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THE HINDU

‘Government can think of coco-tourism circuit’

Did you know that coco produced in Tamil Nadu tastes really yummy?

A Netherlands-based institute tested coco grown in the State and said it is really good. “The State produces about 1,300 tonnes of coco annually and with government intervention, this could very well be increased to 10,000 tonnes,” said Suresh Iyer, Managing Director, Lotte India.

Addressing a session on agriculture and agro processing at the Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet here on Thursday, he said more coco can be cultivated along with coconut trees.

“For the farmers, coco pays double the money of banana. On an average, a kg of coco nuts is priced at Rs. 200. Investors can think of drying and crushing facilities,” he said suggesting that the government could think of creating a coco-tourism circuit like Karnataka’s coffee circuit.

Tafe Chairman and CEO Mallika Srinivasan, who spoke about the density of mechanisation in the State, said there was a big scope for improvement in the sector. Minister for Agriculture R. Vaithilingam said the State had recorded an all-time high foodgrain production of 127.95 lakh tonnes in 2014-15.

Unit to produce biocontrol agents opened in Salem

A new unit to produce biocontrol agents has been opened in Sandhipettai village in Kadayampatti block recently.

The State Balanced Growth Scheme (SBGF) has funded the project. This is the first unit to be set up in the district under this scheme.

N. Elango, Joint Director of Agriculture, inaugurated the unit.

The scheme aims to uplift 100 economically and agriculturally backward blocks in the State.

This scheme involves educating farmers in biocontrol methods. Increasing the use of bio-control agents will encourage the farmers to avoid chemical pesticides.

This will result in reducing the cost of cultivation, and improving the agro-eco system indirectly.

The Agriculture Department has selected three villages in Kadayampatti block -- Kadayampatti (South), Gundukkal and Pannapatti under this scheme. Groups consisting ten progressive farmers has been formed for the implementation of the project.

Departmental officers, and Krishi Vigyan Kendra scientists will impart training to farmers on the techniques involved in the production of bio-control agents.

Mr. Elango said that the objective of the project was to minimise the usage of chemical fertilizers.

The farmers should adopt biological methods for controlling insects, and disease in the crops.

This technique helped farmers reduce the cost of cultivation and indirectly influence the agro-ecological system. He explained the various steps taken to promote the scheme among the farmers.

D. Bharani, Deputy Director of Agriculture; C. Rajendran, Union Deputy Director of Agriculture; N. Sekar, Assistant Director of Agriculture-Quality Control; and A. Nazar, Assistant Director of Agriculture, spoke.

Seed vending machine inaugurated



An automated seed vending machine installed in Palayamkottai on Thursday.— Photo: M. Lakshmi Arun

To encourage more people to go in for vegetable cultivation in their houses and on terraces to meet their daily requirements, Killikulam Agriculture College and Research Institute has installed an automated seed vending machine at its service centre near VOC Ground in Palayamkottai.

Joint Director of Agriculture C. Chandrasekaran formally inaugurated on Thursday the seed vending machine, which has been installed at Palayamkottai after Coimbatore and Madurai.

The Rs. 2.75 lakh-worth machine, fabricated by a Coimbatore-based private firm, would have seeds of vegetable and flowering plants and the public can get the seeds they prefer on paying Rs. 10 per packet between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

The Rs. 2.75 lakh-worth machine will have seeds of vegetable, flowering plants. Public can get it on paying Rs. 10 per packet

Madurai villagers fear industries may gobble fertile lands

Plan to bring big investments creates sense of fear among farmers of Sivarakottai and surrounding villages



GREEN EXPANSE: Various crops raised on rain-fed land in Sivarakottai speak volumes about soil fertility of the village.— File Photo

The State government is buoyed over its maiden two-day Global Investors Meet in Chennai that ended on Thursday having attracted over Rs. 2.42 lakh crore investment proposals. But its intention to bring big ticket investments to southern districts has created a sense of fear among farmers of Sivarakottai and surrounding villages in Madurai district.

They fear that attempts by previous Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam rulers to set up an industrial estate of the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (SIPCOT) on around 1,500 acres of fertile rain-fed land would become a reality under All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam government. “We learn that Tirumangalam Tahsildar and Special Tahsildar (SIPCOT) inspected the land on Wednesday. That they had sought certain details from their subordinates is a sign that the present government is going ahead with the land acquisition plan,” M. Ramalingam, secretary, Madurai District Farmers’ Association, said.

“We pray that Chief Minister Jayalalithaa will officially announce that lands in Sivarakottai, Karisalkalampatti and Swamimallampatti would not be acquired for setting up an industrial cluster as she had opposed the DMK government’s decision in 2008 and promised that in the event of acquisition

taking place, she would give the land back to the farmers on coming back to power,” he said.

He pointed out that the Chief Minister, during Parliamentary elections in 2014, had promised that her government would not promote industrial development at the cost of farming.

Former Joint Director of Agriculture A.J.A. Jeyasingh Gnanadurai said that Agriculture Department chose those villages for millet promotion under State Growth Balance Fund in 2014. The government promoted ‘kuthiraivaali’ and ‘varagu’ cultivation on 300 acres and gave subsidy in the form of seeds and ploughing and farm inputs. “Soil testing conducted in those areas in the past had proved that the land was fertile. The black cotton soil with high moisture retention is good for raising many crops throughout the year, though the entire tract is rain-fed,” he said. Besides, the Agriculture Department set up a millet processing unit in Sivarakottai to promote millet cultivation, he said.

Animals and birds

C.A.A. Krishnamoorthy of Madurai Nature Forum said that there were 10 waterbodies in the land identified for establishing the SIPCOT industrial estate. These areas were home to spotted deer, wild boars, jungle cats and hares.

