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THE HINDU

Seeds from vending machine



It detects fake currency notes and also returns change if we put a note of higher denomination than the specified price.

After experiencing the utility of vending machines of milk, water, coffee, tea, soft drinks and ice creams the citizens of Hyderabad, particularly those interested in cultivating vegetables as a hobby in their home gardens and garden pots, can now purchase quality vegetable seed from a vending machine!

With a view to encourage urban vegetable farming in the home gardens, terrace gardens and pots in urban areas the Department of Horticulture has installed an Automatic Seed Vending Machine (AVSM) in the Public Gardens, at the entrance of the nursery there.

The seed vending machine is attracting passers by and the visitors to the Public Gardens and other offices located there including the Legislative Assembly and Council of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh States.

Resembling an ATM, the automatic seed vending machine has in its belly (displayed) 20 varieties of vegetable seed available for Rs. 10 and Rs. 20 per packet in the quantities ranging from 10 grams to 50 grams, based on the market prices of the seed. A visitor could know the price of particular seed packet by pressing the number displayed below the variety on the small electronic display board and get the choice of packet by inserting currency notes and coins of all denominations from Re. 1

“The AVSM is an intelligent apparatus as it detects fake currency notes and returns change if we put a note of higher denomination than the specified price of a required variety of seed packet. It also sends an SMS to the department if anybody tries to tamper with it or damage it,” Deputy Director (Public Gardens) B. Vijaya Prasad told The Hindu explaining the salient features of the seed vending machine.

Asked how the idea of installing the automatic seed vending machine had come to their mind, Mr. Vijaya Prasad stated that they had come across it while surfing the internet once. Later, on enquiry they had found that the Calicut University in Kerala had installed several such machines in urban areas there to popularise home-vegetable farming and there was good response to the service.

“Further enquiries led us to a Chennai-based firm Future Technologies, the manufacturers of AVSM, and after getting administrative nod we have placed order for one AVSM costing Rs. 2.5 lakh as a demonstration,” Mr. Vijaya Prasad said adding that the department had plans to install such machines in all market yards, Rythu Bazaars, important bus stations in districts once the demo proved successful. Mr. Prasad stated that they had sold over 1,000 vegetable seed packets through the AVSM in about a month’s time so far. They were procuring the seed from National Seed Corporation.

It detects fake currency notes and also returns change if we put a note of higher denomination than the specified price. It also sends an SMS to the department if anybody tries to tamper with it, says B. Vijaya Prasad , Deputy Director (Public Gardens)

Rs. 20 cr. for Anna varsity to develop UAVs

For the past three years, the Centre for Aerospace Research at the Madras Institute of Technology campus has been helping the police in surveillance and rescue efforts.

It will help in alerting natural disasters and security threats: Chief Minister

The State government has allocated Rs. 20 crore to Anna University to design unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa announced in the Assembly on Friday that the vehicle would be used to “provide information to various departments to ensure effective relief works. It will also be useful to monitor and alert natural disasters and security threats,” she said while making a suo motu statement.

For the past three years, the Centre for Aerospace Research in the Department of Aerospace Engineering at the Madras Institute of Technology campus of Anna University, has been helping the police in surveillance and rescue efforts.

An unmanned vehicle was recently used for crowd management during the death anniversary of Dalit leader Immanuel Sekaran at Paramakudi earlier this month. Last year, a UAV along with thermal imaging technology was used to rescue workers trapped under the construction debris of a collapsed building in Moulivakkam.

The Centre’s director K. Sendhil Kumar said winning an international competition from among 153 countries in 2012 gave them the impetus. “On the advice of former President Abdul Kalam we began developing vehicles for civilian applications. The UAV was used to manage crowds during Karthigai deepam in Tiruvannamalai. We also sent it to Uttarakhand for 20 days to help the military rescue people,” he said.

Currently the vehicles are operated within a range of 10 km. But the goal is to expand it to 30km. “It has a huge job potential as industries may come up to manufacture the UAV products. There are 80 colleges in the State offering aeronautical engineering. We can use the fund as seed money and look for national and international projects,” Dr. Sendhil said.

During the recent Global Investors Meet, Chennai Corporation had evinced interest in using the vehicle to map the Pallikaranai marsh, he said. The grant will help the University sign agreements with various State departments, including agriculture. The co-investigator of the project is S. Thamaraiselvi, head of Computer Science Engineering department.

College infrastructure

The Chief Minister also allotted Rs 252.60 crore for developing Anna University’s infrastructure, comprising its four campuses, 13 constituent colleges, and four regional offices. “The science and engineering department will be elevated to centres of excellence. The university will also get hostels, transport facilities, central libraries, computer centres and solar power centres,” she said.

National Commission for Women proposes study on plantation labour

UPASI calls for restructuring of plantation industry

National Commission for Women (NCW) plans to set up a joint research team to undertake a study on plantation labour. Lalitha Kumaramangalam, chairperson, NCW, said this while she addressed the planters at the 122nd Annual Conference of United Planters Association of South India (UPASI) in Coonoor on Thursday.

Ms. Lalitha Kumaramangalam pointed out that a study on the conditions of the planters was done way back in 1969 and it was time to undertake a fresh one.

She added that the NCW will talk to the Ministry of Labour as the subject came under its purview.

Vijayan Rajes, the outgoing President of UPASI, called for a holistic restructuring of the plantation industry.

Otherwise, he warned, India would become a net importer of plantation commodities.

Delivering the presidential address, he said that the sector is governed by 24 different legislations by both the Union and State Governments and as many as 16 different commercial taxes are payable to the union and state governments and local panchayats.

Legislations

Social welfare legislations were enacted as early as 1950 to regulate wages, improve living conditions, introduce sanitation, water supply, provide health care, etc.

“Those legislations came in when local self-governance was not there. After local governments came in and laws were enacted in 1992, such social costs were not shifted to the local bodies that levy taxes for such services”, he pointed out.

This has rendered the Indian plantation industry uncompetitive in the export arena.

This historical anomaly must be corrected immediately, else the survival of the plantations will be at stake,” Rajes said.

He added, “ The industry is being levied Agricultural Income Tax (AIT) by both the Centre and the State.

“Companies in Kerala and Karnataka pay 50 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively, as AIT in addition to central income tax. And in Kerala, Rs 700 per yielding hectare is levied as Plantation Tax.”

He termed Indian taxation as punitive towards plantations and urged the Government to revisit the archaic commodity Acts and restructure it.

“Excessive multiple taxes should be rationalised and finetuned to suit the realities of modern times. Short-term and short-sighted policies on land, taxes, duties and bureaucratic delay have no role in global free trade arena,” he said.

Rajes also stressed the need for sanctioning of funds for tea and coffee research, as these have been pending with the Ministry of Commerce for quite a while now.

He said that the industry was ready to work in tandem with the Government. Ms.Lalitha Kumaramangalam’s observation on the condition of plantation labour came close on the heels of the plantation labour unrest in Munnar in Kerala.

Discussion

“I cannot promise a solution to the issue, but I will facilitate discussion with the plantation workers to hammer out a solution. I can make a comment only after I hear them”, she told newsmen while answering a query on the demands of the plantation workers for a wage of Rs 500 per day.

The study will have suggestions for improving the relations between plantation owners and workers,” she added.

External agency

NCW will involve an external agency such as a university or research institute after discussing with the Labour and Commerce ministry. While it

would take another 2 – 3 months to assign the work, Ms.Lalitha Kumaramangalam is expecting the agency to release the data within a year of assigning the task.

New office-bearers

N. Dharmaraj, chief executive and whole time director of Harrisons Malayalam, has been elected president of the United Planters' Association of Southern India for 2015-16.

