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THE HINDU

Fluoride-affected Nuapada gets 543 crore for water project

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has sanctioned Rs.543.63 crore assistance for mega drinking water supply project in fluoride-contaminated blocks of Odisha's Nuapada district.

The project envisaged at supplying of 100 litres per capita per day (lpcd) of drinking water to 1.20 lakh families in the fluoride-affected blocks like Sinapali, Boden, Khariar, Komna and Nuapada.

Project Sanctioning Committee of NABARD, which met last week, gave its approval for the mega drinking water supply project. The project is likely to cover nearly 500 villages including 414 villages having no piped water source.

Fluoride contamination has crippled a large population in Nuapada district. Many fluorosis-affected villagers in the backward districts of Odisha cannot even walk properly, let alone work in fields. As the fluoride contamination in the district is widespread, the burden becomes backbreaking for people who struggle to make ends meet.

Although symptoms of fluoride contamination became visible about two decades ago and then State government had also taken note of this problem, lakhs of villagers continue to consume water with high fluoride content.

After steps taken in bits and pieces to provide safe drinking water, the State government had made big move by proposing mega drinking water projects under National Rural Water Development Programme. But the State government backed out from its proposal on account of its inability to contribute matching grant.

The mega project to cover 500 villages including 414 that have no piped water source

Mechanical planting of nurseries in full swing



Paddy transplanter being used for planting nurseries at a village near Tiruchi.

The Agriculture Department has asked farmers to utilise mechanised planting of nurseries to get more yield and productivity in paddy during the current 'samba' season.

It has made arrangements for ensuring adequate availability of transplanters and taluk-wise target has been fixed under the National Agriculture Development Programme for motivating farmers to shift to this technique.

In Mannachanallur taluk, a target of 2,250 acres has been fixed under mechanised transplanting and so far planting had been completed on 25 acres. In a press release issued here on Sunday, R. Chandrasekaran, Joint Director of Agriculture, said bed nurseries had been ready for catering to the needs of the farmers.

Earlier, the official inspected the planting of nurseries of ADT-49 and a few other varieties.

Farmers told to take up integrated cropping to enhance their income

'Climate of Malnad region is conducive to such practices'



K.V. Devaraj, the former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru, delivering the inaugural address at third Foundation Day programme of the University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences in Shivamogga on Monday.

K.V. Devaraj, the former Vice-Chancellor of the University Of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Bengaluru, on Monday called upon the farmers to adopt integrated farming practices to enhance their income.

Mr. Devaraj was speaking after inaugurating the third Foundation Day programme of the University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences (UAHS), Shivamogga, here.

Along with agriculture, farmers should take up poultry farming, pisciculture and diary farming.

The climate in Malnad region was conducive to such allied activities. Agriculture scientists should provide proper training and guide the farmers in this regard, he said.

Agriculture should not remain a means of income, but a way of life. Farmers should develop a professional attitude towards agriculture, he said. G.K. Veeresh, also a former Vice-Chancellor of UAS, Bengaluru, launched 'Negila Miditha,' an e-journal of the university, on the occasion.

Mr. Veeresh, who headed a committee formed by the State government to study farmers' suicides in 2002, said that farmers should adopt shrewd cropping patterns.

Farmers who practice mono-cropping were vulnerable to fluctuations in the prices of agricultural produce. Mono-cropping would insulate farmers against the loss they might suffer due to price fluctuation, he said.

C. Vasudevappa, Vice-Chancellor of UAHS, Shivamogga, who presided over the function, said that the university was providing access to agricultural inputs of high quality to the farmers in the vicinity. The university had distributed 4,000 quintals of sowing seeds and over three lakh planting materials among farmers during 2014-15.

Henceforth, the university would market its sowing seeds and planting materials under the brand name of "Sahyadri", he said.

P.M. Salimath, Vice-Chancellor of UAS, Raichur, was present.

Agriculture shouldn't be a means of livelihood, but a way of life.

K.V. Devaraj,

Former Vice-Chancellor,

University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru

Farmers want Cauvery water, removal of 'karuvel' trees

Members of Tamizhaga Eri Matrum Aatrupasana Vivasayigal Sangam staged an agitation near No. 1 Tollgate in the city on Monday in support of their seven-point charter of demands.

Led by P. Viswanathan, State president, they wanted constitution of the Cauvery Management Board for ensuring prompt supply of water due for Tamil Nadu. They sought the Centre's intervention in the matter for directing the Karnataka government to release the waters to save the standing "samba" crop in Tamil Nadu.

They wanted the State government to take action for uprooting the "karuvel" trees on the banks of the tanks and other water bodies as it resulted in serious depletion of groundwater table.

The farmers urged the State government to declare Tamil Nadu as drought-hit area and write off the farm loans taken by them. The State government should fix procurement price for paddy at Rs. 2,000 a quintal.

V. Ulaganathan, State general secretary, A. Subramanian, Manachanallur union president, and V. Gopinath, coordinator, participated.

Coffee Santhe returns to city this weekend



Coffee will be presented in its numerous avatars — even in its non-edible forms — at the three-day event at Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath in Bengaluru during the three-day event starting September 25.— File Photo: K. Murali Kumar

It will feature demos on brewing, contests for children and more

Whether it is the simple kaapi in the morning or the whipped-up café mocha, the sights and smells of the numerous avatars of coffee — even in its non-edible forms — will return to the city with the second edition of Coffee Santhe.