Besides, 87 species of birds, including the rare migratory Bluethroat, had been spotted here. Perennial availability of water in the tanks here attract a large number of birds,” he said.

Paddy transplanting machine enhances returns

Use of machine transplanter for paddy cultivation being demonstrated at the State Seed Farm in Erode on Wednesday.

Taking cognisance of shortage of farm labourers, Agriculture Department officials on Wednesday demonstrated utility of machine transplanter at its State Seed Farm in Bhavani.



The demonstration carried out on a six-acre farm was in keeping with the State Government's keenness to utilise machineries and implements in crop cultivation, R.Savithiri, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Bhavani, said.

A new high-yielding paddy variety ADT (R) 49 was planted in the farm to convince farmers that the strategy will not only help in overcoming labour shortage, but also enhance returns by 20 per centage over traditional planting method.

As the seedlings are raised in the pro-trays, just one labourer could look after nursery preparations. Moreover, the seedlings are healthy and vigorous. There is no wastage while uprooting the seedlings, and the transportation cost to move seedlings to the main field is minimized.

As the standard spacing is maintained in entire cropped area, utilisation of full sunlight is possible and each hill will produce around 60-70 productive tillers, which is the determiner of increase in yield.

Farmers could easily carry out intercultural operation with power weeder, Ms. Savithri said, informing that the Agricultural extension centre, Bhavani, has been set 220 hectare target for machine transplantation with subsidy of

Rs.3,000 per ha. So far, nursery for 200 ha has been prepared for machine transplanting. On the whole, paddy will be cultivated in 4000 hectares in Bhavani block. Seeds and bio-fertilizers were available at Agricultural Extension Centre, Bhavani. Seed treatment is insisted to all the farmers during distribution of seeds, Ms. Savithri said.

Students transforming traditional farm practices into scientific methods

As a result, many farmers are now turning to low-cost sustainable farming



Students of the College of Agriculture conducting various programmes at Kannahatti village in Mandya district.

When Maranna (name changed) of Ankannana Doddi decided to raise a paddy nursery in the first week of August this year, he had planned to buy four quintals of fertilizer. However, he was short of funds by Rs. 3,000 to buy it, at one point of time, which forced him to abstain from agricultural activities

Now, Mr. Maranna is a happy farmer in Ankannana Doddi because of a silent revolution that is taking place in several parts of the district.

The 90-day Rural Agricultural Work Experience (RAWE) programme by the students of the College of Agriculture (University of Agricultural Sciences — Bengaluru), V.C. Farm, prompted him to turn to low-cost and sustainable agricultural practice.

“I was using four quintals of chemicals on my two-acre plot. But, because of the girls are camping at my village, I have reduced the quantity of fertilizer by almost 50 per cent,” he said.

Eighty-one final-year B.Sc. Agriculture students, as part of their curriculum, have been trying to transform the traditional agricultural practices into scientific ways at Ankannana Doddi, Nyamanahalli, Raghuram Pura, Hosahalli, Muthaiahnaegere and Kannahatti villages.

The students were split into six groups. They have been conducting RAWEP camps since July 15.

A series of educational programmes on mechanised farming, eradication of parthenium, digging pits, preparing vermi-compost, controlling rats, pests and disease management, removing/eradicating weeds, cultivating improved varieties of crops, seed treatment, root-feeding, integrated nutrient management, mushroom cultivation, bee keeping, reclamation of problematic soil etc. have been parts of the programme. The students prepared kitchen garden, distributed Moringa and curry leaf saplings and planted pupil, champaka, honge and mahagony plants in villages.

“I opted for integrated farming because of the camp,” said Shivalinge Gowda from Ankannana Doddi.

N. Leelavathi and her classmates have been displaying whatever they had learnt at Ankannana Doddi.

“We have been prompting farmers to grow azolla, besides disseminating information about various horticulture and agriculture-related schemes and subsidies available to farmers,” she said.

Students have also improved the knowledge of farmers on 10 varieties of paddy, eight of millets and several minor millets, oilseeds and pulses. They have decided to conduct some more programmes till October 15.

A good mix of vegetables



Poppy John tends to plants in her rooftop vegetable garden at her residence at K. K. Nagar in Tiruchi.— PHOTO: A. MURALITHARAN

Working for over two decades in Kudumbam, a non-governmental organisation devoted to organic farming has helped Poppy John to set up her own mini-nursery of plants and rooftop garden with over 110 pots at her home in K. K. Nagar. There are at least 10 varieties of vegetables, 15 herbs and 3 trees under the care of Mrs. Poppy and her husband John Xavier. Except for the trees and ornamental plants, everything else is grown in planter bags on the rooftop.

“It is a great feeling to see something flourishing under your care,” Mrs. Poppy told The Hindu. “We have decided to increase the number of pots this year, because the harvest of one or two plants is not enough to feed our family of seven members,” she said. Maintaining a vermin composting plant in a plastic barrel in one corner of the terrace, the couple has designed its own trellis using leftover building materials and wire to raise a crop of cucumbers and what appears to be miniature watermelons. The months of July to August are ideal for planting and harvests can be expected up to January, said Mrs. Poppy. “It’s better to reduce the number of plants as the weather gets hotter. Cowpea, okra and chilli do well in the direct sunlight,

but the others may need some shade control,” she said. The entire process is kept as free of chemicals as possible. Red soil is mixed with vermicompost and coconut peat, procured in pressed blocks from a supplier in Musiri.