He was a member of the Tea Board of India and is currently a member of Tea Council of South India, constituted by the Tea Board.

D. Vinod Sivappa, former chairman of Karnataka Planters' Association, and who was on the committees of Codagu Planters' Association, has been elected vice-president of the association.

'The sector is governed by 24 different legislations by both the Union and State Governments'

Dindigul gets excess rainfall in September: Collector



Farmers at the grievance day meeting held at the Collectorate in Dindigul on Friday.— PHOTO: G. KARTHIKEYAN

The district has received 490.18 mm rainfall so far in September and this is against the average rainfall of 418.1 mm during the month, said T. N. Hariharan, Collector, on Friday.

Addressing the farmers' grievance meeting here, Mr. Hariharan said that the excess rainfall ensured that 10 per cent of 91, 488 wells in the district could provide water for irrigation for two to three hours a day; 20 per cent wells for one to two hours and 50 per cent for an hour. About 20 per cent of the wells did not have enough water. Fifteen of the 2,065 rainfed tanks had water that would last for a month and 65 of them had poor storage.

He said that farmers had commenced sowing in the district and adequate stock of fertilizers, seeds, organic manure, pesticides and micro nutrients was available with agricultural extension centres and private traders, according to an official press release.

The following is the storage position in various dams of Dindigul district (with full capacity in brackets): Palar-Porunthalar 22.28 feet (65); Parappalar 59.61 (90); Varadamanadhi 40.02 (66.47); Kudiraiyar 28.81 (79.99); Kodaganar 10.79 (27.07) and Nankanjiyar 22.63 (39.37).

Farmers allege difficulty in getting farm and jewel loans

Official cites new conditions laid down by CCB as reason

Busy with farming activities ahead of the northeast monsoon, farmers in the district alleged that they faced difficulty in obtaining farm loans from Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Societies (PACCS) though an amount of Rs. 70.44 crore had been set apart for the purpose.

Farmers who attended the farmers' grievance redressal meeting here on Friday alleged that they faced problems in getting both agriculture jewel loans and Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loans as the secretaries of the PACCS were not functioning in a transparent manner.

When Collector K. Nanthakumar sought clarification, T. Arokiya Sukumar, Registrar, Cooperative Societies, said that there had been a 'let-up' in the distribution of loans as Tamil Nadu State Cooperative Bank and Central Cooperative Bank, which provided funds to the PACCS, had laid down fresh conditions to ensure that the farmers got loans only for farming.

He said that after finalising the conditions with the district administration, the societies would resume distributing loans from September 28. “The loan disbursement would pick up after the onset of the monsoon and we will complete the disbursement by December,” he said.

After fixing a target of Rs. 70.40 crore, the PACCS had distributed farm loans to the tune of Rs. 1 crore to 166 farmers till last week. About 15,000 farmers were expected to avail themselves of loans and the target was likely to be exceeded this year, he said, adding last year, the farmers were distributed Rs. 64.22 crore loans against the target of Rs. 64 crore.

Submit details

The Collector said that farmers who practised ‘lease farming’ should submit ‘adangal’ with an undertaking from notary public, giving details of the area of land and crops.

After the village administrative officers submitted the report of ‘adangals’ by December 15, the district administration would scrutinise the applications.

Farmers who had availed themselves of loans giving false information would be asked to repay the KCC loan and their agriculture jewel loan would be converted as general jewel loan, he warned.

As a couple of farmers complained that the office of the Cooperative Registrar refused to part with information sought under the Right to Information Act stating that they would not come under the purview of the Act, the Collector directed his Personal Assistant (Agriculture) to enquire into the complaint and provide the information sought by the farmers.

Global Pravasi meet today

Minister for Panchayats and Social Justice M.K. Muneer will inaugurate the Global Pravasi Meet-2015 organised by the Indo-Arab Confederation Council, at Hotel Alakapuri on Saturday. Organisers said the annual

conference will also mark the opening of an exclusive Agriculture Development Centre for the expatriate community. Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan will inaugurate the functioning of the centre, they added.

Research centre for fishermen's children

The State Cabinet has approved the establishment of Rajiv Gandhi Knowledge Centre for Career Studies and Research exclusively for study and research by children from fishermen's community.

The Cabinet also sanctioned Rs. three crore for the Centre and approved the creation of 10 posts, including that of the Director.

The Centre will temporarily function out of the premises of the Kerala University for Fisheries and Ocean Studies, Panangad. The Department of Agriculture has agreed to provide 50 cents for a permanent building for the Centre, said a press release from the Public Relations Department citing Minister for Fisheries K. Babu.

The Minister said that the Centre was being established to improve the lot of the fishermen community by giving opportunities to children from the community to equip themselves for various vocations.

The Centre will be an autonomous institution under the Department of Fisheries and will coordinate all future education-related activities of the Department.

Coaching to face Civil Services, PSC, UPSC and bank tests will be one of the key activities of the Centre.

Planting saplings to promote agriculture

Youths planting paddy saplings at Kuntalnagar near Moodubelle in Udupi district on Friday.

: Scores of youths and parishioners of St. Anthony's Church got down to the slushy fields on the outskirts of Kuntalnagar near Moodubelle in Udupi district on Friday, to promote agriculture by planting paddy saplings.

They were keeping a promise they had made to Shymala Shetty, the owner of the barren field, who had allowed the youths to hold an event "Yuva Mel Gadyanth Kel" on September 6.



Fr. Denis D'Sa, Parish Priest of St. Anthony's Church, who motivated parishioners by planting paddy saplings along with them, said Catholics played a prominent part in agriculture activities in Coastal Karnataka.

The beetle leafs were the prominent crop raised by Catholics then.

Later on, they shifted their focus to paddy cultivation and other prominent commercial crops.

"Pope Francis has been emphasizing on protection of environment. This exercise taken by the youth is also a step in that direction," he said. Anthony Prajwal Mendonca, President of Kuntalnagar unit of ICYM, said agriculture helped people to realize the importance of nature.

"The intention of planting paddy saplings on the barren land is to inspire other youths and also to promote agriculture. This move has helped us to understand the efforts and difficulties put in by the farmers who are now neglected by the society," he said.

Valerian Mathias, President of Parish Pastoral Council said earlier people used to cultivate fields and eke out their living. “The youth should realize the importance of agriculture and also the role of a farmer in nation building. More youth should engage in cultivating the barren lands in the locality in the coming days,” he said.

Later, the youths were served traditional meal cooked by the parishioners.

Farmers seek compensation for pest attack in paddy



In distress:Collector M. Karunakaran addressing farmers’ grievance meeting in Tirunelveli on Friday

Carrying the wilted paddy crop in their hands, a group of farmers from Suththamalli in the district appealed to Collector M. Karunakaran during the farmers’ grievance meeting on Friday to save the standing crop from pest attack by deputing agriculture department officials.

The farmers said that paddy cultivated on over 600 acres in Suththamalli area had been seriously affected by the pest attack and the agriculturists from Sanganthiradu, Mela Kallur, Kodaganallur, Kondanagaram, Pazhavor, Narasinganallur and Karunkadu were facing similar problem.

“Though we’ve applied four rounds of pesticide, we cannot control the problem, which can be detected only when the grains are forming. Hence, the Collector should instruct the officials to visit the affected areas immediately and prescribe appropriate remedy,” the farmers appealed.

Farmer Sivaraman said that paddy cultivated on over 600 acres around Suththamali had been completely affected and the remaining areas had suffered 80 per cent loss. “If we had bumper crop during this ‘kar’ season, we’d have got Rs. 20,000 per acre. But we’ve suffered a loss of Rs. 12,000 per acre now and hence the government should adequately compensate us,” Mr. Sivaraman said.

