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THE HINDU

Work apace on Aavin dairy at Padalur



Work on the construction of the dairy in Padalur is under way in full swing and is expected to be completed by May next year.

The dairy, being built at an estimate of Rs. 36.28 crore, will be a boon to dairy farmers in Perambalur and Ariyalur districts, which are currently under the jurisdiction of the Tiruchi District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union (Aavin).

The dairy will have a processing capacity of one lakh litres of milk procured in these two districts. Work on construction of the dairy, which commenced on a sprawling area of 22 acres near Padalur, has been in full swing. An estimated 30,000 dairy farmers would benefit through the dairy.

Official sources said state-of-the-art infrastructure was provided to the dairy unit. The growth in the population of livestock in Perambalur and Ariyalur districts has necessitated the setting up of the dairy. It would have modern processing equipment including a chilling plant.

The Tiruchi union accounted for about 700 dairy farmers' cooperative societies and about 50 per cent of the daily production of 4 lakh litres

procured by the union was produced by 320 societies in Perambalur and Ariyalur districts.

GCC goes for organic, ISO certifications'



Minister for Social Welfare and Scheduled Tribes Welfare Ravela Kishore Babu displaying photograph of a model of the proposed building of Girijan Cooperative Corporation in Visakhapatnam on Monday.

The Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC) has applied for organic certification from the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) and for ISO certification as part of its efforts to increase its turnover manifold.

GCC's turnover this year is Rs. 185 crore, which is 20 per cent more than last year's Rs. 143 crore and the aim was to reach Rs. 1,000 crore turnover in the next three-and-a-half years, Minister for Social and Tribal Welfare Ravela Kishore Babu said while reviewing the performance of GCC here on Monday.

There was need to boost its turnover and securing organic certification was the first step and along with the ISO certification, GCC would be able to receive wide acceptance to its products and could export them in large quantities, he said.

Established 60 years ago to help the Girijans to get the right price for their forest produce and strengthen them economically and better their living standards, GCC's performance has not been impressive and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has revamped the corporation and is keen to see it perform better and help the Girijans more, the Minister said. Mr. Naidu would review the functioning of GCC before month-end and organic certification was expected to be received before the meeting.

Brand image

Branding, improving brand image and going for attractive packaging of products were part of improving sale of GCC products, he said. The Minister released the new product packagings during the meeting. The GCC will soon have a Rs. 17 crore new administrative block in the place of its present head office on the beach road.

Funds were released and tendering process would be completed soon. One of the four designs submitted by the architects would be finalised.

Giriputrika Kalyana Pathakam and Giri Gourmuddalu schemes were launched for Girijans and ITDAs have been strengthened by posting IAS officers as their Project Officers as the government was determined to better the lot of Girijans, Mr. Kishore Babu said. Collector N. Yuvaraj, MD of GCC Ravi Prakash, MLCs G. Sreenivasulu Naidu and Gummadi Sandhya Rani and officials of GCC attended the review.

Panels set up on farmers' programmes

The government on Monday issued orders constituting State and district-level coordination and monitoring committees for the effective implementation of farmers' development programmes with specific focus on the debt redemption scheme.

Finance Minister Yanamala Ramakrishnudu is the Chairman of the State-level committee, while Agriculture Minister P. Pulla Rao is the Vice-Chairman.

Planning Board Vice-Chairman; C.S. Rao, Advisor (Finance) to Chief Minister, former Chairman of Canara Bank/Indian Bank M.B.N. Rao; Special Chief Secretary (Planning), Rythu Saadhikara Samstha CEO, Commissioner of Agriculture/ Horticulture, State-Level Bankers' Committee Convenor, Special Chief Secretary, Agriculture Department, and Principal Finance Secretary are the members of the committee.

At the district level, Collector is the Chairman, while district-level bankers' committee convenor; Joint Director, Agriculture; Deputy Director, Horticulture and District Manager of Rythu Saadhikara Samstha are the members. Joint Collector (primary sector) is the member-convenor.

Krishi mela to start on November 19

To focus on drought, integrated farming this year

MATHSYA MELA, AN ADDED ATTRACTION

This year's event will host a Mathsyra (fish) mela, unlike previous years when fisheries was just part of animal sciences. According to the Head of UAS-B fisheries department, D. Seenappa, the Mathsyra mela will comprise 50 stalls set up by research institutes on fish farming. "This is going to be a facility that provides A to Z solution to fish farming, ranging from places for scouting technologies to funding and hand-holding," he said. The pavilion will also focus on ornamental fish farming and pearl farming.

The intention is to create awareness among farmers about the possibilities of increasing their income through fish farming.

The Mathsyra mela will have a separate area where chefs will demonstrate their culinary skills with different varieties of fish.

DISTRICTS UNDER UAS-B JURISDICTION

- Bengaluru Urban
- Bengaluru Rural
- Ramanagaram
- Mandya
- Mysuru
- Chamarajanagar
- Kolar
- Chickballapur
- Hassan
- Tumakuru

The University of Agricultural Sciences-Bengaluru's famed Krishi mela will be held from November 19 to 22. This year, UAS-B has decided to use this platform to create awareness about ways to tackle drought.

