” said Jai Gopal, Director, ICAR-Directorate of Onion and Garlic Research.



## **Rabi worry, too**

“Plantings for the late Kharif have started in some places but persistent lack of rainfall is worrying even for the Rabi during which a bulk of the onions is produced,” he added.

As of Monday, Marathwada and the State’s central region had recorded a 51 per cent and 43 per cent deficit in rainfall respectively, according to India Meteorological Department data. The figures are the two highest shortfalls recorded among the 36 sub-divisions tracked by the Met agency.

## **Acreage slips**

The Kharif season, including the late varieties, make up for 40-45 per cent of total onion output. Only about 11,000 hectares (ha) out of 22,000 ha has been covered this Kharif in Nashik, while about 8,000 ha has been sown in Ahmednagar out of around 17,600 ha.

A decline in production can result in prices shooting up, as evidenced last month when average onion retail prices in NewDelhi scaled ₹80/kg.

“There will be a drop in area and production in Maharashtra due to the drought. In Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, the area is normal but output will be low for the same reason. However, these shortfalls will be made up by the increased area in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat,” said RP Gupta, Director, National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF).

## **Govt efforts**

Despite early Kharif arrivals and imports from Afghanistan and Egypt by private traders, average retail prices in New Delhi and Mumbai stood at ₹60 and ₹59/kg on Monday.

The Centre had earlier increased the minimum export price on the bulb to prevent further shortages.

It had also directed the MMTC to float tenders for the import of 10,000 tonnes of onions and shipments are expected by mid-September.

## **Production data**

According to the NHRDF, India produced 193.53 lakh tonnes (lt) of onions in 2014-15, higher than its previous estimate of around 189 lt, and closer to the 194.02 lt produced the year before.

Maharashtra produced 56.54 lt of the bulb last year.

## **10 out of 13 main agriculture products were in the negative zone**

Exports of as many as 10 agriculture products including coffee, rice, spices and tobacco have recorded negative growth in July due to contraction in prices in the global commodity market.

Cereals, oil meals, oil seeds, fruits and vegetables, marine products, dairy and poultry products too recorded negative growth during the month, according to the Commerce Ministry.

In all, 10 out of 13 main agriculture products that are closely monitored by the Commerce Ministry, were in the negative zone in July.

Exporters body FIEO said that low prices of agri-produce in the global market is one of the main reasons for India's declining exports.

"Prices in the domestic market are much above the global prices making domestic market a better option than exports," said Ajay Sahai, DG & CEO of Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO).

During the month, exports of rice, spices and tobacco declined by 6.7 per cent, 2.5 per cent and 3.41 per cent, respectively.

Other products which have reported negative growth include other cereals (71.56 per cent), oil meals (43.81 per cent), oil seeds (30.98 per cent), fruits and vegetables (11.38 per cent) and meat, dairy & poultry products (7.34 per cent).

Decline in these exports is a key factor for overall contraction in India's merchandise exports.

Agri-products account for over 10 per cent of the country's total exports.

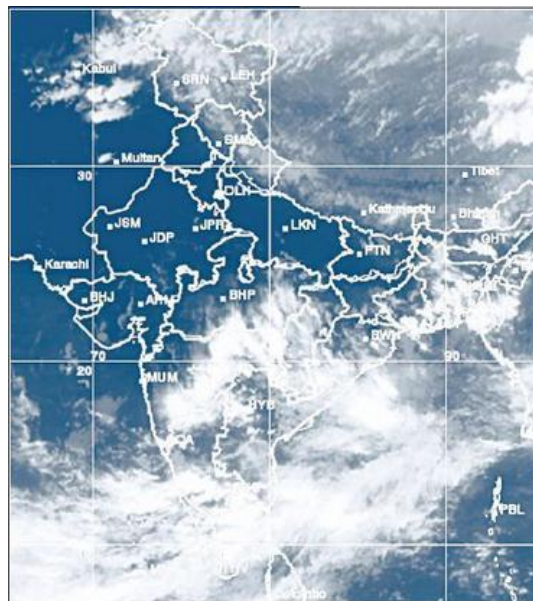
As per estimates, outbound shipments of agri-produce in 2010-11 amounted USD 17.35 billion; USD 27.43 billion in 2011-12; USD 31.86 billion in 2012-13 and about USD 45 billion in 2013-14.