Mr. John prefers to water the plants individually by hand, carrying up the water from the ground floor early in the morning. “It’s a nice way to exercise as well,” he smiled. The couple has never really calculated the cost of their hobby, though they advise newcomers to start slow. “Spinach is the easiest to grow, and one or two pots will yield enough to feed a family comfortably,” said Mr. John. “Once you see the plants responding to your care, start adding others.”

Climate-resilient technologies for farming

Climate-resilient technologies will be demonstrated at a two-day agricultural technology meet to be held at the Rice Research Station at Mancompu from September 17. The programme is being organised by Kayamkulam-based Krishi Vignan Kendra of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

The kendra has been engaged in efforts to improve the earnings of farmers in the area, which is known for flooding and waterlogging. Measures to upgrade farming methods were adopted at various levels during the past four year in Muttar panchayat.

The panchayat had been selected for implementing the programmes under the National Innovation in Climate Resilient Agriculture Technologies, said P.Muralidharan, senior scientist and head of KVK.

The schemes launched in the panchayat focused on adoption of appropriate technology to facilitate successful farming in areas threatened by flooding. The programmes, aimed at resource conservation and improved production, are sought to be extended to Champakkulam and Veliyanadu block panchayats.

Mr. Muralidharan said heavy rainfall, flash floods, high speed winds and waterlogging used to be a bane of Kuttanad farmers. Inundation of paddy fields and lodging of the crop at grain filling and maturity stages cause huge losses to the farmer. Then innovative technologies were intended to tackle such problems.

One of the innovations launched at Muttar was the ‘drum seeder’.

It was introduced for sowing, which optimised the use of seeds. The systematic sowing operations also helped the farmers in tackling the menace of weeds more effectively. The harvesting operations took lesser time, thus benefiting the farmer as the harvesters were charged on an hourly basis. The farmers adopting the innovative methods get an additional profit of Rs.8,000 to Rs.10,000 per acre, Mr. Muralidharan said.

Acidity control of the soil and scientific application of fertilizers and pesticides were part of the schemes for optimizing farm output. Innovative methods for poultry farming suited to areas prone to flooding, weed composting and value addition to farm products have been successfully demonstrated in Muttar. About 140 farmers were brought under the programme, covering about 60 hectares, he said.

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- *Agriculture technology meet begins on Sept.17*
 - *‘Drum seeder’ optimises use of seeds*
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Scientists to work on multi-resistant rice varieties

Research (DRR) and AgriBiotech Foundation (ABF) entered into a tripartite MoU to collaborate on a project titled “ Molecular cross talks between defence pathways in rice: antagonism to synergism”.

The three institutions will form a joint monitoring group to identify targets/ milestones and criteria for completion of the project.

Some years ago, CCMB and DRR collaborated in developing a bacterial blight resistant Samba Masuri rice variety.

In a press release here, CCMB Director, Ch. Mohan Rao, said that during extensive interactions with farmers, the scientists understood their needs and are attempting to address them. One such need is protection from other infections as well. It is possible that over the time, resistance of the improved Samba Masuri variety rice might be overcome by the bacteria. Thus, it is necessary to understand the molecular cross talks between defence pathways to develop multi-resistant pathways.

Dr. Ramesh Sonti, Chief Scientist CCMB, Dr. J. S. Bentur, subject matter specialist, Dr. G. Mallikarjuna, assistant professor, ABF, Dr. M. Srinivas Prasad, Dr. R.M. Sundaram, Dr.A.P. Padma Kumari and Dr.G.S. Laha, senior scientists from DRR, Hyderabad are the collaborators from respective institutes.

Efforts on to check tea quality



The adjudication sub committee of Coonoor Tea Trade Association in the presence of Executive Director C.Paulrasu, Tea Board, and all broker members had a tea tasting session in Coonoor. -Photo: Special arrangement

On Wednesday, Tea Board of India and Coonoor Tea Trade Association organised a tea tasting session. The samples were tested for three parameters – colour, taste, and infusion.

C. Paulrasu, executive director of Tea Board of India, told *The Hindu* that these were samples of teas that were the last 30 in the prices quoted in last week's auction at Coonoor. "We will analyse and take action on teas that scored less in the tea tasting session," he said.

The effort is to bring quality to the market. Such tea tasting sessions will be held regularly from this week, especially of teas in the price range of Rs. 40 to Rs. 45 at Coonoor. "We are now producing more tea. When there is focus on quality, the quantity will come down and farmers will get better prices," he said. Even now, there are teas that are sold at even Rs. 200 a kg in the auction.

The prices are not so low in the Coimbatore and Kochi auction centres, he said.

Meanwhile, the United Planters' Association of Southern India (UPASI) president Vijayan Rajes has said in a press release that the current price levels have pushed the tea industry to a crisis, affected 3.65 lakh workers, 70,000 small growers and their families in south India. Tea prices in the south fell by Rs. 15.85 a kg last year compared to the previous year and this year it has dropped by another Rs. 6.08 a kg to reach Rs. 80.42 a kg. Further, exports have dropped by 4.97 million kg.

The industry is facing stiff competition in the international market too and the cost disadvantage is affecting the sector.

Bankers get a hang of farming

Taking a break from their routine accounts and transactions, a group of bank managers took a crash course on farming.

The farm orientation and billeting programme for State Bank of Travancore managers organised by the Kerala Agricultural University has turned out to be a unique experience for the bankers and farmers.

The programme had two parts: a week-long training on capacity building in agriculture and a ‘farm stay’ at farmers’ houses four days.

First of its kind

“The ‘Life with the farmer programme’ was the first of its kind in the country wherein managers experienced farmer’s lifestyle, physical stress and strain, and problems they confront day by day,” said P. Rajendran, Kerala Agricultural University Vice-Chancellor.