The university has chosen drought and integrated farming systems as the theme this year.

"The main intention is to provide relevant technologies and inputs for farmers to survive during drought," UAS-B Vice-Chancellor H. Shivanna told *The Hindu* .

According to him, the mela will showcase water conservation techniques and dryland farming technologies. Similarly, the integrated farming system will include animal, horticulture, fish, poultry, and other components to improve the income of farmers. Following the overwhelming response to urban horticulture in the earlier krishi melas, the university has decided to focus on urban horticulture this year also. There will be a separate pavilion, which will showcase various aspects and technologies related to urban horticulture, UAS-B senior information specialist L. Ramakrishna Rao said. The krishi mela will continue to have regular features like live crop demonstrations, national exhibition on farm mechanisation and organic farming, besides consultation with agricultural experts. According to Mr. Rao, the event will have 600 stalls related to agriculture and allied sectors. The mela has become popular in the last few years, with a large number of farmers and urbanites thronging them. Around 11 lakh people visited the mela in 2011 and over 20 lakh visited in 2013.

Civic body starts vermicomposting

The Coimbatore Corporation has started vermicomposting at its Vellalore compost yard to deal with the ever increasing quantity of wastes.

Close 900 tonnes of wastes are generated a day within the corporation limits that included biodegradable, and non-degradable.

The wastes are taken to the dump yard at Vellalore spread over 680 acres.

Agreement reached

The civic body has reached an agreement with the Coimbatore Integrated Waste Management Private Limited to handle 500 tonnes of wastes.

The firm has accused the civic body of not giving the waste in a segregated manner as agreed, and has delayed payments.

The corporation is accusing the firm of not properly processing the waste. The corporation has constructed 46 tanks on a 20-acre site in the same dump yard.

The civic body will procure shredding machines soon. The manure generated will be used for growing trees on properties owned by corporation such as parks, children play area, and gardens.

At a later stage, the manure will be marketed through the agriculture department.

Corporation is exploring the possibility of dumping a part of the wastes in abandoned quarries.

To control the fly menace, the civic body has commenced the work of spraying effective microbe solution (EM solution) on the nearly 250 tonnes of wastes dumped in the open.

Siruthuli, an NGO, is providing the solution on a regular basis.

The civic body has installed two bio-gas plants of 1.5 tonnes each to generate methane that could be used to generate up to 300 MW of electricity.

The civic body will install cameras at the dump yard to prevent miscreants from setting fire to garbage.

WEAT to hold training

The Women Entrepreneurs Association of Tamil Nadu (WEAT) will conduct a 15-day training programme on food processing this month. The training will cover various aspects of food processing such as preservation, value addition, fruit processing, and bakery products.

On completion of the training, women will be guided to start enterprises, and prepare project report. Those who are interested may register their names

with the Women Entrepreneurs Association of Tamil Nadu by dialling 0431-420040 or 9488785806 or by visiting in person the WEAT office at St. Paul's Complex, Bharathiar Salai in the city, a WEAT press release said.

DEMONSTRATION PLOTS

Demonstration plots on use of high technology in sorghum cultivation will be set up on 200 hectares in the district under the National Food Security Mission. Farmers who come forward to set up the demonstration plots will be given subsidised inputs, including seeds, bio fertilizer, bio pesticides, and micro nutrients, worth Rs. 2,000 a hectare. Farmers can avail a back-ended subsidy of Rs. 2,000 an hectare for using mechanised seed drill for sowing. Farmers in Thottiyam and Manapparai taluks can avail the scheme and can contact the Agricultural Extension officers, an official release said.

FARMERS CONDEMN SADANANDA GOWDA

The Tamizhaga Eri Mattrum Attru Pasana Vivasayigal Sangam has condemned Union Law Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda for backing Karnataka's position on the Cauvery issue saying the current situation does not permit the State to release water to Tamil Nadu. In a statement here, P. Viswanathan, president of the association, pointed out that delta farmers could not raise kuruvai crop and had now started raising nurseries for samba cultivation. The water level at the Mettur Dam had come down to less than 80 feet and this caused much concern among farmers of Tamil Nadu. Chief Minister Jayalalithaa should meet the Prime Minister along with a delegation of Tamil Nadu MPs and seek the release of water from Karnataka and press for the formation of the Cauvery Management Board, he said.

National-level symposium

Students of Energy and Environmental Engineering at Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University are organising a national-level symposium Ecofest'15 on September 16 marking the World Ozone Day.

The highlights of the symposium are Oral Presentation, Poster and Model Presentation, Green Debate, Code War, Designing, Problematic Quiz and Pixelate (Photography Quiz).

Ecofest'15 is a month-long event from August 16 to September 16 to create awareness on the present environmental issues and energy conservation.

The programme comprised of events like solid waste management, optimization and installation, agri marathon, and Green Brains'15, an inter-school competition.