India's exports contracted for the eighth straight month by 10.3 per cent in July to USD 23.13 billion, pushing the trade deficit to USD 12.81 billion.

In order to boost agri-exports, the Commerce Ministry is asking exporters to explore new markets and ship value-added products.

Prices of soyameal, a variety of oilmeal, have decreased to USD 392 per tonne from USD 509 per tonne in August 2014. "Our soyameal is costlier by about USD 100-125 per tonne in the last one year that is why we are outpriced in the global market," Solvent Extractors' Association Executive Director B V Mehta said.

### Heavy rains in South narrows down deficit



Heavy rain over the South Peninsula, especially Karnataka and parts of Kerala, has cut down deficit in the region by two percentage points to 19 per cent on Monday.

But the overall rain deficit for the country as a whole was unchanged at 14 per cent from Sunday, though higher by a similar margin than what the Met Office has forecast for the entire four-month season.

### **Churn in bay**

In a forecast update on Monday, the Met traced out an upper air cyclonic circulation over West-central Bay of Bengal.

This is expected to set up a low-pressure area in the region over the next few days.

The Bay is currently witnessing good south-westerly monsoon flows thanks to the pull power of typhoon 'Kilo' in the northwest Pacific.

The strength of the flows that rebound off the eastern Himalayas off North-East India is what is setting up the churn in the Bay, in turn registering itself as a cyclonic circulation in the higher atmosphere.

Various global models expect this to descend to lower levels and set up a low-pressure area in a week's time.

It would cross the Andhra Pradesh coast to enter land.

### **Cyclone in offing?**

From here, it is seen pushing deeper into the hinterland as a potential 'warhead' and start strengthening as it approaches Konkan-Goa.

The odd projection suggests that proximity to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea would only help ramp up the system strength to a likely cyclone along and off the Konkan coast by September 20.

It is then shown as careening off in a west-northwest direction to the Mumbai-South Gujarat coast and further away into the Arabian Sea.

Generally in the North Indian Ocean (includes the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal), cyclones are known to breed between April and December, with peaks in May and November.

## **Rich harvest for TN farmer from drip irrigation**

Farmers in Govindapuram village, a small hamlet in Dharapuram in Tamil Nadu's Tirupur district have proved that three crops (including rice) can be raised in a year under limited water conditions using drip irrigation.

One among them – M Parthasarathy was recently identified for the Innovative Rice Farmer Award, conferred by the Indian Institute of Rice Research, Hyderabad. He was among the 30 farmers from 16 States across the country to be nominated for the award.

Incidentally, Parthasarathy's guide BJ Pandian, Director, Water Technology Centre, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, said: "growing rice under drip irrigation is a new concept, tested and promoted for adoption by WTC."

Parthasarathy introduced the drip irrigation for rice in a cropping system approach. He raised onion between April – June using drip system, followed by maize between July – September and cultivated rice using the same system in October – February.

# **Business Standard**

## **In defense of pesticides**

Tough times are upon Tamil Nadu and Karnataka vegetable farmers. Benign weather has ensured bumper yields but the mandi rates have hit the floor due as an important buyer has stayed away from the market. Thanks to its undulating terrain and orientation towards plantation crops, Kerala relies on its neighbours for much of its [fruits](#) and [vegetables](#) needs. Over 60 percent of fruits and veggies consumed in the state are imported. This persistent demand has led to the development of thriving vegetable clusters in and around Nagarcoil, Madurai, Coimbatore, Nilgiris and Mysore.

A news report in early June, citing a study by the Kerala food safety authority, alleged that the TN and Karnataka farmers had put the state on a pesticide diet. The report claimed that the usage of [pesticides](#) were five times the permissible limit. The state apparatus, still recovering from a very public trial of endosulfan, disrupted the supply chain by imposing more regulations at border checkpoints. As the orders dried up, unsold arrivals resulted in a price crash in neighbouring states. Tamil Nadu, which used to supply 900 truckloads daily, was the worst hit.