Officials replied that a proposal for giving compensation to the tune of Rs. 21.98 lakh to 422 farmers, who had suffered crop loss due to pest attack, had been sent to the government.

The farmers also urged the Collector to ensure availability of good number of paddy harvesters with the Department of Agricultural Engineering in a bid to save them from private operators.

Farmers, who have cultivated vegetables in the district, suggested that the government should fix prices for all vegetables in a bid to save the farmers. “Since the farmers are forced to sell their produce to middlemen, who procure the vegetables at throwaway prices, the government should fix the prices for all vegetables,” said farmer T. Ramalingam.

Joint Director of Agriculture C. Chandrasekaran said that the government had proposed to create refrigerated godowns at five places in the district where the growers could keep their produce until the market went up.

Harnessing solar energy for agriculture

Govt. grants almost 80 per cent subsidy to farmers coming forward to install solar pumpsets



close look:Vellore Collector R. Nanthagopal inspects the solar pumpset and shade net in Sirukarumbur village. -Photo: C. Venkatachalapathy

Facing simmering hot weather almost for nine months in a year, Vellore district is eminently suited for harnessing of solar energy for various purposes.

The government is granting almost 80 per cent subsidy to farmers coming forward to install solar pumpsets for energising irrigation pump sets. K. Kumaravel Pandian who has installed a fixed type solar pumpset in his farm land in Sirukarumbur village in Kaveripakkam block availing of the subsidy given by the government last year told newsmen during a press tour of agricultural activities in Kaveripakkam block on Tuesday that he is able to harness solar energy throughout the day. He is using it for irrigating his horticultural crops including tomato, brinjal, papaya, drumstick, bitter gourd and chillies.

Uses Tangedco power too

Asked if he is able to avoid using electricity supplied by the Tamil Nadu Distribution and Generation Corporation for irrigation, Mr. Pandian said that he could not totally replace Tangedco power since the equipment that he has is not capable of storing solar energy for use in the night. Owing to water shortage, he has to irrigate the crop during the night too. M.S. Inbanathan, Executive Engineer, Agricultural Engineering Department said that 17 five-HP solar pump sets each costing Rs. four lakhs have been supplied to farmers with a subsidy component of Rs.3.04 lakhs, amounting to about 80 per cent.

The farmers are able to achieve a water output of 82,000 litres per day from the deep bore well by using the solar pump sets. Four solar pump sets have been supplied to farmers in Kaveripakkam block alone, he said.

Parameswari, wife of Mr. Pandian has established a shade net on one hectare of land with a subsidy of Rs.3.55 lakhs about two years ago in the same village.

The shade net is an innovative method of raising nurseries. She has raised seedlings of brinjal and other vegetables in the shade net.

Mr. Pandian said that they were able to make a profit of Rs.one lakh if they invest Rs. 7 lakhs for raising the nurseries in the shade net in a year. Mrs. Parameswari said that they supplied the seedlings to buyers in Chennai and other places.

R. Nanthagopal, Collector of Vellore district said that subsidy totaling Rs. 40.10 lakhs has been given to 15 farmers for installing shade nets on a total area of 15,000 square metres in Vellore district in the last two years. During 2015-16, a target has been set for setting up shade nets on an area of 20,000 square metres. The beneficiaries have been selected and work orders issued, he said.

Farmers have to be practical, says CM

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu on Friday advised farmers to think practically and committing suicides was not the solution. He said farming in the State was facing problems since last 10 years due to poor administration by previous governments but the Telugu Desam Government was reviving the situation.

“Farmers should not lose hope. Most farmers are using high quantities of urea, while others are investing heavily in agriculture despite their financial limitations. They are not making plans to overcome crisis situations and this needs to be avoided,” he said. Tobacco farmers were facing problems and the State Government would come to their rescue by purchasing their produce. Similarly, measures were being taken up to address the problems of palm oil, sericulture and subabul farmers in the State. The Telugu Desam government will extend 100 per cent support to farmers, he assured. He said Andhra Pradesh was the only State to waive Rs.24,000 crore of farm loans in the country. The government was providing all assistance to farmers by ensuring timely supply of micro nutrients, quality power and expertise of extension officers, he added.

Sago units scuttling move to fix price of tapioca, say farmers

Ask District Collector to take stern action



The farmers' grievances redress meeting in progress in Salem on Friday.–
PHOTO: E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

sago units, with their collective bargaining power, is depriving the farmers of a reasonable price for tapioca, said farmers at a grievances redress meeting held here on Friday.

There were about 300 sago units – all in the private sector. They rarely attend meetings convened at taluk level to decide the price of tapioca.

The District Collector should immediately convene a meeting of farmers, sago unit owners, and officials concerned to find a solution to the problem faced by tapioca cultivators in the district, they said.

A.R. Shanmugam of Panamarathupatti, raising the matter at the meeting, said that the failure to fix a reasonable price for tapioca despite holding meetings in Salem city, Attur, Mettur, and Sankagiri, was a matter of serious concern.

He said that the price fixed in Namakkal should be followed here too. Special teams should be formed to monitor the implementation of the decisions arrived at the meetings, he said.

K.A. Govindasamy, president of the Tamil Nadu Tapioca Farmers Association, said that sago unit owners have not taken the talks seriously. Many sago units owners did not participate in the talks.

He said that taluk level talks will serve no purpose. Mr. Govindasamy insisted that owners of the major sago factories should be directed to attend the talks. Only a direct interaction between the farmers, and the sago unit owners in the presence of senior officials will help find a solution to the problem. N. Elango, Joint Director of Agriculture, said that the sago units were not ready to give the price fixed in Namakkal district. If they continue to take a tough stand, the Collector will definitely intervene, he said.

Some of the farmers said that even the price fixed in Namakkal was not adequate enough taking into consideration the expenses involved in the cultivation of the crop.

They said the price should be fixed at at least Rs. 850 a bag.

S. Govindarajan, president, Salem-Attur Cane Farmers Association, said that the inadequate rainfall has hit the standing makka cholam (corn) crop in various parts of the district. The farmers have spent Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 10,000 an acre. He asked the officials to take steps to bring the makka cholam farmers under insurance coverage.

Mr. Elango said that the government has already introduced insurance coverage for all the crops through the primary agricultural cooperative societies.

The government will bear 50 per cent of the premium. In the past, the farmers have got adequate insurance amount for the crop loss. He called upon the farmers leaders to create awareness among the farming community about the same. C. Vaiyapuri, president, United Farmers Association – Tamil Nadu, said that drought-like conditions have badly hit the standing pulses crop in Thalaivasal block. Even villages situated on the river banks were facing drinking water scarcity. Many animals were dying, he said.

Village survey to be completed by Sept. 30


The State government has decided to complete the baseline survey undertaken to assess the ground realities in villages under the Smart Village programme by September 30 so that the development partners can focus on the troubled areas and address the deficiencies.

The Smart Village and Smart Ward programme launched in the State in January this year is getting a good support from individuals, NGOs, corporates to partner in the all-round development of villages and wards.

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

o **10,000** application received so far

o **7,899** general partnerships and **4,739** sectoral partnerships have been clinched

 **WE ARE SENSITISING MPDOS, PANCHAYAT SECRETARIES TO COMPLETE THE BASELINES SURVEY SOON SO THAT PARTNERS CAN SUBMIT VILLAGE, WARD DEVELOPMENT PLANS BY OCT. 30**
OFFICIALS

“We have already received more than 10,000 applications from individuals, NGOs, corporate sector interested in developing their native or chosen villages, wards to help in achieving holistic development of all sectors. We have directed the Mandal Development Officers, Municipal Commissioners, Gram Panchayat/Ward Committee members to help the donors record the ground realities in the villages chosen by them,” said official sources.