The three-day event, being organised by the Women's Coffee Alliance – India (WCAI), is scheduled to start on September 25. The first edition of the event was held in 2014.

This time around, however, the santhe will feature the world's first Women's Brewmaster Championship, where the participants will push their skills — described as a mixture of art and science — to produce unique coffee brews. Hints of cheese, pineapple, oranges and spices are expected to bring new taste to cappuccinos, espressos, lattes, say the organisers.

It isn't just coffee from all parts of the country — from Araku Valley in Andhra Pradesh to Biligiriranga hills in Karnataka (and of course, Kodagu) — that will be on display.

The santhe will feature demonstrations on brewing the perfect cup of the beverage, competitions for children, demonstrations on bringing art to the canvas that is the frothing lattes, as well as handicrafts — including jewellery — made out of coffee beans.

The santhe is being organised by the NGO to raise funds for Project Nayan Tara, which will pay for the education of daughters of women coffee plantation workers.

The event will be held at Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath between 11 a.m. and 7.30 p.m.

Corporation plans to regulate slaughter

Chennai Corporation is planning to regulate the slaughter of camels for Bakrid, earmarking space, enlisting veterinary surgeons for conducting ante-mortem and post-mortem of the animals before distribution of the meat.

A meeting with representatives of various sections of the community will be held shortly. Even as there are statutory provisions to prevent such slaughter, under Section 296 of CCMC Act, Chennai Corporation Commissioner Vikram Kapur is empowered to allow slaughter of animals “in places that are fit on occasions of festivals and ceremonies or as a special measure. Slaughter of camels has so far not been permitted. The regulation will be a preventive measure against spread of diseases and pollution,” an official said.

However, the lack of adequate veterinary assistant surgeons in the city is likely to affect the drive to regulate camel slaughter. Currently, slaughter of cattle is permitted only in Perambur. As the height of the existing structure is a challenge, the civic body is planning to identify alternative locations for the slaughter.

Of the 19 veterinary assistant surgeon posts in Chennai Corporation, only three are involved in ante-mortem and post-mortem of animals.

According to slaughter house rules, one veterinary assistant surgeon is required for 96 large animals like buffaloes and camels.

Majestic, white birds



Bird watchers can head towards the city's water bodies to spot the great egret

If you are an avid bird watcher, you must head out to one of the city's water bodies, and look out for the elegant, dazzling white great egret (*Ardea alba*). This is the season to spot the males, that grow extra feathery plumes to attract their mates.

“It was an amazing sight to watch the bird preening itself. I took a few quick snaps on the way to work,” beams Vinay Bharadwaj a bird watcher.

According to a bird website, great egrets are slightly smaller and more svelte compared to the great blue heron, but they are still large with impressive wingspans. These birds were hunted nearly to extinction for their plumes in the late 19th century, which were used to adorn women's hats!

“When the great egret is in mating plumage, it has long lacy and delicate plumes on its back that curl over its tail,” explains Bopanna Pattada, who organises bird watching tours in South India. These are tall, long-legged wading birds, with S-curved necks and dagger-like bills. In flight, the long neck is tucked in and the legs extend far beyond the tip of the short tail.

They hunt in classic heron-bird fashion, standing immobile or wading through wetlands to capture fish with a deadly jab of their bills. They normally wade in shallow waters — fresh and salt — to hunt fish, frogs, and other small aquatic animals. They stand still and watch for unsuspecting prey to pass by. Then, with a startling speed, the birds strike with a jab of their long neck and bill.

Deepa Mohan an avid birder says, “It is one bird that I've seen across four continents — Africa, America, Asia and Europe. It's a large heron with white feathers, and during the breeding season, delicate, lacy ornamental feathers on its back give it a beautiful appearance. The beauty of the breeding plumage is something that always fascinates me. I still am amazed

at how the bird can maintain that snowy white plumage even in muddy waters.”

The birds are known to nest in large colonies, in typical untidy stick nests, high in trees, or often on isolated islands. Most of the lakes and water bodies in the city and surrounding areas, will have these birds, which are a treat for watchers.

Preparing for the climate exiles



The poorest and most vulnerable people, forced to move as result of climate change, will have no legal standing under the United Nations Refugee Convention

Although firm numbers are not available, reports suggest that more than 4,00,000 people have arrived at the European Union (EU) border so far this year, driven by wars and conflicts in places such as Syria, Afghanistan and Eritrea. In recent weeks, we have watched in horror the images of officers firing water cannons and tear gas at desperate crowds at borders and railway stations, of people struggling ashore on small dinghies, and of children who could not make it across.

One hopes that these pictures are not a glimpse into a future with climate change impacts and the resulting conflicts. Disasters such as intense storms and heat waves and slow moving changes like droughts and sea level rise (SLR) are expected to exacerbate living conditions to such an extent that people could be forced to move from their homes and become climate exiles. Many may be forced to move into neighbouring, more protective spaces in the same country or perhaps across national borders. According to the 2006 Stern Review, climate change may displace 200 million people by the middle of the century

Island Nations

Consider, for example, atoll nations in the Pacific such as Tuvalu or the Maldives in the Indian Ocean. With an elevation of only a few metres above sea level, these islands will suffer the worst effects of storms and flooding and may be partly or entirely submerged by even a couple of metres of SLR. While the population of these small island states is relatively small, people will have to leave their country without a viable nation state. Those forced to move in this manner have no legal standing under the United Nations Refugee Convention, which offers protection only for those who have been forced to leave their country owing to “well-grounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.”