The abstracts for poster and paper presentation have already been selected and on-spot registration is available for other events.

For details, contact D. Vishnu Ram (Organising Secretary) – 99652 22655 or S. Janani (Joint Organising Secretary) – 99766 73337.

Goa to tap CPCRI technology for empowering farmers



A team led by Goa Agriculture Minister Ramesh Tawadkar along with CPCRI director P. Chowdappa on Monday see the benefits of the Neera technology developed by the institute in Kasaragod.

The technologies developed by the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) here would help Goa further exploit its tourism potential and empower small and marginal farmers by utilising Kalparasa Technology on Neera and its value added products, said Goa Agriculture Minister Ramesh Tawadkar here on Monday.

The snowball tender nut technology developed by the CPCRI should find place in resorts and hotels in Goa to attract tourists especially from abroad, said Mr. Tawadkar who is on a two-day visit to the institute.

The Minister's team focussed on studying CPCRI's various farmer-friendly technologies. CPCRI Director P. Chowdappa briefed the team about the research highlights and said that coconut based cropping and farming system can enhance the productivity, input efficiency, high returns to empower youth and women in rural areas in the era of declining land and water.

Agri college alumni to host celebrations

To commemorate the golden jubilee of the Agricultural College and Research Institute, the Madurai Agri College Old Students Association (MACOSA) will host celebrations on September 20 which will bring together over 1,000 alumni members from 1965, who have passed out of the college.

Speaking about the event, M.P. Vasimalai, president of MACOSA, said that alumni who now hold various posts in the government as well as those who had settled across the world were convening to remember their association with the college.

“There will also be interactions with students of the existing batches where we talk to them about the scope of their studies and offer them guidance and share our experiences,” he said. The alumni had also come together to institute endowment prizes for outstanding students across departments through donations for a corpus fund. While the meet on Sunday would have cultural programmes, distribution of endowment awards and a heritage walk at Yanamalai in which the alumni and the students could take part, there would be a series of sports events for the alumni members on September 19.

A.R. Moorthy, secretary of the Association, said that the alumni expected to attend the programme on Sunday included C. Sylendra Babu, ADGP, Sanila Velikeloth, Nobel Peace Prize awardee, and V.K. Subbaraj, Union Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals, (Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers).

Pesticide spraying turning into major health hazard for farmers



A farmer spraying pesticide on cotton crop at Manakondur in Karimnagar district on Monday. -Photo: Thakur Ajay Pal Singh

Exposure to chemical pesticides while spraying in the field has also become a major health problem for farmers in Karimnagar district.

Though, there is no serious pest attack in the district, the farmers, in order to reap riches, have been using pesticides extensively and as a result are suffering from various ailments. Recently, a farmer D Narsaiah reportedly died after inhaling the vapour while spraying pesticides in his fields in Rajalingapet village of Medipalli mandal. This is first such incident in which a farmer died due to inhalation of the pesticide.

However, majority of farmers suffer from various ailments due to spraying of pesticides such as nausea, skin disorders and digestive problems and other.

Majority of farmers spray chemicals without taking basic safety precautions such as wearing mask and gloves. Many a time they inhale the pesticide while spraying it against the wind direction.

The skin when it gets in contact with the pesticide on leads to several problems as it would be absorbed into the body through pores.

Raji Reddy, a farmer from Manakondur mandal said that farmers have been habituated to spraying pesticide without using the protection gear. Sometimes, even school children were forced to spray pesticides in the villages, he stated.

Expressing concern over farmers not following minimum safety precautions while spraying pesticide, Joint Director (Agriculture) Shatru Naik said that they were educating the farmers to use gloves, spectacles, mask around the mouth and nose and shower bath after completion of the spraying, but in vain. Only few farmers follow all the norms, he said and added that majority of the farmers do not even wash their hands with soap after spraying the pesticide and consume food.

New skill training courses for the youth

Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Monday approved new courses and curriculum for skill development in various streams which would be offered to nearly 15,000 youths in the state annually.

Mr Badal gave the approval while presiding over a meeting to finalise skill training courses for unemployed youths and upgrading the skills of the employed in specific fields including health care and paramedics, horticulture, agriculture, allied farming and construction activity, an official release said.

The Chief Minister directed the Secretary of Technical Education to engage best training agencies to enhance the infrastructure of five upcoming Multi-Skill Development Centres (MSDCs) at Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Hoshiarpur and Bathinda with total intake capacity of 7,500 trainees, it said.

The Chief Minister was informed that apart from these, three more skill development centres were being established in the Government Medical Colleges of Patiala, Amritsar and Faridkot with total intake capacity of 1,200 trainees per year.

Likewise, 4,800 trainees would be provided training in the upcoming construction & building skill development centres at Mohali, Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Amritsar.

As many as 900 youths would be trained in horticulture, gardening, landscaping, bee-keeping, mushroom cultivation in the Punjab Agriculture University (PAU), Ludhiana with a focused approach to promote the much needed programme of agriculture diversification, the release stated.