So far 7,899 general partnerships and 4,739 sectoral partnerships have been clinched and the developmental partners include political leaders, NRIs, Non-resident villagers, Non-resident Telugus, industrialists, NGOs, corporates.

“We are sensitising the MPDOs, panchayat secretaries in completing the baselines survey so that partners can submit village, ward development plans to the government by October 30. Based on the development plan financial cost for each village and ward will be assessed,” they said.

Sources said that apart from State and Central government and local bodies’ funds, donations from partners, there will still be a shortfall of Rs.10,000 crore which has been proposed to be mobilised from the Telugu people living overseas. A Telugu NRI trust has already offered to mobilise the funds in a transparent manner.

Meanwhile, the government is also thinking of floating a foundation or trust on the lines of Farmers Empowerment Corporation, Women’s Empowerment Corporation to mobilise funds and ensure their effective spending as per the respective village, ward development plans.

Meanwhile, the Planning Department has estimated that the financial and non-financial commitments under the 20 non-negotiable development indicators laid by the government for 12,918 gram panchayats and 3,933 wards in urban local bodies would require a whopping Rs.44,000 crore

IOB RSETI training

The Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI) of the Indian Overseas Bank would organise a free training course on modern apparel designing for unemployed rural women shortly. Successful trainees would be issued certificates at the end of the 21-day course. Lunch and material would be provided free of cost. Rural women in the age group of 18 to 35 can participate in the training, according to a press release. Interested persons can apply with three passport size photos, photocopy of marks list, transfer certificate, and ration card copy to the following address: The Director, IOB RSETI, 1506/02, West Fourth Street, Pudukkottai -622001 before September 30. For more information, dial 04322-225339.

LPG USERS GRIEVANCE MEET

A grievance redress meeting for LPG consumers would be held at 3.30 p.m. at the Collector's Office here on September 29, according to a release from Collector Darez Ahamed.

FARMERS' GRIEVANCE REDRESS MEETING

The monthly farmers grievances day meeting would be held at 11 a.m. at the Collector's Office here on September 30, Collector A. Saravanelraj said in a press release.

Aavin should procure more milk

Farmers on Friday said that the capacity of Aavin should be augmented so that it can procure all the milk produced by the farmers. S. Govindarajan of Ammanpalayam said that Aavin's refusal to procure the additional milk has led to the fall in price, affecting the farming community.

He said that there was good demand for all the value-added products of Aavin.

If these products were properly marketed Aavin would need more milk to produce them, he said.

R. Rajendran, legal advisor, Tamil Nadu Milk Producers' Welfare Association, said that of the 1.9 crore litre milk being procured daily in the State, Aavin's share was just 30 lakh litres a day.

While Aavin was paying Rs. 28 a litre to farmers, private dairies were procuring milk for Rs. 17 to Rs. 20 a litre. These private dairies were selling the milk for Rs. 48 a litre, while Aavin was selling milk at Rs. 36 a litre.

The private dairies were making a huge profit at the cost of farmers. Neither the farmers nor the consumers get any benefit from the profit earned by the private dairies, he said. Steps should be taken to regulate them, he said.

Refuting the allegation that Aavin was not procuring additional milk, B. Rajendran, Deputy Director-Dairy, said that the primary cooperative milk societies attached to Salem Aavin covering the districts of Salem and Namakkal, procured 5.13 lakh litres on Thursday compared to 3.83 lakh litres procured on September 24, 2014.

CM announces major irrigation schemes

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa on Friday announced irrigation schemes for various districts in the State to the tune of Rs. 321 crore.

Making a *suo motu* statement in the Assembly, she said Azhiar Ootu canal of the Parambikulam-Azhiar scheme would be repaired at a cost of Rs. 20 crore to enhance its flowing capacity. Besides providing water for irrigation for 9,710 acres, the canal will fulfil the drinking water needs of Kuniyamuthur and Kinathukadavu town panchayats, Pollachi municipality and neighbouring villages.

Another project is to utilise the additional water available to Tamil Nadu after the water level in Mullaperiyar dam was allowed to increase from 136 ft to 142 ft. While the first phase is already in progress, the second phase will be implemented at a cost of Rs. 15 crore.

Under this scheme, the main canal of Periyar in Vadipatti, Madurai North, Madurai East and Melur taluks will be repaired to supply water for 33,828 acre.

The Chief Minister also said the Mettur east bank canal and the tail end areas of Tiruchengode taluk would be repaired at a cost of Rs. 30 crore.

New courts

Ms. Jayalalithaa said 22 new courts would be set up at a cost of Rs 9.56 crore. It includes civil courts in Lalgudi, Keeranur, Omalur, Parmathi and Andipatti, an additional civil court in Madurai and two additional civil courts in Coimbatore.

She said 10 fast-track courts with the power of district judges would be set up at a cost of Rs 5.32 crore.

Students need to learn remote-sensing: scientist

Remote-sensing technology is no longer limited to research institutions. It is being widely used for several pro- people initiatives, P.P. Nageshwar Rao, retired senior scientist of ISRO, said in Bidar on Friday.

Data generated by remote-sensing satellites is used for things as varied as monsoon studies, flood control and even for ensuring rail safety. It is essential that we study it well and teach it to young students, Mr. Rao said. He was speaking at a faculty development programme on “Applications of remote sensing and geographical information system”.

Around 70 teachers from Karnataka, Maharashtra and Telangana attended.

Prevent growth of invasive plants in forests: greens



‘Paplio,’ a three-day nature study camp held on the Brahmagiri Hills under the North Wayanad Forest Division, stressed the need to take necessary steps to prevent the wild growth of invasive plants in the forests of the district.

The camp was organised by the University Union of Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University in association with the Forest Department.

The programme was aimed at sensitising veterinarians to the significance of conserving flora and fauna endemic to the Western Ghats.

K.V. Uthaman, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Social Forestry Division, Wayanad, inaugurated the programme. Sudheesh Karingari, wildlife researcher, said medicinal plants in the forests of Wayanad attracted different species of butterflies as it acted as the host plant to them.

But wild growth of alien invasive plants such as Senna spectabilis and parthenium had started to arrest the growth of host plants and it would adversely affect the butterfly population. He explained the wide distribution of the alien plants and its environmental and social impacts on the wild habitats.

Mohan Babu, environmentalist, and C.K. Vishnudas, ornithologist, handled classes on the significance of conserving forest and bird population in the State respectively. A trek to the Brahmagiri hills was a major attraction of the camp.

As many as 40 students from various campuses of the university attended the programme.



Diet diary: The not so well-known ‘destroyer’ of blood sugar



Nature has its own ways of balancing. While India is topping the charts, housing the maximum number of diabetics in the world, it can also boast of having myriad natural solutions and antidotes to fight blood sugar levels.

One of the lesser-known ones is *Gymnema Sylvestre*, commonly known as ‘Gurmar’ or Madhunashini. ‘Gurmar’ has been used in Ayurvedic medicine for centuries and was first used to treat diabetes almost 2,000 years ago.

The word *Gymnema* is derived from the Hindi word ‘Gurmar’, which means ‘destroyer of sugar’. This tropical and woody vine-like climbing plant is native to India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Africa and Australia. The medicinally active parts of the plant are its leaves and roots. Its healing and health-promoting properties have been used for centuries in Ayurvedic and herbal medicinal preparations.

The leading active compounds in *Gymnema* are gymnemic acids and gurmarin found in its leaves. They possess anti-diabetic and anti-inflammatory activities. It is known to have antimicrobial, cholesterol-lowering, liver-protective, laxative, anti-cancer and diuretic effects. Its benefits have also been documented in Ayurvedic texts for asthma, dental caries, stomach ailments, constipation, hemorrhoids and water retention.