Worst of all, the people most affected by these changes will be among the poorest and most vulnerable. Their own nations’ contributions to greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere are relatively trivial, but they would suffer some of the most severe effects. It is no surprise then that Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) has called for global action to limit warming to 1.5°C, as opposed to the general focus on a 2°C limit. In a grim reminder of reality, however, the World Bank in its report “Turn Down the Heat” says that without action, we could be seeing warming by 4°C above pre-industrial levels.

Low-lying delta regions of the world such as those of the Irrawaddy and the Ganges-Brahmaputra are also vulnerable to the effects of SLR. More than a

tenth of humanity resides in vulnerable regions of the world that are within 10 metres of today's sea level, also known as Low Elevation Coastal Zones (LECZ). Close to half of Bangladesh lies in the LECZ and these areas will be severely affected by rising seas.

Anticipating these changes with rising temperature, it is important that we prepare to address these issues instead of building fortress-like nations. Regional agreements, joint action, training and skills, sharing of knowledge, technologies, lessons from successes and failures to adapt should all be part of a regional focus in preparing for SLR. Labour agreements are especially important and should be combined with skill building and training in advance of migration.

Loss and Damage

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has acknowledged a domain referred to as Loss and Damage (L&D), which essentially tries to capture these types of inability to cope with the effects of warming. This is distinct from mitigation, or reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and adaptation, or finding ways to live in a warmer world. At the Conference of Parties (COP19) of the UNFCCC, held in Warsaw in 2013, all parties agreed to set up a new mechanism on L&D. The issue is important because even after GHG emissions are reduced and communities adapt to climate change, there would still be loss and damage to people, livelihoods and infrastructure as a result of their inability to cope with climate change. Loss generally refers to the complete forfeiture of items like land, ecosystems, or of human lives, while damage refers to the harm to infrastructure and property that could be repaired. The term includes both economic and non-economic losses.

In order to gain traction, however, this issue needs support from rich countries (Annex-1 countries in UN parlance). The term L&D has, at any rate, come to imply liability and compensation, which makes it particularly challenging for rich countries, which are responsible for the bulk of the GHG concentrations in the atmosphere. It is still not clear if L&D will figure

at all in the negotiations and whether it would then be part of the core agreement at Paris.

The Loss and Damage mechanism is up for review in 2016 and developing countries want to ensure that it is part of the core agreement in Paris, so that its centrality is established. This is why developing countries “are fighting tooth and nail to ensure L&D figures in the core agreement”, said Indrajit Bose from Third World Network.

Commentators on a recently concluded meeting in Bonn, a preparatory meeting for the Paris COP, have said progress was slow but others contend that various issues will get trimmed down as discussions move forward and the focus will shift to ‘key matters’. With less than three months remaining to decide these questions, time is running out.

The refugee crisis in Europe reminds us that the Paris agreement needs to be wider than just the reduction of greenhouse gases, or mitigation. The text of the recently concluded meeting of Like Minded Developing Countries in Delhi states that the issues for the Paris COP are “mitigation, adaptation, finance, capacity building, technology development and transfer, transparency of action and support as well as loss and damage.” Acknowledging and acting on these issues would help prevent the kind of crisis we are now seeing in Europe in future as a result of climate change.

(Sujatha Byravan is Principal Research Scientist, Centre for Study of Science, Technology & Policy [CSTEP])

Cotton production next season expected to be same as this year

Cotton production in the country next cotton season (October 2015-September 2016) is expected to be approximately 385 lakh bales, according to the Indian Cotton Federation.

The annual meeting of the federation was held here on Sunday. Though deficient rainfall in States such as Gujarat and Maharashtra were expected to bring down cotton production, rains in these States during the last 10 days have given hope that the production will be almost the same as this year.

Prices are also expected to be stable next season, according to K.N. Viswanathan, vice-president of the association.

It was decided at the meeting here to appeal to the Centre to announce the National Fibre Policy at the earliest. Individual States were coming out with textile policies and a common, comprehensive policy is required at the national level.

Further, textile mills, who are the main buyers of cotton in the country, are facing financial problems because of slow movement of yarn. The Centre should come out with a scheme to extend financial support to the mills to purchase the raw material (cotton), he said.

J. Thulasidharan, president of the association, said cotton exports this year is lower than last year and is 63 lakh bales so far. Imports have touched 13 lakh bales. Cotton stock is available in surplus globally.

International cotton associations are also expecting surplus carry over of cotton stock world over.

The federation has prepared a contract format for its members and is in the process of amending its bylaws to support its members address cotton-related disputes through arbitration and conciliation.

Office-bearers

J. Thulasidharan, Managing Director of Rajaratna Mills, has been re-elected president of the Indian Cotton Federation for 2015-2016.

The other office-bearers are: vice-presidents: P. Nataraj, Managing Director of KPR Mill and K.N. Viswanathan of C. Jayantilal and Co, secretary: Atul P. Asher of Ravji Shamji Asher.

Prices are also expected to be stable next season

“Remove poultry wastes”

About 300 villagers picketed the Palani-Puliyampatti road on Monday demanding removal of poultry wastes dumped on farmlands on the roadside.

The villagers alleged that hundreds of poultry units at Puliampatti, Marisilambu, Vathagoundenpatti, Poolampatti and other places had been dumping poultry wastes and dead birds on the roadside and on farmlands. The stench emanating from it was unbearable.

The accumulated wastes had become a breeding ground for flies and other insects and a health hazard for residents of nearby villages.