With all these initiatives in different sectors to promote skill development, the state government would be able to impart training to 14,400 youths under this ambitious programme to commence from the next year, it said.

Mr Badal also gave green signal to initiate a special programme to provide on-site training to workers employed in different factories to upskill them in a phased manner. Nearly 10,000 such workers would be imparted specialised training as per the needs of local industry in the first phase so as to upgrade their skills in a meaningful and result oriented manner, he said.

The Chief Minister also asked the departments concerned entrusted with the task of establishing these skill centres to provide hostel facilities to the trainees and ensure that these were ready in all aspects well before the commencement of these skill training courses.

Dairy farmers want Aavin to settle arrears

Aavin owes Rs. 300 crore to farmers attached to primary milk cooperative societies

Due to poor marketing initiatives, much of the additional milk procured by cooperative societies and the by-products such as milk powder, ghee etc could not be marketed by Aavin.

As a result, Aavin owes Rs. 300 crore to farmers attached to primary milk cooperative societies in the State in the last three months.

Milk producers want Aavin to take effective steps to widen its marketing network and clear the entire arrears immediately.

LIST OF DEMANDS

RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT A MEETING OF TAMIL NADU MILK PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

- Aavin should clear the entire arrears of Rs. 300 crores pending to the farmers attached to milk societies for the past three months immediately.
- Increase milk procurement in the State to 50 lakh litres a day.
- Strengthen Aavin infrastructure by commissioning more chilling plants
- Slap a ban on import of milk by-products.



A resolution to this effect was adopted at the State Committee meeting of the Tamil Nadu Milk Producers Association held here recently, K. Mohamed Ali, association general secretary told *The Hindu* on Monday.

About five lakh active members of the 11,503 primary milk societies have been supplying 25 lakh litres of milk per day to Aavin for the last three decades.

With the State government increasing the procurement price, many farmers who were supplying milk to private dairies, have resumed their supply to cooperative societies. Following pressure from the milk farmers associations, the societies came forward to procure additional five lakh litres per day.

In the absence of proper marketing strategies and adequate chilling plants, additional milk produced is not marketed in an effective manner, resulting in a loss of Rs. 1.50 crore per day to Aavin for the past three months, the resolution said.

This led to arrears of Rs. 300 crores to farmers. Milk by-products worth Rs. 500 crore remain unsold with Aavin. Four years ago, the Chief Minister assured increasing the procurement of Aavin to one crore litre a day.

But nothing tangible has been done in this direction, another resolution said and urged the government to augment daily production to at least 50 lakh litres a day.

The infrastructure of Aavin should be developed to handle additional milk procured.

The association has also demanded that milk be included in the daily menu of noon-meal centres and anganwadis.

Import of milk by-products has also come in a big way in marketing Aavin products. The Centre should slap a ban on the import of milk by-products for strengthening the cooperative movement, it said.

The State government should also convince the Centre to levy 40 per cent duty on imported milk by-products.

Mr. Mohamed Ali said that the association would resort to picketing with cattle in Chennai if the demands were not met.

Farmers in Theni district reduce use of chemical fertilizers

Even as the monsoon cheered farmers in Theni district, especially in Cumbum valley and in rain-fed areas, progressive farmers in Chinnamanur have capitalised on the sudden showers that rocked the region last week by reducing use of chemical-based fertilizers. Normally farmers apply fertilizers during milk stage, also known as ripening stage, for better quality and size of grains.

Yield will be decided at this stage. The recent rain was very useful to standing crops at this stage. After flowering stage, milk and maturity stages were crucial for paddy crop to ensure better yield and quality, colour and

size of the grains. Application of fertilizers would enhance the quality. But intermittent showers and sunlight would supply required nutrients to the plants, and there was no need for external source, said Chinnamanur block Farmers' Association office-bearer A. Ponnu Ram.

Hence, many progressive farmers had reduced the quantity of fertilizers to a minimum level based on the condition of soil and plants, not only to cut production cost but also to preserve soil fertility, he added. Moreover, farmers had also reduced the quantum of water drawn from the river for irrigation following showers. The demand for water would also be reduced considerably in the coming months as crops would reach maturity stage, heading for harvesting.

‘Mission Kakatiya helped paddy cultivation’

Minister for Irrigation T. Harish Rao on Monday stated that farmers in Khammam district had taken up paddy cultivation in about 2 lakh acres after the irrigation tanks were renovated and restored as part of the Mission Kakatiya programme.

The Minister made a special mention of it during a review meeting on irrigation works in Nizamabad, Khammam and Mahabubnagar districts held here.

Re-engineering of Rajiv Dummuguden and Indirasagar lift irrigation schemes was discussed in detail and decided to have a meeting with the Forest Department on Tuesday to resolve issues related to forest land.

Ministers Tummala Nageswara Rao, Pocharam Srinivas Reddy, Special Advisor to Government D. Srinivas, Advisor (Irrigation) R. Vidyasagar Rao, Principal Secretary (Irrigation) S.K. Joshi, Engineer-in-Chief C. Muralidhar were among several officials and elected representatives, who attended the meeting.