A recent study in the *European Journal of Integrative Medicine* evaluated the effect of *Gymnema Sylvestre* on the blood sugar and cholesterol levels of 32 human subjects with type-2 diabetes mellitus. It was seen that daily administration of it for about six months significantly reduced their blood sugar levels and glycosylated hemoglobin levels. Several studies have confirmed *Gymnema*’s traditionally-known actions and therapeutic uses including its remarkable anti-diabetic benefits for both type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

Interestingly, it has been reported to help curb sweet cravings. *Gymnema* is available in various anti-diabetic herbal preparations. It can also be consumed as a simple herbal tea, or a liquid or as a capsule, though its preparation in the form of fresh tea leaves may be most effective.

It is best to seek professional help from an experienced practitioner of Ayurveda to incorporate Gurmar as a therapeutic agent, but do inform your medical practitioner. It is not recommended during pregnancy, lactation and should not be given to infants and those with low blood pressure and low blood sugar levels.

Full text: PM Modi's address to the United Nations General Assembly
Full text of Prime Minister Modi's address at the United Nations General Assembly.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the United Nations General Assembly on Friday, where he called for greater cooperation in the fight against climate change and urged world leaders to pursue the elimination of poverty.

Here is the full text of Prime Minister Modi's address at the United Nations General Assembly

Excellencies,

Mahatma Gandhi had once said, “One must care about the world one will not see”. Indeed, humanity has progressed when it has collectively risen to its obligation to the world and responsibility to the future.

Seventy years after the end of a tragic war and birth of a new hope for our age, we are meeting to chart a course for our humanity and our planet. I consider this a very important summit and thank UN Secretary General for organizing it.

Just as our vision behind the Agenda 2030 is lofty, our goals are comprehensive. It gives priority to the problems that have endured through the past decades. And, it reflects our evolving understanding of the social, economic and environmental linkages that define our lives.

We live in an age of unprecedented prosperity, but also unspeakable deprivation around the world.

I am pleased that elimination of poverty in all forms everywhere is at the top of our goals. Addressing the needs of 1.3 billion poor people in the world is not merely a question of their survival and dignity or our moral responsibility. It is a vital necessity for ensuring peaceful, sustainable and just world.

A great Indian thinker, Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay, placed the welfare of the poorest at the centre of his thoughts. This is what we also see in the 2030 Agenda. It is a happy coincidence that we are beginning the celebration of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay's 100th anniversary today.

The goals recognize that economic growth, industrialization, infrastructure, and access to energy provide the foundations of development.

We welcome the prominence given to environmental goals, especially climate change and sustainable consumption. The distinct goal on ocean ecosystem reflects the unique character of its challenges and opportunities. Equally important, it focuses our attention on the future of the island states. I speak about Blue Revolution, which includes the prosperity, sustainable use of marine wealth and blue skies.

Today, much of India's development agenda is mirrored in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Since Independence, we have pursued the dream of eliminating poverty from India. We have chosen the path of removing poverty by empowering the poor. We have placed priority on education and skill development.

Our attack on poverty today includes expanded conventional schemes of development, but we have also launched a new era of inclusion and empowerment, turning distant dreams into immediate possibilities: new bank accounts for 180 million; direct transfer of benefits; funds to the unbanked; insurance within the reach of all; and, pension for everyone's sunset years.

The world speaks of private sector and public sector. In India, we have defined a new personal sector of individual enterprise, micro enterprises and micro finance, drawing also on the strength of digital and mobile applications.

We are focusing on the basics: housing, power, water and sanitation for all – important not just for welfare, but also human dignity. These are goals with

a definite date, not just a mirage of hope. Our development is intrinsically linked to empowerment of women and it begins with a massive programme on educating the girl child that has become every family's mission.

We are making our farms more productive and better connected to markets; and, farmers less vulnerable to the whims of nature.

We are reviving our manufacturing, improving our services sector, investing on an unprecedented scale in infrastructure; and, making our cities smart, sustainable and engines of progress.

We are committed to a sustainable path to prosperity. It comes from the natural instinct of our tradition and culture. But, it is also rooted firmly in our commitment to the future.

We represent a culture that calls our planet Mother Earth.

As our ancient text say: "Keep pure! For the Earth is our mother! And we are her children!"

Our national plans are ambitious and purposeful: new capacity of 175 GW of renewable energy over the next seven years; energy efficiency; a tax on coal; a huge afforestation programme; reforming our transportation; and, cleaning up our cities and rivers. The energy intensity of our growth will continue to decline.

Sustainable development of one-sixth of humanity will be of great consequence to the world and our beautiful planet. It will be a world of fewer challenges and greater hope; and, more confident of its success.

Our success will give us more resources to share with our friends. As India's ancient saying goes, the wise look at the world as one family.

Today, India is fulfilling its responsibilities as development partners in Asia and Africa and with small island states from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

Nations have a national responsibility for sustainable development. They also need policy space.

However, we are here today in the United Nations because we all believe that international partnership must be at the centre of our efforts, whether it is development or combating climate change.

And, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities is the bedrock of our collective enterprise.

When we speak only of climate change, there is a perception of our desire to secure the comforts of our lifestyle. When we speak of climate justice, we demonstrate our sensitivity and resolve to secure the future of the poor from the perils of natural disasters.

In addressing climate change, it is important to focus on solutions that can help us reach our goals. We should forge a global public partnership to harness technology, innovation and finance to put affordable clean and renewable energy within the reach of all.

Equally, we must look for changes in our lifestyles that would make us less dependent on energy and more sustainable in our consumption.

It is equally critical to launch a global education programme that prepares our next generation to protect and conserve Nature.

I hope that the Developed World will fulfil its financing commitments for development and climate change, without in any way putting both under the same head!

I also hope that the Technology Facilitation Mechanism will turn technology and innovation into an effective instrument for global public good, not just private returns.

As we see now, distance is no insulation from challenges. And, they can rise from the shadows of conflict and privations from distant lands.

So, we must transform international partnerships on the strength of solidarity with fellow human beings and also our enlightened self-interest.

And, we must also reform the United Nations, including its Security Council, so that it carries greater credibility and legitimacy and will be more representative and effective in achieving our goals.

There is no cause greater than shaping a world, in which every life that enters it can look to a future of security, opportunity and dignity; and, where we leave our environment in better shape for the next generation. And, no cause that is more challenging.

At 70, we are called to rise to that challenge, with our wisdom, experience, generosity, compassion, skills and technology.

I am confident that we can.

In the end, let me express my hope for everyone's well with a few lines from our ancient texts:

May all be happy, may all be healthy, may all see welfare, may no one have any sorrow.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

How to make your own bottle garden



Ever seen a garden in a bottle? Only a genie might be able to do that, right? Well, not anymore. Even you can conjure one at home now. Don't believe us? Do it yourself...

Commonly used as a form of decoration, a bottle garden is perhaps a brilliant substitute of balcony or terrace gardens for city apartments. A

plastic or a glass bottle with a narrow neck is just what you require to get started. Plants are grown inside the bottle with little exposure to sunlight, and can be contained indefinitely inside the bottle. You may wonder how the plants survive without air or water. It's pure science. When the plants are initially planted in a bottle, a small quantity of water is added. The air in the bottle provides the plants with necessary oxygen and carbon dioxide for photosynthesis. Sunlight is used to convert water and carbon dioxide into sugar. Oxygen that is liberated as a byproduct, remains trapped in the bottle and is, in turn, used for respiration by the plants. The cycle continues and thus, the plants can easily survive in a self-sufficient ecosystem.