Rooftop can be a fertile ground for chemical-free veggies



Gardening enthusiast R. Vinendran tends to his vegetable garden on his rooftop terrace in Maniyakara Street in Tiruchi.— Photo: Nahla Nainar

: The terrace, often the chosen dumping spot for the general detritus of life, has slowly emerged as an ideal place for kitchen gardens to grow and sustain households with harvests of chemical-free produce.

The appeal of modern-day organic subsistence farming has caught on in popular culture too. This year’s sleeper hit *36 Vayadhinile*, remake of 2014

Malayalam film *How Old Are You?* had the leading woman, finding new meaning in her life through rooftop gardening.

Growing health consciousness and awareness about the harmful effects of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has made growing one's own produce look like the most promising way out. These are some of the avid terrace gardeners *The Hindu* came across in the city

CFTRI to file patent for bottled sugar cane juice

The Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI), Mysore, is in advanced stages of filing patent for bottled sugarcane juice, for which it has developed preservation and packaging technologies.

With value-addition being done at the cane-crushing stage itself with use of permitted chemicals, the bottled juice will be fit for consumption for six to eight months from the date of manufacture, according to Mr G. Venkateswaran, chief scientist at the CFTRI Resource Centre, Hyderabad. Speaking on the sidelines of a conference on food processing sector here on Thursday, Mr. Venkateswaran said spices like ginger and cardamom would be added at the time of crushing, along with some preservatives, to enhance the shelf-life of the product for up to six months.

Since the presence of yeast in the juice causes quick fermentation, it cannot be stored for long. By giving a distinct flavour and adding chemicals before the quality of the juice starts declining, its shelf-life can be improved by a large measure. Mr. Venkateswaran said there was already a flood of enquiries about the technology developed by CFTRI, and that it was bound to generate huge revenue in the form of royalties.

Stored Haleem

The National Research Centre on Meat (NRCM), Hyderabad, is developing a technology named Retort Processing (RP), which is aimed at retaining the freshness of Hyderabad's famous delicacy Haleem for over a month. It is normally not stored owing to its perishable nature.

According to NRCM Director V.V. Kulkarni, RP technology (defined as ‘a type of food packaging made from a laminate of flexible plastic and metal foils that keeps the food/drink sterile for a long time’) will keep the stew fresh for up to two months.

Technology that keeps Haleem fresh for over a month under development

The plans of the Telangana government to make the State a seed bowl, particularly for crops largely cultivated in its soils, may take at least three years to take shape, though the combined Andhra Pradesh State met over 50 per cent of seed requirements of the country in major food crops.

According to officials, the government is planning to take up soyabean seed production to begin with, as the crop is being cultivated in area ranging from 1.8 lakh to 2.8 lakh hectares in the recent years. The State has been getting most of its soyabean seed supplies from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and the value of required seed has been in the range of Rs. 130 crore to Rs. 150 crore every year.

Long process

“The process of producing seed for the end-user, farmer, is long since it has to begin with nucleus seed in the lab to breeder seed production in the farms of research stations and finally production of foundation seed produced by selected farmers,” a senior official of the Agriculture Department stated. Production of maize and mustard seed would also be taken up as they had good demand in the country’s seed market besides requirement within the State, the official said.

Maize is being cultivated in the range of 4.5 lakh hectares to 6 lakh hectares in the recent years as its demand in human diet and poultry food has been growing constantly, the official explained adding that the farming community has been spending Rs. 25 crore to Rs. 30 crore for seed every kharif season. “Telangana meets about 30 per cent paddy seed required in the country,” the official said.

Telangana has been getting most of its soyabean seed supplies from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra

Fishermen told to carry ID cards

As part of measures to step up coastal security, Andhra Pradesh government has made it mandatory for all fishermen along the coastline going into the sea for fishing to carry biometric ID cards.

Chief Secretary I.Y.R.Krishna Rao has directed the Fisheries Department to coordinate with the Union Ministry of Fisheries and ensure that ID cards were given to all the fishermen. About 69 per cent of fishermen were given biometric ID cards so far, he said.

Mr. Krishna Rao chaired the third Apex Committee review meeting on Coastal Security – Andhra Pradesh attended by member officials from Navy, Coast Guard, Fisheries, Ports, Home and Finance departments here on Tuesday.

The meeting which was held after a gap of two-and-a-half years took stock of the initiatives on security along the 974 km long coast, functioning of Radar stations, monitoring of fishing boats, issuing of ID cards to fishermen and other related issues.

Global warming on the rise'

Prof. Goverdhan Mehta, an eminent scientist and Lilly - Jubilant Chair at the University of Hyderabad called upon the students to intensify research in chemistry stating that it has potential to address many problems.

Delivering a lecture at Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad (IITH) on Wednesday, Prof. Mehta said that global warming was increasing at alarming levels and it may lead to several problems.

He also stressed the need for reducing the impact of carbon dioxide and increasing tree plantation across the globe.

How to make... kuthiraivali veg upma / barnyard millet veg upma



During my childhood, pati used to make an arisi upma, which I loved to eat with curd. The aroma and taste still linger in my senses. My pati, now 83, still remembers the recipe for the dish, which she often made, whenever I craved for it.

Ingredients:

Kuthiraivali - 1 cup
Beans - 10, finely chopped
Carrot - half, finely chopped
Coconut grated - 1/4 cup
Coconut oil - for tempering
Mustard seeds - 1 tsp
Urad dal - 1 tsp
Red chillies – 2
Asafoetida - 1/4 tsp
Water - 2 cups
Curry leaves
Salt

Method:

Wash the millet and keep it aside. In a pressure pan, add the coconut oil and splutter mustard seeds, urad dal, curry leaves, asafoetida and red chillies.