He also reviewed the progress of Koel Sagar, Nettempadu lift and land acquisition for Palamuru-Rangareddy lift scheme. MP B.B. Patil, MLAs G.

Goverdhan, Ravinder Reddy, B. Goverdhan, V. Prashanth Reddy, M.A. Shakeel, B. Hanmanth Shinde, Rajeshwar Rao and V.G. Goud participated.



Marijuana use may up pre-diabetes risk: study

Marijuana users are more likely to have prediabetes - the state of poor blood sugar control that can progress to type 2 diabetes - than those who have never smoked it, a new study has found.



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Marijuana users are more likely to have prediabetes – the state of poor blood sugar control that can progress to type 2 diabetes – than those who have never smoked it, a new study has found.

Previous studies on marijuana use have showed conflicting results, with some suggesting marijuana can reduce the risk of diabetes, despite others showing that the drug is associated with an increased calorie consumption.

In this study, the researchers, led by Mike Banks of University of Minnesota in US, studied the association between self-reported marijuana use and concurrent and incident prediabetes and full blown type 2 diabetes, considering both quantity used and status of current use.

They also aimed to examine the role of body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference as potential confounding and mediating factors to these associations. They also looked at the effects of sex and race.

Data from Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults (CARDIA) study was used to determine marijuana use and presence of prediabetes and diabetes.

Individuals in the CARDIA study were 18-30 years of age at study recruitment in 1985-1986 and are currently in their 30th year of observation. The association between marijuana use and prevalence of prediabetes and diabetes was examined in 3,034 participants at CARDIA exam Year 25 (2010-2011) and incidence of prediabetes and diabetes according to previous marijuana use was assessed in 3,151 individuals free from prediabetes and diabetes at Year 7 (1992-1993) who returned for at least one of the four subsequent follow-up examinations over the next 18 years.

There was a 65 per cent increased risk of having prediabetes in individuals who reported current use of marijuana, and a 49 per cent increased risk of having prediabetes in individuals who reported lifetime use of 100 times or more, researchers said.

However, there was no association between marijuana use and full blown type 2 diabetes at CARDIA exam Year 25.

The authors then did further analyses where marijuana use was assessed prior to the development or not of prediabetes.

Over 18 years follow-up, a 40 per cent greater risk for developing prediabetes (but not diabetes) was found for individuals who reported lifetime use of 100 times or more compared to individuals who reported never using marijuana.

“In conclusion, marijuana use, by status or lifetime frequency, was not associated with incidence or presence of diabetes after adjustment for potential confounding factors,” the authors said.

“However, marijuana use was associated with the development and prevalence of prediabetes after adjustment,” they said. The study was published in the journal Diabetologia.

Junk food may shrink your brain, says study

Eating junk food may shrink the part of your brain involved in learning, memory and mental health, a new study has claimed.



Eating junk food may shrink the part of your brain involved in learning, memory and mental health, a new study has claimed. (Source: Thinkstock Images)

Eating junk food may shrink the part of your brain involved in learning, memory and mental health, a new study has claimed.

Older adults who eat more unhealthy foods, such as sweet drinks, salty snacks and processed meats, have smaller left hippocampi, researchers said. The study also shows that older people with healthier diets have larger hippocampi, a region of the brain used for learning, memory and mental health.

As the negative impact of unhealthy foods on the waistline of the population grows, so does the evidence suggesting that our brain health is also affected, said lead author Felice Jacka, associate professor at the Deakin University in Australia.

“We’ve known for some time that components of diet, both healthy and unhealthy, have a rapid impact on aspects of the brain that affect hippocampal size and function, but up until now these studies have only been done in rats and mice,” Jacka said.

“This is the first study to show that this also appears to be the case for humans,” Jacka said.

The researchers used magnetic resonance imaging to measure the size of hippocampi in adults aged 60-64 years, participating in a large longitudinal study of ageing conducted at the Australian National University (ANU).

They also measured the participants’ regular diets and took into account a range of other factors that could affect the hippocampus.

The study suggests that older adults who eat more unhealthy foods, such as sweet drinks, salty snacks and processed meats, have smaller left hippocampi.

It also shows that older adults who eat more nutrient-rich foods, such as vegetables, fruits and fish, have larger left hippocampi.

These relationships existed over and above other factors that may explain these associations, such as gender, levels of physical activity, smoking, education or depression itself.

These findings have relevance for both dementia and mental health, Jacka said. “Mental disorders account for the leading cause of disability worldwide, while rates of dementia are increasing as the population ages,” she said.

“This latest study sheds light on at least one of the pathways by which eating an unhealthy diet may influence the risk for dementia, cognitive decline and mental disorders such as depression and anxiety in older people,” Jacka said. “As the hippocampus is critical to learning and memory throughout life, as well as being a key part of the brain involved in mental health, this study underscores the importance of good nutrition for children, adolescents and adults of all ages,” she said.