Green therapy

Creating a bottle garden is simple. All you need to do is select a plant with a slender stem, tolerance for lower indoor light, humidity and features of visible interest like appealing leaf colour, shape etal. Get a pretty-looking bottle and you are all set.

- Put a tablespoon of coarse aquarium gravel at the bottom of the bottle. That way you'll be able to see if there is stagnant water below the soil.
- Fill the bottle up to an inch with fine potting soil just above the gravel. Let it settle down by gently adding water, but just enough to moisten the soil.
- To prevent getting water on the mouth of the bottle and to prevent over watering, use an eye dropper. Using distilled water will help limit the amount of salts going into the soil.
- Keep adding soil and water until the level of the soil is correct and all of it is moist.
- Once the stem extends beyond the top of the bottle, gradually add more soil

to give the stem and roots time to adjust being covered. With such a small opening, the soil may not be able to take in enough air at times and may sour due to over-watering. Now, that might be fatal to the roots.

- If the bottle is big enough, a layer of brick pieces of about 10 mm thickness should be laid (instead of gravel) at the bottom. This will absorb accidental application of excess water. Preparing the soil.

- The soil mixture should be porous and friable. This helps in aeration of roots. In case of a bottle garden, it is not easy to loosen the soil at regular intervals. Hence porous soil is essential.

- For this, take one part red garden soil, one part crushed brick pieces and one part leaf mould. In case leaf mould is not available, $\frac{1}{2}$ part of well-decomposed manure may be used in the mixture. It is not necessary to sterilise the soil mixture.

- To take care of fungus and insect infection, add a small quantity of fungicide and insecticide to the soil mixture. It is advisable that these chemicals are mixed in water and then added to the soil.

- Making the soil moist has certain advantages. The dust will not fly while you fill the bottle with soil. And when you plant the saplings, the soil won't crack.

Selection of plants

- The plants chosen should be slow-growing because fast-growing plants need frequent pruning, which is bit difficult in case of a bottle garden.

- Herbs like sage, oregano, basil and ferns work quite well for a bottle

garden as they usually adapt to the size of their environment be it a small bottle or a big container.

- Keep the bottle near a window. But direct sunlight must be avoided, or else plants will wilt inside.

How to sow a sapling

Place the selected saplings inside the bottle with the help of fork and forcep. Pour a few droplets of water and close the lid of the bottle. The plants start growing inside the closed bottle. You should not water again unless the saplings start wilting. So, what are you waiting for? Happy gardening!

Customised dabbas for the city's health-conscious population



Being the commercial capital of the state, Indore is home to many students and working professionals who stay away from home.

And after a long and hectic day at work or college, there's hardly any energy left for them to cook a meal. Ultimately, most of these people end up at Chhappan for a quick meal and end up consuming oily food that burns a hole in the pocket apart from messing up your digestion. Thankfully, the city is now seeing a rise in the number of tiffin services that are catering to the health-conscious Indoreans with low-calorie and hygienic meals. What's more, you can even customise your meal as per your liking.

Low-calorie tiffin over canteen meal, any day

Your office canteen might look like the perfect option for a budget friendly meal but for the health-conscious folks, eating canteen ka spicy khaana is a big no. Anuradha Gupta, a marketing professional, said, 'Our office canteen provides a variety of dishes at economical rates but one can't eat the food daily. It's very oily and I prefer spending some extra bucks on light and nutritious meals that a tiffin centre near my place provides.'" Similar is the case with Saurabh Patidar, an HR trainee, who added, 'I live alone and don't have the time to cook. My office's canteen food is good, but I can't eat it regularly. One of my colleagues, who used to eat at the canteen regularly, was detected with stomach ulcer last week and I too have been having stomach problems lately. Post the incident with my colleague, I made up my mind to shift to ordering healthy food from a tiffin centre. It has not only rescued me from cooking but has also helped me to keep a tab on my calorie intake."

A customised and nutritious meal

Another option that is picking up in the city is that of customised meals. Geetanjali Singh, a professor at Indore Institute of Law and a fitness freak, said, "I have to leave for office by 7 in the morning and hence, I have to rely on tiffin services in order to avoid the high-calorie food of our college canteen. My husband's office employees were getting tiffin served from an agency which served meals the way you want them to be. So, I told them my requirements and they were ready to serve the same, with slight changes on specific days." Tiffin providers are going out of their way to provide healthy food to Indoreans. Ravi Nagar, owner of Milshul Multi cuisine food joint that provides low-calorie meals, informed, "We cater to a large number of youngsters, especially students and working professionals. From healthy sandwiches and salads to rajma-chawal, daliya, combo khichadi, protein

shakes and flavoured yoghurt, the menu can be customised according to one's preferences. We also have a dietician, who keeps guiding our clients on what to eat and what to avoid." JP Singh, owner of Ma Ka Swaad, another food agency, said, 'Apart from low-calorie Indian food, we are open to the idea of customisation and make sure that the dabba is delivered to the right place at the right time. We have also started working according to the Mumbai Dabbawala style where housewives cook homemade food for the office-goers and students. This trend is picking up fast."

Light on the pocket as well

If you thought that getting healthy food will burn a hole in your pocket, worry not. Singh informed, "A regular meal is priced at Rs 60 and the nutrients-specific ones fall between Rs 100 and Rs 120, which is not very costly." Mamta Khanna, who runs a tiffin service with meals priced between Rs 145 and Rs 165, added, 'If you cook the food in olive oil, provide fresh fruits, organic pulses and rice in the menu, the price is bound to go up. Those who eat healthy are also aware of this. We have tie-ups with some dieticians, so that fee is also included in the overall cost." Neeraj Sharama, a sales executive, said, "I spend Rs 9,000 a month for healthy eating and don't think it is overpriced. If they are providing good services, this cost is quite reasonable. Adhering to a low-calorie diet has kept my weight under control. My gym expense is also the same."

Health benefits of Indian spices



As Indians, we ensure that spices form the base of any dish. We are not satisfied with a dash of salt and a squeeze of sour lime, we need spices.

If spices are consumed in moderation you can derive health benefits, but an overdose of any spice can lead to indigestion or even ulcers. Media portals are flooded with the health benefits of turmeric or haldi, but today we list out other Indian spices that are healthy and are kept under wraps.

Cinnamon:

This spice is aromatic and has a refreshing taste. You can add cinnamon in curries, pulao and even desserts; it adds spark to a bland dish. But research on this woody spice tells us that it is also diabetes-friendly and if you show symptoms of insulin resistance, cinnamon will help reduce it.

Besides, cinnamon is used to give you relief from indigestion, common cold, diarrhea, poor blood circulation and tension during menstruation.

Cloves:

Every Indian knows that clove is the spice to treat tooth problems since it contains anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial properties. Due to these healthy characteristics cloves are an important ingredient in natural tooth pastes.

Perfumers use the oil extract from cloves but it has its health benefits. If you are feeling queasy after indulging in too much food or alcohol, cloves have the properties to put you at ease. Cloves can relieve you from vomiting, indigestion, an upset digestive tract and loose motions.

Cumin:

Tempered cumin or jeera adds the spice that dal fry needs. Most dishes are incomplete without cumin. All the better for us, as cumin is known to relieve

you from digestive problems, reduce your chances of anemia and alleviate common cold.

Surprisingly jeera can reduce the problem of piles, serves as a laxative and provides your body with iron, manganese that helps in the absorption of calcium and controls blood pressure.

Black Cardamom:

Do not confuse it with green cardamom; black cardamom is a common spice in briyani. Apparently this spice is also used as anti-venom for snakes and scorpions, but try it out at your own risk.