Add the chopped beans, carrot and sauté for two minutes.
Add the grated coconut and sauté.
Add the barnyard millet, required salt and two cups of water.
Stir well and close it. Let it cook for four whistles.
It tastes yummy as it is, but can also be served with coconut chutney.



Vidarbha to have one of its best Kharif harvests this year

‘Good rains in June, absence of hailstorms in February and March, and no major diseases have contributed to a good spring flowering season’



Orange crop in Vidarbha had been undergoing a crisis over the last 20 years with ground water table depleting by hundreds of feet, leading to farmers choosing to grow other crops.

While Marathwada is reeling under sever drought conditions, Vidarbha is set to have one of its best Kharif harvests in recent years after well spreadout rains in the region.

The Nagpur revenue division has received 75 per cent rains, till date, and the Amravati division has received 89 per cent rain. All the major crops like

cotton, soyabean, tur and orange are in a good condition, according to officials. Paddy, however, will require a few more good spells in the coming days to be at its normal standing in some pockets where the transplantation was taken up late.

With at least two substantial spells expected, the condition would only improve, the officials said.

“Vidarbha received 75 per cent rains, but because it was well spreadout, the crops are in a good condition at this stage. Paddy, grown in all the five districts, Nagpur, Chandrapur, Bhandara, Gondia and Gadchiroli, however, is stunted in some pockets, but it would get better with a few more spells, expected later. Even if it doesn’t rain, the shortfall in production will not be more than 15 per cent,” said V N Ghawate, joint director, Agriculture, Nagpur division.

Besides paddy (7.67 lakh ha), Nagpur division farmers grow cotton (5.78 lakh ha), soyabean (3.44 lakh ha) and tur (1.7 lakh ha). Amravati joint director of Agriculture S R Sardar said, “The division received 89 per cent rains that have been generally well spreadout, except for a long gap after August 15. We were worried about soyabean production that comes to bearing stage at this time. But, good rains on September 8 and 9 have brought the cheer back.”

Soyabean (15.27 lakh ha) is the main crop in the Amravati division, followed by cotton (9.5 lakh ha) and tur (3.95 lakh ha). Together, the two divisions also grow orange on about 80,000 ha.

According to director of Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR) Keshav Kranthi, “This year is being called the best cotton year with production likely in the range of 35-40 lakh bales as against 30-33 in the previous years. Accuweather, a weather forecasting agency, has forecast two more spells of rains from September 16 to 25 and September 28 to October 3, which will better conditions.”

M S Ladaniya, director of National Research Centre for Citrus (NRCC) said, “Good rains in June, absence of hailstorms in February and March, and no major diseases have contributed to a good spring flowering season (ambia bahar) of orange, this year. We are expecting the highest production in the last 20 years. As against 7-9 tonnes per ha in recent times, we are expecting

12-15 tonnes per ha, this time. We are also expecting a similar monsoon flowering season (mrig bahar).”

Orange crop in Vidarbha had been undergoing a crisis over the last 20 years with ground water table depleting by hundreds of feet, leading to farmers choosing to grow other crops.

Suicide count going up

Despite being one of the best years in recent times, the number of suicides in rural parts is higher. Figures compiled by Vasant Rao Naik Sheti Swawalamban Mission (VNSSM), a government body set up to reduce agrarian distress, has put the number till August at 827 in the six most suicide-prone districts. The count last year was 963. With four months still to go, this year, the figure might go up substantially. The suicide numbers being counted systematically since 2006 had shown a distinct downward trend from 1449 to 805 in 2013. But, it rose to 963 in 2014. Of all the districts, Yavatmal, known to be the most suicide-prone district, has already recorded 264 cases this year. In the rest of the districts, Wardha, Buldana, Washim, Akola and Amravati, the suicide numbers are either comparable to the corresponding period last year or marginally higher. VNSSM director Kishor Tiwari said, “The farmers have not recovered from failures in the last few seasons. Only one-third of the farmers have had access to credit. The harvest is still two months away, and hence, farmers continue to reel under fund crunch.”

Express Recipes: How to make Fruit and Ice Cream Flan



Craving for a frozen dessert? You can very well make this super yummy Fruit and Ice Cream Flan.

Serves 12

Ingredients

1 jelly mould with a hole in the centre
1 brick vanilla ice cream
½ brick strawberry ice cream
½ brick mango ice cream
100 gms cream
1 tin of fruit cocktail
or
1 cup fresh mixed fruits
6-8 cashew halves – roasted
2 tbsp mixed fruit jam

Method

- * Pack vanilla ice cream into a ring mould.
- * Beat some strawberry ice cream lightly and pour over the vanilla. Freeze for 1 hour.
- * Put the mango ice cream also in the same way. Freeze overnight or till serving.
- * Chill cream in the freezer for 15-20 minutes. Add sugar to cream. Whip cream till soft peaks are formed.
- * Be careful not to over beat the cream. Put whipped cream in an icing gun and keep in the fridge.
- * Heat jam with 2 tbsp water in a pan. Add fruits and mix for 1-2 minutes.
- * Unmould ice cream on to serving plate at the time of serving.
- * Put fruits in the centre.
- * Decorate with whipped cream kept in the icing gun in the refrigerator.
- * Arrange cashew pieces. Serve at once.

A glass of turmeric milk can help cure your child's common cold

According to ayurvedic experts, turmeric is an excellent herb that can help treat common cold in children and can be taken on a regular basis without any adverse effects.



According to ayurvedic experts, turmeric is an excellent herb that can help treat common cold in children (Source: Thinkstock Images)

Cold is very common in children during the rainy season. When a child gets [common cold](#), it is usually accompanied with headaches, fever and a runny nose. This can cause your child to get cranky and uncomfortable. While giving usual allopathy drugs can cure the cold instantly, it is better to avoid excessive usage of chemical drugs. For something as common as common cold, one can safely choose [natural alternative treatments](#) to get the desired result.