After Palani Tahsildar Mariappan assured to take action within two days, the villagers withdrew the protest, which led to traffic disruption for about two hours.

Delta farmers plan to move SC on Cauvery water issue

The fast depleting water level at Mettur Dam is a matter of concern for them

Delta farmers fearing inadequate water supply for samba paddy cultivation beyond 20 days from now are mulling moving the Supreme Court to direct the Central Government to force Karnataka release water as per the orders of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal.

The fast depleting water level at Mettur Dam is more than a cause for concern for the farmers who have lost kuruvai for the past four years on a row and the samba too going the same way this year is looming large.

Normally over 12 lakh acres spanning Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam, Cuddalore, Ariyalur, Tiruchi, Karur and Pudukkottai districts would be brought under samba paddy.

Of that Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts together account for more than 10.5 lakh acres.

With Mettur Dam opening for delta irrigation in the first week of August, kuruvai was taken up only under borewell and filter point irrigation and those who depended on river for water were disappointed. More trouble was

in store for the samba paddy growers as the longer term varieties require water for at least 140 days and in the present circumstances with the first quarter of the samba season ending, there is hardly water to last for another 20 days.

With Karnataka backing its assertion with data, that its dams did not have enough water to meet its own drinking water requirements, and there is hardly any sign of monsoon setting in time either over Cauvery catchment areas or in the delta, farmers are worried.

The silence of the Centre in constituting the Cauvery Management Board and the Cauvery Water Regulatory Authority, the obduracy of Karnataka in releasing the sanctioned quantum of water and the inability of Tamil Nadu Government to bring adequate pressure upon the Centre to counsel Karnataka to adhere to the rules of the game have pushed the delta farmers to the brink. They are upset over what they perceive as a prolonged delay on the part of the judiciary as well to enforce its own orders, all contributing to their suffering that has reached its nadir now.

“The final award of the tribunal has the same force and strength of the Supreme Court verdict and it is surprising that even after the orders being passed in May 2007, we are pleading and fighting to enforce the very same orders,” points out general secretary of the Tamil Nadu Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association Mannargudi S. Ranganathan.

During that interregnum of eight years Tamil Nadu has lost more than 100 lakh tonnes of paddy just in kuruvai season alone. The loss in monetary and economic terms that could well cross Rs. 15,000 crores, he told “The Hindu.”

Cauvery Farmers’ Association general secretary P.R. Pandian, says that delta farmers are at the brink and his association is all set to move the Supreme Court later this week seeking a direction to the Centre to ensure delta gets its due share of water, Cauvery Management Board is constituted

immediately and samba paddy is saved. Mr. Pandian criticized the successive Central Governments for failing to notify the tribunal orders.

KVK, Kudumbasree on an organic mission

To join hands to produce organic agricultural inputs



MONTHLY PRODUCTION OF ORGANIC INPUTS BY KVK, ERNAKULAM	
Panchagavya	40 litre
Amino plus	40 litre
Neem-de -pest	20 kg.
Tobacco decoction kit	40 Nos.
Fruit fly trap	25 Nos.
Pheromone trap-Vegetables	40 Nos.
Pheromone trap Mango	25 Nos.
Vegetable top up	40 kg.
Banana top up	35 kg.
Neem oil	10 litres
Organo excel	100 kg.
Neem cake	125 kg.

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Ernakulam, attached to Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute and the Ernakulam district unit of the Kudumbasree Mission have joined hands to produce organic agricultural inputs such as manure and growbag mixture.

A Joint Liability Group, the Kudumbasree Mission and the KVK have entered into a pact for the project, which has financial backing from a corporate entity under its corporate social responsibility initiative.

A scientist said the KVK would provide technical support for the programme and Kudumbasree would pitch in with a portion of the money required for the project and provide organisational support. Products from the venture will be sold under the Kudumbasree brand.

An official of the Kudumbashree Mission said that orientation training for a group in Mazhuvannoor panchayat had been completed and production training would begin in early October.

The KVK wanted to leverage the reach and acceptability of Kudumbasree in the district to make organic farming inputs widely available, said the scientist. Though the KVK produced organic inputs, its market reach was limited, he added. With the movement for organic production of vegetables and fruits gaining momentum, one of the key drawbacks has been the lack of

availability of quality inputs such as organic fertilisers, pesticides and bio-controls.

The KVK will ensure that products from the Mazhuvannoor unit are of the required quality. Spurious products posed a threat to the entire movement towards organic agriculture as people, especially those taking up farming activities for the first time, would be disappointed with the results. It might force them to abandon such activities, said the KVK scientist.

Products from the Mazhuvannoor venture will include neem oil and cake, growbag mixture, amino fishmeal and dolomite.

Environmental awareness campaign held

City-based Darshanam Samskarika Vedi in association with the Centre for Environment and Development, Malabar Botanical Garden and Institute of Plant Sciences, Darsanam Action and Development, National Green Corps, Soil Survey and Conservation Department and Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has been observing a National Environmental Awareness Campaign with a variety of programmes from September 13.

The main theme is combating desertification, land degradation and draught and sub theme, adopting sustainable land management practices. The observance will conclude at Kalandithazham on September 24.

Rs. 23.6 crore for water plants in fluoride-hit areas

The Union government has sanctioned Rs. 23.6 crore for taking up community water purification plants in Prakasam district, according to YSR Congress Whip in Parliament, Y.V. Subba Reddy.