Black cardamom eases out digestive problems and reduces flatulence, it is known to relieve you from throat problems, chest congestion, and gum infection. Due to its anti-inflammatory properties and the fact that it can alleviate muscle spasms, black cardamom is a saving grace for asthmatics. It is a great ingredient for respiratory problems.

Saffron:

Kashmir is synonymous with the production of the best quality of saffron in India. This ingredient adds colour and spice to briyani or dessert. Saffron is expensive but the health benefits are priceless.

Saffron has the ability to treat depression, prevents loss of vision, and improves memory. The stigma of the flower can relieve you from digestive issues with the help of anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and anti-depressant properties.

Nutmeg:

Like cloves, nutmeg too has anti-bacterial properties. It helps fight tooth decay. Besides, nutmeg can fight Alzheimer's and improves your memory. This lesser known spice has the ability to reduce flatulence and improve

appetite - a problem that all mothers face when it comes to their child's fussy eating habits. It can also release the tension in your muscle.

According to the Chinese, this spice can improve impotence; worth a try for those looking for a natural alternative.

Black Pepper:

Once upon a time, black pepper was considered gold, a precious commodity for trade. A dash of pepper can create an explosion of flavours to a bland dish. But consume this fiery spice in moderation.

Black pepper has the ability to increase the production of hydrochloric acid that the stomach needs to help in digestion. You can save yourself from digestive problems, flatulence and constipation. It is also anti - bacterial in nature, reduces blood pressure and contains iron that is beneficial for the body.

Read more Personal Health, Diet & Fitness stories on www.healthmeup.com

THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

Hedging the kiwi for the apple

Where apple production has fallen due to climate change, kiwi fruit has given hope to Himachal Pradesh farmers

Bunches of exotic Kiwi fruit hang deliciously low, as their creepers climb high iron structures bang in the middle of an orchard adjoining the thick pine forests of Solan district. This is the scenic village of Gawlhi, a few kilometres downhill from the Oachghat Gram Panchayat in Himachal Pradesh.

“The fruit is almost ripe and will be ready for marketing from mid-September,” says Sudhir Sood, the orchard’s proud owner, who spent his own money to construct a 2.5km road to make the village accessible.

Sood’s inspiration came from his father, who had, together with his college friends from agricultural backgrounds, set up a small garden with apple trees in Solan. So, when the time came, Sood bought some land for cultivation in Gawlhi and started with tomatoes and a low-height variety of apple trees. It was in 1993 that he planted some saplings of kiwi fruit for the first time.

By 1996 his first crop came to fruition, but he found there were no buyers despite the fact that kiwi had both nutritional and medicinal qualities. It was simply a case of unfamiliarity with the fruit or its taste. For the next five to six years, it was a struggle for Sood to educate as well as market kiwi among the population.

His persistence finally paid off. Today, the enterprising farmer no longer has to transport his kiwi crop to the market. Wholesale dealers land up on his doorstep to buy the elite fruit. Kiwi is slowly, but surely taking a prime place in the fruit basket of the hill-State. Sood has over 60 plants in one orchard and 125 in another, which will start giving fruit next year.

Passionate about cultivation, Sood also has trees of Japanese fruit, apricot, peach, almond, and walnut. Turmeric, cardamom, pulses and vegetables too bedeck his land, but kiwi is now his mainstay crop.

Kiwi was first grown in Himachal Pradesh almost 20 years ago on an experimental basis. Only in recent years has there been a rise in demand for it in the fruit markets of Delhi, Punjab, even Mumbai. Farmers are getting a good price in the local market as well, due to its popularity with tourists.

“The best thing is that the kiwi fruit starts becoming available from the moment the festival season begins in October till the end of the year. Gifting kiwi fruit-boxes is becoming a trend,” explains Sood.

In Shimla, the State capital, slices of a sweet-sour variety of kiwi are sprinkled with chaat masala and sold for ₹20. A single sweet kiwi fetches ₹30-40. Processing units buy it, too, for juice and winemaking.

The kiwi plant takes three years to bear fruit, yielding from one to three quintals. Sood says he uses only organic manure and has put in place water harvesting and drip irrigation along with a dozen solar panels to light up the area.

Unlike apple, kiwi does not require much work or attention. “All one needs is a space of about five metres between adjacent plants, and a strong iron structure and net to hold the heavy bunches of Kiwi fruit. As it fruits in winter, there aren’t many post-harvesting issues. What is more, monkeys and birds don’t like the fruit, so there are fewer chances of destruction by them. The Himachal Pradesh government has been encouraging farmers to take up kiwi cultivation by providing training and financial assistance. This has borne fruit. Today, over 500 farmers cultivate kiwi in 120 hectares, with an annual production of 270 tonnes. The fruit is cultivated both in open fields and in polyhouses.

According to Sudhir Katiha, Deputy Director of the State Horticulture Department, farmers are switching to kiwi in some areas of Shimla, Kullu and Mandi districts where apple production has fallen due to climate change. “It took decades for apple to become a part of the middle-class’s food basket, and the time is not far when kiwi too will become a popular fruit without the ‘elite’ tag and add to the State economy in a big way,” says a hopeful Sood.

The writer is a senior journalist based in Delhi

Coffee producers join hands to boost Arabica output globally

To tackle the declining trend in Arabica production, all producing countries of the variety have joined hands for a coffee research programme. Under this programme, the producers have agreed to share the Arabica coffee varieties and evaluate among them in the 11-12 coffee growing countries.

“We are going to get about 26 varieties from all over the world. We have contributed four varieties. Our varieties will be tried in the 12 different countries, evaluated to see which particular geography and agro-climatic condition is best suited for growing the variety,” Y Raghuramulu, Director-Research, Coffee Board said.

This global collaboration, he said, would help give some leads to 1 or 2 varieties that are superior to what is presently grown here.

According to FAO statistics, coffee yield level in India at 845.6 kg/hectare is far below the 2013 Vietnam yield level of 2,499.1 and Brazil's 1,421.5.

Interestingly, a comparison of productivity levels in 1971 vis-à-vis 2013 clearly suggest that only India (-1.8 per cent) and Indonesia (-0.07 per cent) have reported a drastic decline in yield levels in the last forty years.

Lower productivity in India has been attributed to non-release of better clones, limited mechanisation, pest infestation and paucity of labour.

Much needs to be done to step up productivity – both at the policy level and farm level, an UPASI source said, adding, “this global collaboration would probably give some leads. It is early days yet.”

Higher premiums

Coffee markets the world over have been highly volatile in recent times.

Sufficient buffer stock with major exporters, depreciation of currency of major coffee producing countries (Brazil Real dropped to 12-year low, Columbia's Peso, Vietnam's Dong and Indian Rupee depreciated) and the release of more coffee to market saw the prices slide since January, said Y Raghuramulu, Director-Research, Coffee Board.

He was speaking at the 122nd UPASI Annual Conference – Commodity Outlook session on Coffee.

Citing the higher differentials for Indian coffee, Raghuramulu said, “Indian Arabicas have been placed at higher premium in international market than Columbian milds and Robustas – perceived among the best in the world.”

Export scenario

This recognition for Indian coffee in international markets steadily transformed coffee exports from commodity exports to exports of differentiated products. Export of bulk green coffee slipped from 94 per cent in the early 1990s to 59 per cent in 2014-15.

Specialty coffee exports registered a six-fold increase in the last two decades from 2,219 tonnes in 1995-96 to 12,715 tonnes in 2014-15.

Milk Mantra enters Hyderabad with ‘healthy’ milkshake

‘MooShake’, a dairy health beverage manufactured by Odisha-based Milk Mantra, is set to hit stores in Hyderabad this month and in Mumbai and Chennai by end-2015.



The milkshake, introduced in Bengaluru in June, contains curcumin, an extract from turmeric that is believed to have anti-inflammatory and anti-carcinogenic properties and is regarded as an immunity booster.