According to [ayurvedic experts](#), turmeric is an excellent herb that can help treat [common cold](#) in children and can be taken on a regular basis without any adverse effects.

Watch Video

Turmeric which is scientifically known as *curcuma longa* is a rhizome (root) and belongs to the Zingiberaceae family (a plant family). Since ancient times, turmeric has been widely used in the Ayurvedic and Chinese medicines for its versatile medicinal properties. Drinking turmeric milk when suffering from common cold is a popular age-old home remedy.

The major medicinal value and health benefits of turmeric are due to its main ingredient curcumin. Curcumin serves as an anti-inflammatory agent and also possess anti-bacterial and anti-viral properties. These properties make it a powerful healing agent in conditions like common cold. The anti-

inflammatory action of curcumin aids in relieving the chest congestion which typically accompanies common cold. Curcumin also helps in boosting immunity and hence makes children less susceptible to such infections.

When taken with milk, the absorption of curcumin in the body is enhanced significantly leading to a quick relief from common cold.

So the next time you have a sneezy wheezy kid, you know he or she needs a glass of turmeric milk.

How to make homemade iced coffee in 39 seconds

There's no need to buy iced coffee from your nearby coffee shop anymore as we have an incredibly quick tutorial for you and it's only in a matter of seconds that you can make this.



Homemade iced coffee

There's no need to buy iced coffee from your nearby coffee shop anymore as we have an incredibly quick tutorial for you and it's only in a matter of seconds that you can make this.

Ingredients (Makes 2)

- 100ml boiled water
- 300ml milk
- 2 tbsp instant coffee
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tumbler of ice cubes

Method

* Combine 2 tbsp of instant coffee granules and 100ml boiled water and mix together until all dissolved. Add the sugar, honey and vanilla extract and stir.

* Add 300ml milk to the coffee mixture. Give it a stir and then add a tumbler of ice. Blend up until smooth.

- See more at: <http://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/food-wine/how-to-make-homemade-iced-coffee-in-39-seconds/#sthash.BgobTVBi.dpuf>



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Call on Ghats eco sensitive zone gets delayed by 2 months

Eco-sensitive zone radius around Karnala sanctuary to be reduced Boost for tiger conservation as eco-sensitive zone of Tadoba-Andhari ...Taj's eco sensitive zone: NGT orders state government to file conclud...Javadekar urged to protect interests of locals in W Ghats Filth keeps devotees away from Bithoor ghats

The final decision on demarcating ecologically sensitive area (ESA) within Western Ghats has got delayed for at least two more months as the Centre has had to extend the deadline for hearing states' concerns by another 60 days in the absence of reports from two states.

While Gujarat, Kerala, Goa and Karnataka have submitted their reports on demarcation after conducting ground-level verification, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have yet to submit their reports to the Union environment and forests ministry.

It is expected that both the states will present their views within the extended period of 60 days. Thereafter, the ministry will examine all the reports and issue a final notification, demarcating the exact ESA.

Assuring that the 'final' notification will not in any way affect the basic livelihood issues, including agriculture and plantation activities, of the local people, Union environment and forests minister Prakash Javadekar on Thursday said, "The government is fully committed to protect the ecology of the Western Ghats. At the same time, it is determined to ensure sustainable development in the region."

He was speaking on re-issue of the 'draft' notification on Western Ghats. The ministry had on September 4 issued the 'draft' notification in supersession of the notification of March 10, 2014.

"This re-issue of draft notification gives us a window of 60 days. We have communicated to Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu to send their reports as soon as possible. We want to bring clarity on the issue. This notification is a progressive step. Otherwise there would have been confusion," Javadekar said adding that the final notification will come at the end of 60 days.

A 'final' notification for the ESA had to be issued within a period of 545 days of the last draft notification, issued during the UPA government in March last year. As deadline was to expire last week, the government had on September 4 issued fresh 'draft' notification. It reiterated all the points of the earlier draft and clarified that any 'final' notification in future will not affect agriculture and plantation activities of the villagers, living in the zone falling under the eco-sensitive area.

Though the fresh draft notification has not changed the proposed ESA in Karnataka (20,668 sq km), Maharashtra (17,340 sq km), Tamil Nadu (6,914 sq km), Goa (1,461 sq km) and Gujarat (449 sq km), it kept silent on details for Kerala - in a clear indication that the final ESA will incorporate 9,993 sq km of the state as notified in March, 2014.

Heeding to Kerala's demand, the then UPA government had reduced the demarcated area of the state by 3,115 sq km through March, 2014 notification, reducing the total proposed ESA in Western Ghats from 59,940 sq km to 56,825 sq km.

The entire issue of final notification had been pending since 2013. While responding to the draft notification, many stakeholders and state governments of the Western Ghats region had expressed their apprehensions and concerns with respect to ESA.

In order to clarify the provisions stated in the draft notification and to dispel the apprehensions and concerns raised by the stakeholders with respect to provisions of the 'draft' notification and the concept of Ecologically Sensitive Area, the ministry had decided in public interest to supersede the earlier draft notification with a fresh draft notification addressing these concerns/apprehensions.

Investors to sow Rs 2.4L crore, Tamil Nadu reaps a bumper harvest

When chief minister J Jayalalithaa brought the curtains down on the Global Investors Meet on Thursday , there was a huge difference between promise and delivery -and everyone was happy about it.