On a representation to Union Drinking water and Sanitation Minister Ram Kripal Yadav, the Centre had approved drinking water projects to 53 fluoride-affected villages in the mandals of P.C.pally, Veligandla, Chandrasekharapuram, Mundlamuru, Markapur, Pedaraveedu and Tripurantakam in Prakasam district, an MP office said in an official release here Monday.

Surface water

The Centre has also approved Rs. 88 crore to ensure supply of surface water from Ramatheertham and Nagarjunasagar reservoirs to the fluoride-hit villages in the next four years, the MP added.

Move to strengthen fisheries societies

Minister for Finance and Civil Supplies Etala Rajender said that the State government had decided to strengthen the Fisheries Cooperative Societies by increasing fish production in the State. Participating as the chief guest at the District Fisheries Cooperative Society general body meeting in Karimnagar on Sunday, he said that the government had decided to provide fish seedlings worth Rs. 200 crore during this season to increase the fish production. He said that they had taken up cage-based fish culture in the State only to increase fish production and income of the fishermen.

Stating that the district was having ample water sources for increasing fish production, he said that the Mission Kakatiya programme was also aimed at increasing the fish production in the village tanks. He also said that they were constructing community buildings for fishermen.

KTR launches water grid project works



IT and Panchayat Raj Minister K. Taraka Rama Rao inaugurating a water grid scheme at Puttakota in Khammam district on Sunday.- PHOTO. G.N. Rao

Terming the Water Grid scheme as a gigantic project of mammoth scale and utility value, Minister for Panchayat Raj K. Taraka Rama Rao said the works in respect of Palair segment under the project will be expeditiously completed within one-and-a-half years to provide drinking water to every household in Palair and Khammam Assembly constituencies.

He was speaking after formally launching the Water Grid Project works in respect of Palair segment at Jeelacheruvu in Kusumanchi mandal on Sunday. Stating that the Telangana Drinking Water Supply Project (TDWSP-Water Grid) was initiated with an estimated outlay of a whopping Rs. 35,000 crore, he said the mega project will find a lasting solution to the drinking water needs of people in the State. The project will be implemented under four different segments - including Palair, encompassing a balancing reservoir, in Khammam district - at an estimated expenditure of Rs.3,558 crore. The State government is determined to complete the project much ahead of the stipulated timeframe of three-and-a-half years he said.

Water supply scheme

Earlier, the Minister inaugurated the Rs. 10 crore Comprehensive Protected Drinking Water Supply (CPWS) Scheme at Puttakota in Raghunadhapalem mandal and a new rural water supply scheme at Edulapuram village in Khammam rural mandal.

Minister for Roads and Buildings T. Nageswara Rao, Khammam MP P. Srinivas Reddy, Paliar MLA R. Venkat Reddy, Khammam legislator P. Ajay Kumar, Principal Secretary (PR&RD) J. Raymond Peter, Khammam district Collector D.S. Lokesh Kumar and others were present.

Small tea growers in distress over price woes

Small tea growers (STG) in the state are facing distress due to pricing woes with the growers maintaining that the prices that they were getting from the bought leaf factories (BLF) were below their costs of production.

There is considerable agitation among the thousands of small tea growers in the state, who together with the STG segment in Assam, the southern region and other smaller tea growing areas, account for about 35 per cent of India's annual tea output which averages at 1,100 million kg.

These tea growers grow tea on small patches of land, but are dependent on the BLF as they have no processing facilities. The BLF in turn buy the green leaf and sell it to the big companies in the organised industry after processing the teas.

The present cost of production is about Rs.11 per kg, according to sources in the STG segment. Most of these growers have no access to institutional finance.

Over the last three years, the Tea Board of India had announced a slew of measures for this segment, given their increasing importance. This includes setting up exclusive directorates to catalyse the growth of this segment. Earlier this year, Tea Board amended the Tea Control Order making it mandatory for BLF units to sell not less than 70 per cent of the processed tea bought from STG, through public auction.

It was felt that this would help the monitoring of the price of end-produce. The BLF sector held it was unable to pay higher prices for the green leaf as quality was not good and price realisation was low.

Threatened with the prospect of the STG segment grinding to a halt, the Tea Board had got together the two sectors maintaining that while it was important for the small growers to harvest quality green leaf, the BLF sector too should stop purchasing if they found leaf quality to be below par.

The Tea Board, in response to a representation filed by the Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers association said that the segment should coalesce to form self-help groups which would increase their bargaining power with the BLF segment.

These tea growers grow tea on small patches of land, but are dependent on the Bought Leaf Factories



If farming becomes expensive, what will we do, ask farmers



While the farmers, gathered at [Congress](#) party's Kisan Samman rally in the capital, expressed satisfaction over the turn of events that led Modi government to withdraw the land ordinance, the immediate issues that are bothering them are related to the stress in the agriculture sector of the country.

“In the last five months, the cost of paddy has gone down from Rs 3,200 to Rs 1,200 per quintal. We are unhappy. I suffer a loss of 15 to 20,000 with every crop and it is difficult to live like this,” said Omi Lal, who travelled from Kurukshetra with hundreds of farmers to take part in the rally. He had also attended Congress party's massive kisan rally on April 19 this year.

Most of the farmers talked about the rising input costs. “The cost of urea, pesticides needs to be reduced. When the farmer suffers, the farm labourers also suffer. If farming becomes too expensive for us, what work will we do?” asked Harnam Singh, a farmer from Jhajjar in Haryana.