From sowing to harvesting, vegetable [farming](#) is a strict time-bound project. A tomato field is harvested twice a week for 10-12 weeks. Delayed harvest, even by two days, results in unsaleable produce. Absence of cold storage infrastructure accentuates the challenge. The supply chain too is rigid to absorb these shocks and divert the excess supplies to newer markets.

The gory images of victims of alleged [endosulfan](#) poisoning from cashew plantations of Kasaragod have left a deep scar of the psyche of the nation. Repeated reports of excess pesticide residues found in food from various parts of the country have made consumers extremely nervous. The battle is still raging between Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala with each roping their respective central agricultural universities to back their claims.

Unfortunately, the media reports on this issue are high on emotions and low on data. For example, the much maligned wax coated apple has been a standard industry practice since the early 30's. As apples lose their wax coating during washing, the packinghouses use natural wax to replace it. The coating reduces perspiration and prevents moisture loss. The coating helps apples travel further and keeps the price affordable.

The dominant narrative of carcinogen laced food platter on the dining table gets punctured when data is given a chance to prove itself. At 650 grams of active ingredients per hectare, pesticide consumption in India is one of the lowest in the world. For a country that is one of the top producers of major food crops, it is a remarkable achievement. It is a fact that pesticides have a vital role in our country's food security.

In 2010, ICAR conducted a nationwide survey of vegetables to assess the pesticide residues in fruits and vegetables. Only 542 (1.6 percent) out of 34,207 samples were found to having residues above the prescribed limits. Disturbingly, the study found the presence of non-recommended pesticides in vegetables. Prior to its ban, India consumed over 4000 tonnes of the endosulfan annually for decades. No fruits and vegetables went untouched by the ubiquitous insecticide. If endosulfan was even half dangerous as claimed by various unsubstantiated reports, deadly diseases linked to its toxicology would have inflicted at least a generation of Indians. The fact that aerial sprays of high dosage endosulfan were responsible for the deadly poisoning in Kasaragod was drowned in the fracas. An affordable pesticide was snatched away from the farmers. Alternatives like Imidachloprid, Thiamethoxam and Rynaxypyr are expensive. And hence the reason why Monocrotophos, prohibited from use on fruits and vegetables, has now become the go to insecticide.

Intensive mono-cropping and off-season cultivation have been blamed for some farmers resorting to non-prescribed chemicals to combat pesticide resistance. However, it is tough for a small farmer to switch away from a crop that he has internalized the vagaries of the plant, its diseases and marketing. Another deterrent is the initial capital expenditure associated with cropping of each vegetable. For growing an acre of tomato, one needs at least 1,500 5-foot bamboo stakes, about 4kms

of tomato twine and drip lines. One cropping season is not enough to recover this cost.

For consumers, the risk of eating vegetables with high residues of pesticides gets highly diluted as a produce from particular farm gets pooled in every step of supply chain, but the farmer consumes what he grows. And that is where the efforts should be directed. The work is cut out for extension services to nudge farmers towards judicious use of pesticides so productivity increases further without compromising their own health. It is a long-term battle and until then, please do take this advice from Kerala agricultural university: wash your fruits and vegetables thoroughly before consuming it.



### **Chlorophile: Priced out of the plate?**

At Nayabazar, Delhi's wholesale market for pulses, we get a variety of views on the cause and consequences of the spurt in prices of pigeon pea, or arhar, the second-most consumed dal in the country, after chickpea or chana, whose uses vary with changes in form.

One trader pleads the cause of the aam aadmi. The dal has disappeared from katoris or bowls used for accompaniments at meals, he says. Another holds retailers responsible. While wholesale margins do not exceed 1%, retailers in nearby Kharibaoli jack up rates by more than 30%. The government's focus on industry and neglect of agriculture also comes in for criticism. The cap on stocking limits leads to volatility, says another. He trades about 60 tonnes a day but cannot hold more than 200 tonnes



at any time. A retired teacher copes by serving dal as thin as attendance in government schools. A young homemaker says 'plus minus karna padta hai.' The math lets her kids have dal at any one meal not both.