Against a target of `1 lakh crore, Jayalalithaa announced, deals worth `2.42 lakh crore were signed during the two-day jamboree. "I am extremely happy to inform that in a resounding endorsement of Tamil Nadu and its government's policies, the total amount of investments finalised during the Global Investors Meet in Chennai is an unprecedented `2,42,160 crore," said the chief minister.

The massive investment assurance was much more than the accumulated investments in the last 20 years, since 1991, she said. Thrilled with the

success of the meet, the government has now proposed to hold GIMs every two years, with the next one scheduled for 2017.

The CM has assured investors approvals within 30 days of the date of submission of application. "For each investment finalised here, I assure the investors that necessary statutory clearances would be accorded within 30 days. Senior IAS officials will be facilitators for each of the projects, and they will be responsible for liaising with the investor to ensure that all clearances are granted within 30 days," she said.

She also promised to make all pre-project clearances online to ensure ease in doing business with Tamil Nadu. Of the investments in the pipeline, nearly 45% or `1,07,136 crore is in the manufacturing sector. The products range from footwear, solar cell and float glass to steel, tyres and electronic hardware. Companies that have come forward include Apollo Tyres, Saint Gobain, JSW Steel, ITC, Lotus Footwear. This is followed by the energy sector with a proposed investment of `1,07,136 crore, of which a large chunk is in solar. "As a direct outcome of the solar energy policy in 2012, MoUs have been signed for `35,356 crore to set up 5,345MW of solar power," said Jayalalithaa.

The IT sector has received less than 10% of the total investments, with `10,950 crore, followed by handlooms and textiles that got `1,955 crore. Agriculture and fisheries sectors have received investments of `800 crore and `500 crore respectively. The southern districts, which have plenty of arid land, take nearly 50% of the investments in the manufacturing sector, Jayalalithaa said.

Fertilisers and infrastructure also got a look-in. "An LNG terminal at Tuticorin is one of the projects being signed today. This, along with Ennore LNG terminal, will secure long-term energy security of the state," she said.

Global Investors Meet: Tamil Nadu granting 100% subsidy for micro irrigation systems



As many as 5,000 delegates, including 1,000 from abroad, are attending the two-day investors meet which began on Wednesday.

Tamil Nadu is granting 100% subsidy to set up micro irrigation systems, said minister for agriculture R Vaithilingam on Thursday.

Speaking at a seminar on food processing opportunities in the state, held as part of the Global Investors Meet here, the minister said the state also provided appropriate subsidies for farm mechanisation.

"We are a top producer in maize and tapioca and second in sugarcane. Tamil Nadu offers huge opportunities for agro processing," he said.

As many as 5,000 delegates, including 1,000 from abroad, are attending the two-day investors meet which began on Wednesday.

Ayush Ministry red flags Genetically Modified crops

Just as the government struggles to find some middle ground on Genetically Modified crops, there is a fresh twist to the politically sensitive issue. The Ayush ministry, which deals with Ayurveda and other Indian systems of medicine, has raised concerns with the environment ministry on the possible adverse impact GM crops could have on certain wild varieties of medicinal plants used for Ayurvedic purposes.

And in this context, the Ayush ministry has sought representation in the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) — the apex body that clears GM field trials in India. In 2010 too, the ministry had issues with Bt Brinjal and had made them known to the environment ministry. It raised the matter yet again with the ministry late last year writing to them.

When contacted by ET with queries on the same, the environment ministry said: "Ayush had nothing to do with GEAC. National Biodiversity Authority is already a member." Ayush officials confirmed to ET that they had taken up the matter with the environment ministry.



"We did write to them in late 2014 as well. The request was made because of several representations from the practitioners of Ayurvedic and also Unani medicines who feel that crosspollinated GM crops may affect other wild varieties of plants used for medicinal purposes. We are yet to hear from the environment ministry," Somita Biswas, CEO of the National Medicinal Plants Board — a body under the Ayush ministry — told ET.

However, senior Ayush ministry officials sought to nuance their position. "We are not opposed to introduction of GM crops as such. But there are

views on the possible implications of GM introduction on the other species. We have only said that this issue must be addressed and the same can be done if we participate in the GEAC meetings."

The Modi government is in a bind on GM crops due to strong opposition from many right-wing outfits like the Swadeshi Jagran Manch. The Modi government has not yet articulated a clear policy view on the subject. The environment ministry held a GEAC meeting last week, but it was only the second such meeting in the government's term so far and has been kept completely under wraps.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Edible oils turn hot as stockists enter market

In edible oils market, sunflower oil declined by Rs. 5 and cotton oil rose by Rs.3. Under current of the market remained firm tracking extended gain in overseas palm oil and soya oil futures. Sources said stockists' demand in physical market continued ahead of festival season. Vikram Global Commodities quoted Rs. 470 for Malaysian super palm. Liberty traded palmolein at Rs. 440, super palmolein Rs. 480 and soyabean refined oil Rs. 573. In Saurashtra-Rajkot, groundnut oil *telia* was up at Rs.1,750 (1,740) and loose (10 kg) at Rs. 1,125 (1,125).

BCE spot rates (Rs. /10 kg): groundnut oil 1,100 (1,100), soya ref. oil 568 (568), sunflower ref. 710 (715), rapeseed exp. ref. 860 (860), cottonseed ref. oil 615 (612) and palmolein 436 (436).

Pepper exports up 33% despite high prices

Pepper exports during January-July 2015 have risen by about a third to an estimated 16,000 tonnes as against 12,000 tonnes in corresponding period last year, market sources said.

Tight availability has kept the prices at higher levels and the exports have reportedly taken place when the prices were ruling at around \$10,000 a tonne, they added.

Shipments through Kochi port alone showed an increase of 46.68 per cent at 13,990 tonnes as against 9,538 tonnes. Imports have also surged by 11 per cent for the period under review, they said.