Farmers from Rajasthan complained about lack of water to irrigate their fields. “The condition of the Indira Gandhi canal is so bad that we get only

25 per cent of the canal's water. This also, only during certain periods in the year," said Yogender Acharya from Jaisalmer.

Others pointed to the sale of fake pesticides in the markets leading to heavy losses to the farmers. "Fake pesticides are selling unchecked. Its effect is visible very late when the crop gets infected around harvest season and by then we cannot do much to save our crops," said Murari Lal, sarpanch of Raipur panchayat, up.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Tur dal rates on upswing again

After a small dip, tur dal rates have again jumped by a couple of hundred rupees in the wholesale market. The bulk rates for high quality tur dal are in the range of 138 to 140 a kg.

The stock at higher rates has still not reached the retail market since tur dal prices remains at 134 a kg at several retail vendors. Traders are worried that this staple food of the common man may get dearer in the coming days. This is because the Tamil Nadu government has recently mopped up 25,000 tonnes of tur dal through an open tender for supplying the commodity through the state's public distribution system (PDS). The order has been bagged by a firm in Jalgaon at a rate of 155 a ton, a source said.

This will suck out a major quantity from the local market, forcing up the prices, said Pratap Motwani, secretary of Itwari Grain and Seeds Merchants Association. The Tamil Nadu government plans to mop up 22,500 tonnes of urad dal and 48,000 tonnes of masoor dal too, said Motwani.

Urad dal rates are already catching up with tur at 110 to 130 a kg. Moong dal too has touched 92kg with the likelihood of prices increasing further in the future, say traders.

Citing agriculture ministry data, Motwani said there are estimates that tur dal production may touch a six-year low this season at 26.1 lakh tonnes. This is 6% less than the previous year's output. At the same time, urad dal output is estimated to be the highest in last three years at 13.7 lakh tonnes. However, if overall estimates for all pulses for the year is considered, it is the lowest since 2009-10 at 55.60 lakh tonnes. Last year, it was 56.30 lakh tonnes, he said.

Consumers in rural areas have stopped consuming tur dal and shifted to cheaper versions like peas or lakhodi dal, which is banned in several other states, said Motwani.

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Co-operative bank to issue credit cards soon

After implementing central banking system and introducing RuPay debit cards, the co-operative banks in the state, in another step towards modernization, are set to issue credit cards to their account holders. This will not only ease the interest burden on account holders but will also help them in availing various services available through credit cards.

The Ahmedabad District Co Op Bank Ltd (ADC Bank) will be the first to implement the credit card system. The credit cards will be first issued to farmers beginning this month before being extended to other account holders.

"Till now, our bank transferred money to crop loan accounts of the farmers

through PACs (primary agricultural society) under Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme. Now onwards, ADC bank will issue more than 88,000 RuPay cards in crop loan accounts of farmers," said Samay Vora, deputy general manager, ADC Bank.

Vora further said, "This card will help farmers make purchases using plastic cards. Whenever the farmers withdraw money, interest will start on that amount only, thereby reducing the interest burden on the farmers."

These card will provide account holders access to 1.6 lakh ATM centres and 8.75 lakh point of sale (POS) terminals (machines used by merchants in shops and malls to accept payment through cards).

"Once farmers are covered, we will give this facility to other account holders in the bank," said M L Bahedia, CEO, ADC Bank.

The regional office of NABARD has sanctioned Rs2.75 crore for this project under the Central government's financial inclusion programme.

"Like internet banking and RuPay debit card, the credit card scheme will also be covered across all co-operative banks in state," said Ajay Patel, chairman, Gujarat State Co-Op Bank Ltd, the apex body of state's all district co-operative banks.

There are 18 district co-operative and 243 urban co-operative banks in the state with over 1.5 crore customers. Over 28 lakh farmers are also involved with credit societies in the state.

The co-operative banks in the state have Rs40,000 crore in deposits and Rs30,000 crore in advances.

Arrivals of tur imports to begin this week, onions by Oct

The Centre on Monday said that the first tranche of tur (arhar) dal imports will reach the country this week while imported onions will follow in the first week of October.

“...MMTC apprised that the first tranche of 888 tonnes and 984 tonnes will arrive at Chennai Port and JNPT, Mumbai, on September 23 and 24, respectively. The entire consignment of 5,000 tonnes would be received at the two ports by October 20,” said an official statement.

The release comes after the third meeting of the inter-ministerial committee on prices and availability of essential food items which observed that prices of pulses and onions had remained “relatively stable” over the week.

It informed that a “firm request” for the import of tur had only been received from Andhra Pradesh so far and the State will receive the first allocation of the purchases.

India purchases tur mainly from eastern African nations and Myanmar.

The Committee also reiterated the need for early finalisation of long-term pulses procurement strategy to help incentivise production.

“The MMTC had also indicated that 5,000 tonnes of urad from Myanmar will be received at the Chennai and JNPT ports. Both ports will receive around 2,500 tonnes each by October 20,” the release said.

“As regards imports of onion, about 1,000 tonnes is expected by first week of October and another 1,000 tonnes by the second and third week of October at JNPT,” it added.

It mentioned that another tender for import of 1,000 tonnes had also been floated on September 11 and the bid would be opened on September 22.

According to the Consumer Affairs Ministry data, average retail price of tur continues to remain high in New Delhi at ₹132/kg – up 61 per cent from a year ago (₹82).

Onions are selling at ₹59/kg – up almost 88 per cent from a year ago.