The study was published in the journal BMC Medicine.

Government decides for additional import of Tur Dal

The union government has decided to import an additional 5000 MT of Tur Dal to increase the availability and control prices of pulses. Import of 10,000MT of Tur and Urad Dals is already in the pipeline and the first consignment will reach by 23rd September, 2015.

The government has put in place a weekly monitoring mechanism to keep a close watch on availability of essential commodities and moderating of prices under the chairmanship of secretary, consumer affairs with representatives from department of commerce, food, agriculture, revenue among others and also from cabinet secretariat.

The committee has directed the agencies like MMTC, SFAC and NAFED to get in touch with states and also with SAFAL to supply imported dals through retail outlets. The retail and wholesale prices of commodities in various markets were reviewed medium and long term strategy to increase availability of essential commodities and moderate prices were discussed.

Government of India has taken a series of policy initiatives and measures to enhance the availability and thereby moderate prices of pulses and onions. Stock limits have already been imposed on pulses and state governments have been requested to take strict action against hoarding and black-marketing and use available provisions and powers under Essential Commodities Act.

Rooftop farming in Rajarhat gets nod

The state government is inching closer towards development of bio-villages and introduction of rooftop organic farming in Rajarhat New Town.

Union urban development minister Venkaiah Naidu on Saturday discussed about the issue as one of the major components of developing smart cities while conducting a workshop which was attended by senior state government officials.

The New Town Kolkata Development Authority (NKDA) will shortly hold a meeting with state agriculture department to chalk out plans to develop rooftop organic farming in New Town.

State agriculture department minister Purnendu Bose told TOI that his department has already started on working on the issue.

"Our officers are already working on the subject of organic farming to develop bio-villages. We are holding discussions with various NGOs and organizations who are involved in organic farming. We are trying to develop this new concept of farming not only in the urban areas of New Town, but also in the rural areas of Rajarhat," the minister said.

NKDA chairman Debashis Sen said that they would discuss the issue with the agriculture department.

"The concept of rooftop organic farming was presented as a component for developing smart cities. We will shortly work out a plan on this," said NKDA chairman Debashis Sen.

Last week, NKDA approved a proposal to allot three vegetable kiosks to various farmers' cooperatives in one of the newly constructed NKDA market

complexes in New Town's Action Area 1C at concessional rates. The idea is to allow farmers to sell fresh vegetables in the retail market directly by bypassing the wholesale market through their cooperatives and self-help groups.

Two vegetable kiosks will be allotted to 'Dharampur SKUS' of North 24-Paraganas while one will be allotted to 'Baruipur Thana Large Sized Co-Operative Society' of South 24-Paraganas.

A senior NKDA official said that the move would benefit both the residents of New Town and the farmers.

He also said that the move would encourage formation of more such farming cooperatives or self-help groups who would sell fresh vegetables coming from district farms directly to customers without involving any middleman.

At present, only a few associations are using large rooftop space of highrises in New Town to do organic farming with the guidance of farming experts. But, its popularity is only set to increase in the days to come.

"Organic food products have already gained much popularity and the trend will only increase in the days to come. But, proper guidelines will have to be framed to spread more awareness so that more people are encouraged to do organic farming," said an official.

E-commerce gets its 'cattle class'

Braham Singh, a resident of Muzaffarnagar's Khatauli town, was never really tech savvy. On the insistence of his sons, both of whom are engineers, the dairy owner however decided to place an ad for his cow on the internet. And bingo. Someone from far off Karnataka bought it for Rs 60,000.

Singh is an example of a growing trend online where farmers and dairy owners like him have taken to online classified sites such as OLX and Quikr to find buyers for cattle.



"I wasn't expecting to be paid a lot of money for my cow," Singh told TOI on Monday. "We have a small family-run enterprise and we decided to sell one of our five cows. I was surprised to find that there were many takers for my cow on the internet, more than willing to pay more than what I had initially expected. I was getting offers from across the country. The person who finally sealed the deal was from Karnataka and he coughed up Rs 60,000 for one of my cows. Later, I found out that people sell cattle heads for as high as Rs 1 lakh."

On OLX alone, there are close to 3,500 ads for cows, buffaloes, goats and sheep. Quikr, too, has a large list.

People are increasingly discovering the benefit of trading animals on the internet. Salim Qureshi, who owns a dairy on the UP-Uttarakhand border near Bareilly, says his cattle-trading business has grown manifold ever since he started trading online. "I started putting ads on OLX and Quikr about two years ago. Since then, I have placed between 300-400 ads on the internet and the response has been overwhelming," smiled Qureshi.

According to Qureshi, his business has now "become" national. "At first, the offers were only local. But soon, they started coming from everywhere. I have received offers even from Kanyakumari - the southern-most tip of the country. I have had several people from Kerala contacting me over the years. While we prefer if the buyer can arrange for transport themselves, we even transport the cattle if the need arises."