“MooShake is a unique product since it’s the only dairy beverage globally to contain curcumin. We achieved our target of having the product in 1,000 stores in Bengaluru in three months and will launch it in Hyderabad this month. Mumbai and Chennai will follow,” said Srikumar Misra, Founder and Managing Director of the six-year-old venture.

Developed in-house, MooShake has a shelf life of 180 days and each pack contains 0.05 per cent of pure curcumin of 95 per cent strength. It took nearly three years of research and development to create the product.

Milkshakes are estimated to be a ₹1,000-crore category and is currently dominated by players, such as Amul, Mother Dairy, Nestle and Danone.

“The functional health ready-to-drink category is what we are looking to grow in. This is why we’re looking to scale up its presence across the country over the next 18 months,” Misra said.

He said exports to the US, the UK and Japan, will be undertaken in the near future since the properties of curcumin are well-known in developed markets.

The company, backed by about \$18 million in venture capital funding, is also set to expand its processing capacity to 3 lakh litres of milk a day by December from 1 lakh litres a day currently.

It has two processing facilities, one at Gop near Konark and the other at Sambalpur, and procures milk from around 35,000 farmers. The Milky Moo brand of fresh dairy products, which includes fresh milk, paneer, lassi, and probiotic yoghurt, is available in Odisha and cities such as Kolkata, Ranchi and Jamshedpur.

“We’ve clocked 100 per cent growth over the last four years and are in the process of recording the same this fiscal where we expect a turnover of ₹150 crore. Fresh product sales outside Odisha will be taken up if we can find a strategic space,” Misra added.

Illegal pesticides usage may lower food output by 10.6 million tonnes, says study



The use of sub-standard and spurious pesticides could lead to a loss of 10.6 million tonnes (mt) of food produce this year in India, according to a study by industry chamber FICCI conducted in association with the Tata Strategic Management Group.

Titled ‘Study on Sub-standard, Spurious/Counterfeit Pesticides in India’ and released here on Wednesday, the report estimates the proportion of counterfeit pesticides as high as 40 per cent by 2019.

“It is a problematic area with serious implications for farmers and Indian agriculture, society and economy at large. These products not only fail to take care of pests but also inflict damage on crops and the environment,” JS

Sandhu, Deputy Director General, Indian Council of Agriculture Research, is quoted as saying.

The use of such pesticides is growing at about 20 per cent every year with Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Haryana and West Bengal being the worst-affected States.

Illegal pesticides can lower yields by 4 per cent, the study says, and render soil degraded for cultivation of succeeding crops in the cultivation cycle.

Ground and surface water is also contaminated due to heavy metals and toxic chemicals present in such products.

“Only 25-30 per cent of farmers are aware of the use of pesticides and don’t exactly know what to spray in their fields...hence, most can’t make out the authenticity of the pesticides they are buying,” the study says.

It blames the dependence on commission agents (*adhtiyas*) who typically run seed and pesticide retail shops as a source of the problem since they extend credit to farmers who are forced to buy inputs exclusively from them. “Our study indicates that 50 to 60 per cent of farmers purchase pesticides on credit. Therefore, it is not in their interest to refuse the product which is offered by these agents /retailers who often refuse to provide credit on branded products,” it says.

Recommendations include farmers demanding a receipt and maintaining a record of the crop care materials used, while the village community could identify authorised retailers.

The report urged companies to improve outreach programmes through the radio, organise awareness camps, and also monitor of end-retailers for whom a database should be maintained.

The Indian crop protection industry is estimated to be worth ₹25,000 crore (about \$3.7 billion) including exports, of which between ₹2,780 crore and ₹3,475 crore is believed to comprise non-genuine pesticides.

Pulses could rise 10-15% on festival demand, says Assocham study

The prices of pulses can shoot up by 10-15 per cent in the run up to the festival season, according to an Associated Chambers of Commerce of India (Assocham) study released here on Friday.

The trade body estimates that India will import over 10 million tonnes (mt) of pulses since domestic production is likely to be limited to around 17 mt on the back of a poor monsoon which will affect yields in various producing States.

“...with festivals like Diwali around the corner, the demand for pulses would further shoot up and prices may be looking up further by at least 10-15 per cent. As it is, pulses are selling at ₹90-150 a kg with prices varying in different States,” it said.

Assocham estimates put annual domestic demand for pulses at 27.1 mt. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh account for 70 per cent of pulses output.

The major pulses grown are gram, a Rabi pulse which contributes to 41 per cent of the total pulses produced in India, and arhar which contributes to 16 per cent of output. Urad, moong and masur are the other important pulses grown in the country.

Average retail price of arhar (tur) in New Delhi as on Thursday was ₹132/kg – up 65 per cent from ₹80a year ago. Urad was selling at ₹110 (₹ 81).

Moong (₹99), masur (₹96) and gram (₹67) are all higher than during the corresponding period last year.

In 2013-14, pulses worth \$1.9 billion were imported which increased to \$2.6 billion last year. This year, \$0.66 billion of imports have already been undertaken, the study estimates. The imports were mainly from Myanmar, Canada, Australia and east African nations such as Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania.

“India’s large dependence on imports, higher prices and declining per capital availability and consumption of pulses has been matter of concern,” said DS Rawat, Secretary-General, Assocham.

“The government must prepare an implementable action plan to incentivise farmers to cultivate more pulses in the Rabi season by providing seeds and technical support,” he added.

Cashew body’s diamond jubilee

The Cashew Export Promotion Council of India (CEPCI) is celebrating its Diamond Jubilee from September 29-October 1 here.

As a part of the commemoration of 60 years of its existence the Council is holding the 4th edition of KAJU INDIA 2015, international buyer-seller meet and exhibition for cashew industry here during the event. The event is being organised with the support of Department of Commerce, Sasi Varma, Executive Director and Secretary, CEPCI, said.

About 500 delegates from India and 50 delegates from overseas are expected to attend the programme, he said. The exporters will get an opportunity to exhibit their products, so that there will be greater awareness among the importers about the availability of various products of cashew which will help to increase the value-added exports from India.

Business Standard

Nestle steps up marketing for Maggi relaunch

Nestle India has increased its marketing of Maggi as it prepares to present results of the re-test conducted on samples of the instant noodles brand to the Bombay High Court.

The court had on August 13 order directed the company to complete the tests in six weeks. Nestle has tied up with smartphone apps to create a buzz around the year-end re-launch. Users of apps like Haaptik, an online directory, are receiving mailers that the service will alert them when Maggi arrives in stores.

The company has been uploading videos for its Miss-You Maggi advertising campaign unveiled a month ago. The advertisements speak of how Maggi was a crucial snack at any time.

The Miss-You Maggi campaign is supported by a twitter hashtag 'wemissyoutoo' that had surfaced right after the Bombay High Court verdict on August 14. The hashtag has received about five million impressions, according to MindShift Metrics, a digital agency that maps reach and trends on social media.

Nestle has also uploaded a new corporate advertisement on Youtube that highlights its journey in India over 100 years. While Maggi is not part of this film, brand experts said the assurances of safety and quality would rub off on the brand as well.

Nestle India Managing Director Suresh Narayanan recently said the company would ensure Maggi's relaunch was a memorable experience. Many of these initiatives would be digital, Narayanan said, to address "24 by 7" audiences.

It is unclear whether Nestle will appoint brand ambassadors for Maggi. Narayanan admitted the company had not thought about it. During the Maggi recall, the brand's past and present endorsers, including actors Madhuri Dixit, Amitabh Bachchan and Priety Zinta, were served notices by the Uttarakhand Food and Drug Administration for making false claims.