Erratic monsoon to hit corn output

Erratic monsoon this year would hit corn production despite higher sowing reported across growing regions in India, an expert said here on Monday.

Corn has been sown on 7.59 million hectares as on September 11 compared with 7.46 million hectares last year, according to the data from Department of Agriculture & Cooperation. Corn production is expected to be around 20 million tonnes, lowest in last five years due to irregular rainfall across growing regions of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Last year, the production was 23.67 million tonnes, points out the fourth advance estimates of the Centre.

Due to lower production estimates, the price of corn is likely to remain firm, Shashin Desai, Executive Director-Business Operations, Anil Limited, said.

Desai said corn prices have fallen globally due to sustained higher ending stocks since the last couple of years. “The US has seen their reserves swell to its highest in last 28 years due to which their ending stocks are also likely to remain high. But, lower domestic supply in India would support the prices going forward,” Desai added.

September rains improve Rabi outlook

After prolonged dry spells in July and August, a resurgent monsoon this month is expected to help farmers during the Rabi season.

Deficit rainfall is likely to take its toll on Kharif foodgrains (rice, pulses and coarse cereals) output which the Agriculture Ministry expects will contract by 2 per cent to 124.05 million tonnes (mt) this year, according to its early estimates released last week.

As of Monday, the rainfall deficit has narrowed to 14 per cent after showers across East and North-East India.

The early monsoon withdrawal appears to have slowed with low pressure systems moving toward the North bringing more moisture to parts of Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh over the weekend. Parched areas of Maharashtra also received much needed precipitation, while Gujarat's Saurashtra and Kutch areas recorded steady rainfall.

The South Peninsula also received significant rainfall in the first two weeks of September. This helped narrow the deficit to 14 per cent from a late-August high of 22 per cent.

“The resurgence will improve soil moisture in these areas. Even if Kharif yields fall due to less rain during the monsoon, Rabi prospects appear to be good. Overall, food inflation is unlikely to worsen,” said an Agriculture Ministry official.

According to India Meteorological Department data, 16 out of 36 sub-stations have reported deficient rainfall between June 1 and September 21. Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Marathwada and the Konkan coast are largely rain-fed and have been hit the hardest.

The normal area during the Rabi season is 61.43 million hectares and important crops grown include wheat, pulses like chickpea (chana) and gram, mustard and barley. The season accounts for 51 per cent of the country's foodgrain output.

“Rainfall has been forecast for another 10 days. So, this will help crops in the final flowering stage. Moisture retention in the soil and charged reservoir levels is a positive sign for Rabi,” said a senior official from Indian Agricultural Research Institute. Kharif crop sowing, of which 97 per cent has been completed, will end this month.

Rabi conference

The two-day annual ‘Rabi Conference’, which reviews the performance of the preceding Kharif and strategises about the Rabi, will be held here from Tuesday. The conference will see Central and State agriculture officers engaging on preparedness for the season.

Six topics, including the promotion of horticulture and organic farming, more cultivation of pulses and oilseeds in rice fallows, and ways to tackle agrarian crisis, will be focused on.

Cardamom rules steady on heavy arrivals



Cardamom prices last week were nearly steady with a marginal slip at auctions held in Kerala and Tamil Nadu due to heavy arrivals.

Upsurge continued in arrivals and that remained almost double of that of the same week of previous season.

Upcountry dealers were covering but the number was less at the auctions and that in turn has pulled the market slightly down, PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *BusinessLine* .

Out of the total arrival of 886 tonnes around 842 tonnes were sold, trade sources said. North Indian traders were, however, buying good size capsules for the festival season, they said.

Exporters have bought an estimated 120 tonnes last week.

Arrivals last week increased to 886 tonnes from 846 tonnes the previous week and as against around 481 tonnes at this time of the previous season.

The individual auction average declined marginally last week and vacillated between Rs. 620 and Rs. 675 a kg.

Arrivals today at the CPA auction in Bodinayakannur decreased to 52.6 tonnes from 61.7 the previous Monday. The maximum price was at Rs. 827 a kg. The auction average today fell to Rs. 615.31 a kg from Rs.637.50.

Total arrivals during the season up to September 19 stood at 5,271 tonnes against 2,329 tonnes as on the same day last year. Sales were at 5,166 tonnes and 2,282 tonnes respectively.

The auction average was at Rs. 651.30 (816.84) a kg.

Prices of graded varieties (Rs. /kg): 8mm bold good colour 940-970; 7-8 mm 720-740; 6-7 mm 630-640; below 6 mm: 590-600.

Firm trends likely in cashew kernel

Having witnessed an easier trend in July and early August, the cashew kernel prices are expected to show a firmer trend if the current buoyancy in demand persisted.

More enquiries were floating and small volumes were traded as there were very few sellers at lower levels.

“If this trend continues, it is quite possible that price may move up gradually in coming weeks”, Pankaj N Sampat, a major Mumbai-based dealer, told *Business Line*.

Although kernel buying interest was reasonable but not very strong in the last three months, prices were steady in a narrow range and forwards were trading a few cents higher.

This seems to indicate that below a certain level, selling interest is limited. High RCN costs and regular buying interest from some market or the other are providing a floor to the market. However, given the current uncertainty in economic situation it is difficult to judge demand and market trend in coming months.

And yet, overall, “we don’t expect much change in market in coming weeks but there is certainly a possibility that prices could move up a bit if there is a good demand for year-end top-up requirements and first half 2016 shipments,” he said.