Like images from a line-printer, a picture emerges.

Pigeon pea prices have touched highs never seen before. Erratic weather is the proximate reason. On August 22, last year, it rained in torrents in the Kanpur Dehat area where long-duration pigeon pea (of 280-300 days) is traditionally grown. It laid crops flat. After that there was no rain. A farmer like Udai Bir Singh, who has been trained in the agronomy by the nearby Indian Institute of Pulses Research (IIPR), got just one quintal a hectare against 25 quintals he expected. When a year-long crop like pigeon pea fails, 'kisan toot jata hai,' he rues.

Area under pigeon pea has remained flat for the past 25 years. In north-west India, it has fallen victim to the rice-wheat (and mungbean) cropping system. In the Kanpur Dehat area, farmers are withdrawing from long-duration pigeon pea and growing two or more crops as a hedging strategy.

Medium- and short-duration pigeon pea varieties have been developed but are not very productive. Yields have remained flat at about 700 kg a hectare for the past 40 years. Icrisat has produced a hybrid, a first for a pulses crop. C L Lakshmi pati Gowda, who retired in January as deputy director-general of the Hyderabad-based institute which researches crops for the semi-arid regions and the tropics, says it can give 2,500 to 3,000 tonnes a hectare. He blames a shortage of seeds for the hybrids not taking off and wants the private sector to be roped in. But scientists like S M Mannur, of the pulses research station in Kalaburagi (Gulbarga), says 'the production technology is not defined,' that is, the set of practices farmers must follow to obtain the target yields, have not been spelt out.

Lured by this year's high prices, farmers in Kalaburagi had rushed to sow pigeon pea. The institute had run out of seed and there would have been 'havoc' says Mannur, if rains had not vanished for about a month, delaying sowing operations. 'Prices will fall,' during the next harvest, he predicts.

It is a boom-bust cycle that should be evened out for the stability of both prices and farmers' incomes.

Despite high prices, small holders do not gain, says Sharad Tenglikar, a professor of community medicine at a Kalaburagi college and himself a farmer, who grows pulses and other crops on about 60 acres of own and leased land. Small-holders are forced to sell at harvest time when prices are low to redeem loans taken from commission agents. It is rich farmers and traders who rake it in, he says. 'Yes, hoarding definitely is there,' he says. 'There are 250 to 300 mills in Gulbarga and they hold it back.'

Even if smallholders wished to sell during the lean season, they cannot because storages are lacking. Whole pulses with seed coats on do not keep for long as bruchids are attracted to them. Processed dals have a longer shelf life. Mannur proposes 'pulses parks' in production hubs like Kalaburagi and Kanpur with processing facilities and giant silos, which government could use for open market operations to stabilise prices—and production.

N P Singh, director of Kanpur's IIPR blames government policies. Minimum support prices are announced but there is little procurement as dals are not sold through ration shops except in states like Tamil Nadu. The import of yellow pea from Canada has disrupted the pigeon pea economy. For Canadian farmers, yellow pea is a bonus crop they grow when paid by the government to keep wheat fields fallow (to shore up international prices). 'We are trying to introduce pigeon pea into the cropping system

of Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh as a replacement for rice,' he says, but productivity will have to be improved.

Pigeon pea production can increase by about 30% if GM technologies such as Bt technology are used; this has demonstrated great effect in cotton, against bollworms, and can be deployed against pod-borers, says Gowda. But opposition from the anti-GM movement is preventing the use of this technology, though research continues at ICRISAT, IIPR and elsewhere.

Another affliction is fusarium wilt. When pigeonpea was planted with jowar, the latter acted as a barrier. Its root secretions would kill the wilt. 'We have lost the cropping balance,' says Singh.

Balance needs to be restored in policy as well. The government is sensitive to prices and has worked to augment supply. But if pigeon pea growers do not get a greater share of retail value, they are unlikely to remain doves.