The new trend in Indian e-commerce: Going hybrid

Shamli farmer Gautam Malik says he may soon give up buying animals from cattle fairs and start trading exclusively online. "I recently tried a hand at selling cattle online. I decided to test waters first by selling a calf. I got Rs 3,000 for it. While it is not a lot, it is definitely more than what I would have got at cattle fairs. The internet cuts off the middleman and I deal directly with a buyer. Besides, when people from far-flung places come to these fairs, they are, at most, from a 100 km away. On the internet, buyers from all over India are within my reach."

Organizers of cattle fairs, however, say if this method of buying cattle replaces the traditional way, it would be "unfortunate". Binu Tyagi, who organizes cattle fairs at his property in Meerut's Parikshitgarh, says, "There can be no substitute for traditional cattle markets and it would be unfortunate if they are replaced. Unless you interact with an animal, you cannot see how healthy it is and how it behaves. Unless you experience all those things personally, it would not be prudent to buy cattle."

Raman's radio idea to reach out to farmers

Chhattisgarh chief minister Raman Singh on Sunday expressed deep concern over the prevailing drought condition in state but has assured farmers that his government is committed to provide all possible help, including finding alternate avenues for employment, to help them tide over the crisis.

Addressing the people on radio in his newly launched monthly programme 'Raman ki goth', a leaf from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann ki baat', the chief minister said directions have been issued to all departments to ensure continued irrigation facilities to farmers. In a bid to strike an emotional chord with farmers, Singh said, "I'm also from a family of agriculturalists and thus can understand the pain of the community in these tough times."

He said besides raising financial assistance, his government had also finalised a policy to create alternate avenues of employment for people in the villages so that they don't have to migrate to other places. However, he did not specify the details of the policy.

He said his government had also reduced the damage criteria for compensation to farmers and now financial assistance would be provided to all those who suffer 33% crop damage instead of the earlier 50%. He also appealed to farmers, who have not availed debt insurance, to get registered for the scheme by September 15.

In his 15-minute interview based programme, the chief minister also dwelled upon issues of education and various welfare schemes, including Pradhanmantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Pradhanmantri Surakshabima Yojana (PSBY) and Swachta Bharat Abhiyaan, initiated by NDA government at Centre. Singh also invited feedback from people on his programme and suggestions for making the administration more responsive to people's needs.

High prices may leave India out of soyameal market

As the new soyabean crop hits the markets of Madhya Pradesh, the largest-producing State, export prospects for domestic soyameal continues to remain bleak as it stands outpriced in the global market.

Bean arrivals in various markets of MP were estimated at around 20,000-25,000 bags on Monday and price of the new bean is hovering around ₹3,000 per quintal, while the old crop is being sold at around ₹3,200 per quintal.

Looking at the trend, the crushing industry has to depend only on the domestic market, in the absence of any overseas demand, said Rajesh Agarwal, Chairman and Managing Director of Giridharilal Sugar and Allied Industries. Normally around this time, the exporters' order book would have transactions of at least four to five lakh tonnes. DN Pathak, Executive Director, Soybean Processors' Association of India (SOPA), said the only reason why there were no export orders was because "we are not competitive enough in Argentina and Brazil. Why should anyone pay \$100 per tonne more for Indian meal?"

Slack season

"The last two months (July and August) are not a good gauge because it's slack season anyway. The season begins in October, this year it's a bit early. That said, the situation is unlikely to improve because we are out priced by competitors. We have a unique selling proposition of being non-GM (genetically modified). But for that we can command a \$15-25/tonne premium at best, no one will pay \$100 more," Pathak added.

While the new crop has hit the markets, there's considerable amount of old stocks which is also entering the markets, sources said. "The export prospects don't look good. It is going to be a repetition of last year," said Raju Choksi, Vice-President of Anil Nutrients Ltd, an exporter. Choksi said the trade had borne the brunt of high domestic bean prices last year. As a result, neither the trade nor the crushers or exporters are taking any positions now. They will wait for the arrivals to pick up and how the prices move, he

added. BV Mehta, Executive Director, Solvent Extractors' Association of India, said the price difference between India and Argentina and Brazil is above \$100-120 per tonne and at these rates it's difficult to see exports increasing.

“The meal is not supporting crushing, nor is the bean price, which although has come down, there's still a disparity in the processing of the bean. That's hurting the industry with capacity-utilisation at its lowest. Either edible oil prices have to go up or bean prices come down for processing to be viable,” Mehta added. SOPA's Pathak further explained that farmers in Argentina sell their soyabean at \$300 a tonne; Indian farmers sell their bean at \$500 a tonne. “Productivity in Argentina is roughly three times ours.

This means that an Indian farmer gets \$500 per hectare, but the Argentinian farmer, even if yield is 2.5 times more, gets \$750 per hectare. We have to increase our productivity by at least 1.5 times but no one is looking at that,” he said.

Currently, the soyabean prices ranges between ₹30,000-32,000/tonne and has caused a disparity since oil prices have fallen. The realisation from oil sales, which used to be 50 per cent, have come down to 30 per cent.