There are very little chances of decline from current levels in the foreseeable future, he said. The range of prices last week was for W240 \$3.60-3.80; W320 \$3.45-3.65; W450 \$3.40-3.55; WS \$3.15-3.30; LP \$2.95-3.10 per lb (fob).

RCN prices dip

The Raw Cashew Nut (RCN) prices came down in end-July/early August due to bunching of arrivals but not much was traded as most processors had adequate arrivals of their own.

In last 2-3 weeks, prices have inched up a bit as medium and small processors started buying in small lots. Current RCN prices are in the range of \$1,350-1,450 a tonne for Ivory Coast (IVC) / Benin and \$1,550-1,650 for GB/Senegal/Gambia depending on the quality.

Except for IVC which reportedly shipped a record quantity, shipments from other West African origins were slightly lower than last year.

Outlook for upcoming Southern crop is hazy-some people say Brazil may have a good crop and Tanzania movements may be delayed due to elections. Small lots of Indonesia are trading at very high prices.

On an average, RCN prices in 2015 have been 20-25 per cent higher than 2014 whereas kernel prices have been almost the same and probably with an increase of maybe 5 per cent.

Between now and March 2016, RCN availability will be from Indonesia, East Africa, Brazil which account for only 25 per cent of world production.

TN plantation sector seeks govt bailout

The plantation industry in Tamil Nadu has sought immediate Government intervention to alleviate their financial stress, through a bailout.

“It is unprecedented; if not checked immediately, the situation would only worsen and running this industry would become economically unviable in the years to come,” V Suresh Menon, Chairman, Planters’ Association of Tamil Nadu said.

Caught between under-recovery in price realisation on the one hand and heavy crop loss due to pests and diseases on the other, the tea industry in the State is heading towards a looming financial crisis.

The average price at the tea auctions slipped almost by Rs. 7/kg to Rs. 80.75 during the first seven months of the current calendar year compared to the corresponding period of the past year. This is much lower than the production cost of a kg of tea in TN, which is hovering at around Rs. 125. This cost of production includes not only wages and wage-related payments, but also cost of inputs.

Coupled with this, tea plantations have, during the past three months, registered heavy crop loss ranging between 30 and 40 per cent due to pest and diseases including severe attack by tea mosquito bugs. As there was no expected crop to be harvested, several man days have also been lost resulting in huge monetary loss in price realisation, Menon said.

The association has appealed to the State to do away with the discriminatory VAT rate on sale of tea by the corporate tea factories, relax land reform provisions by permitting crop diversion and sharing of social costs among others.

Business Standard

Spice-based industry says India too costly



Indian companies keen on making value-added spice-based products say it's making increasing sense to base these in neighbouring countries, not in this country.

Two leading [oleoresin](#) makers, [Synthite Industries](#) and Plant Lipids, have started units in China and in Sri Lanka, respectively. More producers of oleoresins and oils, like Arjuna Natural Extracts and AK Flavours, plan to start units in Southeast Asian countries.

State governments are proposing to introduce new taxes under the Biodiversity Act, impacting the industry, say heads of prominent companies. Imposition of fresh taxes will have sizable consequences, says George Paul, managing director of Kochi-based Synthite Industries.

The new proposals are targeted to protect the biodiversity of the Western Ghats, where most spices are grown, especially those used in value addition. Kerala, for instance, plans to introduce a three to four per cent purchase tax and a one per cent turnover tax under the Act. Experts say input availability and lower price tags attract companies to China, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Cambodia and Myanmar. The new taxes might impel more to do so, more so as many of these countries also offer tax holidays, among other incentives.

Synthite has started a paprika-based extraction unit in China and [Plant Lipids](#) a pepper-based unit in Lanka. This when India has two-thirds of the total global market in oleoresin and [spice](#) oils, though this is diminishing.

N Emmanuel, a leading expert, says production of spices in India is not only falling but quality cannot be always ensured. And, the prices are the highest here.

In the case of paprika, said George Paul, productivity is high in China; so, the price is low. Indian companies cannot compete on the price. “Our market share in paprika has gone down to around 25 per cent. So, we moved to China,” he said. The cost of manufacturing in China is 25-30 per cent lower.

SPREADING AROMA		Quantity	Value
Spice oils and oleoresins export		(Tonne)	(₹ cr)
Year			
2010-11		7,600	910.62
2011-12		7,265	1,304.38
2012-13		9,515	1,558.88
2013-14		11,415	1,733.24
2014-15		11,475	1,910.90

Source: Spices Board

P K Kunjachan, managing director of Arjuna Natural Extracts, a leading manufacturer of turmeric-based products, said they seriously planned to set up an extraction unit in Indonesia, Vietnam or in Myanmar, where turmeric is both cheap

and abundant. These countries offer space for export processing zones and a five to 10-year tax holiday. Apart from the tax proposals under the Biodiversity Act, he noted the new levies that states here plan to impose. These, he said, would make survival difficult. “So, we are very serious on moving to other countries, We have two units in India. Naturally, production here will come to a halt.”

A Mumbai-based analyst told Business Standard that higher productivity and lower prices attract Indian spice ingredient makers to move on to Southeast Asia. While India produces around 70 spices, Vietnam and Indonesia focus on five or six. While India produce spices in small and medium holdings, other countries produce on large plantations. This make them cost-advantageous and hence the lower prices, he added.

India in 2014-15 exported 11,475 tonnes of oils and oleoresins, valued at Rs 1,911 crore, one per cent more than in the previous year.