Exports during last calendar year via Kochi port stood at 17,099 tonnes and at the national level it was estimated to be around 20,000 tonnes.

Tight availability continued to exist in India. Growers who can afford to hold back are doing so, of late, in anticipation of a price rise next season due to an expected poor crop due to erratic monsoon rains this year, primary market dealers said.

Meanwhile, Karnataka – which had a bumper crop during the current season – is also expecting a lower crop next season as it gets good crop every alternate year. Add to this is the unfavourable weather conditions, some of the growers in Sakleshpur and Chikmagalur said.

One of the sources of availability, at present, to meet the domestic demand is the pepper released from the warehouses after being cleared by the food safety authorities, market sources said.

An estimated 6,000 tonnes of ‘allegedly tainted pepper’ held by cartels for over two years in warehouses are being released in instalments after being cleared by a designated laboratory in Kolkata, they said.

Domestic pipelines are claimed to be empty as the buyers have been postponing buying during April, May, June anticipating fall in prices. Meanwhile, the current exchange rates would make imports unattractive unless they are made under-invoiced, they said.

US and the EU importers are reporting that they could buy Indonesian pepper at about \$300-400 below Indian and Vietnamese prices and, therefore, in the next two months Indonesia will be in the driving seat in the international pepper arena, Kishor Shamji, an exporter and former President, IPSTA, told *BusinessLine*.

Rain effect: Rabi output, not Kharif harvest, will be hurt, says India Ratings

The deficient monsoon can hurt the Rabi crop even if overall Kharif crop production is unlikely to be affected and will be higher than the previous fiscal, said a report published by India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) on Thursday.

The report – titled ‘Monsoon Gazing Ends’ – comes a day after the India Meteorological Department (IMD) reported a 15 per cent deficiency in rainfall across the country.

“In view of the total area sown under Kharif crops reaching 99.87 million hectares (mh) on September 4, 2015, which is 1.93 mh higher than last year’s, Ind-Ra expects the overall Kharif output this fiscal to be still better than in the last fiscal,” the report said.

The inference deviates from a mid-August study done by Crisil Research which highlighted the pressure on profitability of farm output and identified 5 crops – jowar, soyabean, tur dal, maize and cotton – as particularly at risk.

Water storage levels

Kharif output, according to Ind-Ra, was likely to be higher due to increased acreage and better water storage levels (as on September 2) than last year in major foodgrain producing States such as Punjab, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

Reservoir levels in southern India, which recorded a 17 per cent deficit in rainfall as of September 9, had fallen to 33.2 per cent, it noted. According to the Central Water Commission, total storage levels are pegged at 92.92 billion cubic metres (bcm), 59 per cent of capacity, as of September 3

Devendra Kumar Pant, Chief Economist and Senior Director of Public Finance at Ind-Ra, said that States which had received sufficient rainfall will make up any shortfall in output from other States.

“Karnataka, as a whole, has recorded deficient rainfall and coarse cereals’ production is likely to be lower. But Rajasthan has received excess rain,

particularly in the western part. So total output should be the same if not more,” he said.

Pulses inflation

While the impact of the sub-par monsoon is likely to be muted in terms of rural spending due to the rising share of non-agricultural income in rural earnings, food inflation needed to be monitored.

“Wholesale pulses inflation in July 2015 was 35.8 per cent. Although higher acreage under pulses this fiscal would help in containing inflation, weakening of the rupee will make import of pulses costlier,” the report said. On an average, India imports between three and four million tonnes (mt) of pulses every year to augment domestic production of 18-19 mt.

Centre to import additional 1,000 tonnes of onions

In addition to the tenders floated by MMTC for the import of 10,000 tonnes of onions, the Centre is set to ship in extra 1,000 tonnes of the bulb to check the rise in its prices.

The decision was announced by Ram Vilas Paswan, Union Food Minister, after a review meeting held on Thursday over the prices and availability of the kitchen staple.

“A further 1,000 tonnes of onions will be imported in the coming days to increase domestic availability and stabilise prices,” Paswan said after the meeting.

Two tenders for the import of 2,000 tonnes of onion from China and Egypt have been finalised.

While the first shipment had landed on Thursday and will be available by end-September, a second shipment is likely to reach India within two weeks. Paswan said government agencies will continue to intervene in the open market to improve availability of onions to be sold through the Delhi government and Safal outlets where it has been priced at Rs. 38/kg.

“At present, 100 tonnes is being supplied daily by both the agencies together in Delhi. Any difference in the cost for these operations would be reimbursed by the Price Stabilisation Fund,” he said.

The average retail price of the bulb has stayed at Rs. 60 in New Delhi, the same as a week ago, and up 30.4 per cent over the month. Retail prices are up a whopping 77 per cent than at the same time last year, when the average price was Rs. 34/kg.

Fresh arrivals of the early Kharif harvest – which makes up 5-6 per cent of the total seasonal crop – from Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra had helped lower prices from a peak of Rs. 80 last month.

Earlier, officials had said that prices are unlikely to cool off till the Kharif crop hit markets in October.

Private traders have also been importing the bulb from Egypt and Afghanistan.

Coca-Cola India launches Fuze Tea

COCA COLA INDIA LAUNCHES FUZE TEA

Coca-Cola India on Thursday it said it intends to bring its global brand Fuze Tea to the country. The company’s billion-dollar brand is targeted at the urban population and will be initially available in Lemon and Peach flavours. Priced at Rs. 30, it will be available in 250 ml PET bottles. Fuze Tea joins the company’s growing portfolio of premium brands which includes Schweppes Tonic and Schweppes Soda.