Soyabean meal exports dropped sharply to 768 tonnes in August, compared to 2,778 tonnes during the same period last year. As of September 11, soyabean has been sown across 11.62 million hectares (mha), up 5.5 per cent from the same time last year when acreage stood at 11.01 mha.

Production fell to 10.5 million tonnes (mt) in 2014-15 from 11.86 mt the year before. It is estimated that production will remain about the same as last year in 2015-16.

India to assist Ghana in tomato production

Soon, expertise from India will help boost the ailing tomato-growing sector in Ghana. A combination of high-yielding varieties and latest farm techniques will be tested on the West African nation's soil.

The Ghanaian government has allotted three plots of five acres each in three different regions to the National Research Development Corporation (NRDC), which is leading the Indian effort.

Project plans

With the Centre launching a major Africa policy and set to host the Indo-Africa Summit in October in New Delhi, with 54 African nations expected to take part, this is one of the many projects on the anvil. The Ministry of External Affairs had firmed up the bilateral, \$2-million project.



“A team from NRDC will be going to Ghana on September 29 to kick-start the project in collaboration with the CSIR-Ghana, which runs a string of national institutes on the lines of the Indian CSIR (Council for Scientific & Industrial Research),” said H Purushotham, Chairman & Managing Director of NRDC.

Ghana, traditionally a gold and cocoa economy with a population of 27 million with a good Indian presence, has a diversified economy with a growing agriculture sector and industry. It has, however, been struggling with its tomato farming over the past two decades.

Sustainability problems

The International Food Policy Research Institute in a study pointed out Ghana has not been able to sustain processing plants, and is also finding the going tough in terms of improving livelihoods of those households involved in tomato production. Despite government interventions that include establishment of tomato-processing factories, tomatoes of the right quality and quantity for commercial agro processing are not being grown. Many farmers still prefer to plant local varieties, typically with high water content. Low average yield, lack of access to markets and competition from imports make life difficult for the tomato farmers.

The NRDC will get seed companies, equipment manufacturers and agri-scientists from India to implement the effort over the next three years. The Ghana government will provide local resources, farmers and capabilities, Purushotham told *BusinessLine* here.

A few years ago, the corporation had helped set up a Centre for Technology Demonstration in Ivory Coast. About 250 technologies from India were on demonstration. Over the past five years, the move has helped 166 small and medium enterprises take shape with local entrepreneurs, he said.

Shipments of fresh pulses to arrive next week

The Centre will receive 5,000 tonnes of tur (arhar) and urad imports by October 20 to help ease prices of these key pulses by improving the supply situation of the key protein source in the country.

The MMTC has also been advised to float a tender for milling the imported pulses after States indicated their inability to process the unmilled ones. Two shipments of 2,500 tonnes will arrive at Chennai and JNPT ports in different tranches beginning September 23, the Consumer Affairs Ministry informed on Monday.

The MMTC had floated the tender for tur procurement on September 11 and the bid has an opening date of September 21. Tur is mainly imported from Myanmar and African nations such as Tanzania, Mozambique and Malawi.

“The entire consignment of 5,000 tonnes of tur would be received at the two ports by October 20. To further improve the availability, import of additional 5,000 tonnes has also been approved,” the statement added.

The shipments of urad from Myanmar will reach both ports by the same date.

Typically, India produces about 18-19 million tonnes (mt) of pulses each year and imports about 3-4 mt to meet domestic demand.

Average retail price of tur was Rs. 132/kg in New Delhi on Monday, up 48 per cent from six months ago (Rs.89/kg) and 61 per cent from a year ago (Rs. 82/kg).

Similarly, urad prices are at Rs. 112/kg, up nearly 37 per cent from a year ago.

With regard to onion imports, around 1,000 tonnes is expected at JNPT by the first week of October and another 1,000 tonnes over the following two weeks of the same month.

Coonoor tea sales drop on higher price

As much as 22 per cent, worth Rs. 2.61 crore, of the 15.60 lakh kg on offer remained unsold at Sale No: 37 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions when average prices rose to Rs. 67.28 a kg from previous week's Rs. 66.51.

The Broken Pekoe grade of Homedale Estate, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the leaf auction and CTC market, when TRP Tea and Commodities bought it for Rs. 205 a kg.

The Red Dust of Homedale Estate topped the dust auction fetching Rs. 202 while the Pekoe Dust of Homedale Estate came next at Rs. 200. Darmona Estate got Rs. 198. In all, 33 marks got Rs. 125 and more per kg.

Kairbetta topped orthodox market fetching Rs. 246, followed by Kodanad at Rs. 242, Havukal Rs. 241 and Chamraj Rs. 227. In all, 42 marks got Rs. 125 and more per kg.

On the export front, Pakistan bought selectively in a wide range of Rs. 42-110.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 40-43 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 100-125 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs. 40-48 for plain dusts and Rs. 110-170 for brighter liquoring dusts.