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# THE HINDU

## **Agriculture may be another subject in schools soon**

Government on Friday supported a proposal to introduce agriculture as a subject right from the school level and in science colleges to encourage its promotion among students.

“I agree that agriculture should be taught at the school level and in science colleges and have already had a discussion with the HRD Minister in the regard. However, as agriculture is a state subject, our role is limited in this regard and the states have to decide on this,” Minister of State for Agriculture Sanjeev Kumar Balyan said in Rajya Sabha in reply to a question.

Agricultural education, at present, was confined to 73 agriculture universities and krishi vigyan kendras, though the Centre has taken several measures to retain and attract youths towards agricultural education, the Minister said.

BJD’s Baishnab Parida had proposed in the House the introduction of agriculture as a subject in the school level and in science colleges. He was supported some members from other parties.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research has initiated a ‘Student Ready’ programme, providing rural entrepreneurship awareness, practical experience in real life situations in rural agriculture and creating awareness

among under graduate students for pursuing better career in agriculture farming, Balyan said.

Besides, a scheme of attracting and retaining youth in agriculture has been sanctioned under the 12th Plan Period at a cost of Rs 100 crore, covering 400 rural youths in each of the identified districts in the country. A total of 1000 youths will be covered, he said.

Replying to another question, he assured that the government was committed to launch a centrally sponsored scheme of 'Promotion of National Agriculture Market' at a cost of Rs 200 crore. It will be an e-marketing platform that is deployable in markets across the country, connecting the mandis across the country. Each of the mandis has been allocated Rs 30 lakh, Balyan said.PTI

### **Climate change impacts Apple cultivation**



With global warming causing temperatures to rise and snowfall to decrease, the apple you eat might never be the same again as new varieties of the fruit find favour with cultivators looking to adapt to the change in weather patterns.

New low-chilling and early maturing varieties of the fruit are being introduced in the lower-altitude areas of states like Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand as cultivation of the traditional types is gradually shifting to the higher altitudes.

“It is getting difficult to grow traditional varieties in lower altitudes up to the height of 4,000-ft because of global warming and unpredictable weather conditions. So, we have been adopting new varieties in the last 1-2 years,” Rakesh Singh, president of Sev Utpadak Sangh (Apple Growers Association) of Himachal, said.

“As the cultivation of apples is gradually shifting upwards to higher altitudes, we need these new varieties which mature early and have a lower requirement of chilling hours.

They can help us mitigate the impact of climate change on apple,” said Dr Nazeer Ahmad, director of Central Institute of Temperate Horticulture (CITH), in Srinagar.

### **Cultivation practices change**

Weather records show that snowfall has decreased as the winters are now warmer than two-three decades back in the Himalayas. Uma Partap,

Agriculture Specialist, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development in Nepal's Kathmandu, said that the impact of climate change on crop productivity is being felt across the Hindukush Himalayan belt.

“Over the years, snowfall has reduced drastically. Less snow and reduced soil moisture is influencing cultivation practices. The rising temperature, erratic rainfall, unexpected frost and hailstorm, and emergence of new pests and diseases are symptoms of climate change,” she said.PTI

*Apple is one of the most important commercial crops of the Himalayan region with Himachal Pradesh having more than 1 lakh hectares under apple cultivation. The three Himalayan states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand produce more than 95 per cent of India's apples.*

*Normally an apple crop matures in 160-180 days while the early-maturing ones are ready in 130-140 days.*

**“Action taken against officials for paddy adulteration”**



The adulterated paddy bags recently unearthed in the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation godown here originated from Ramanathapuram district, Collector L. Subramanian said on Friday.

Responding to an issue raised by Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam functionary Devarajan at the monthly farmers' grievance meeting here, Mr. Subramanian said stringent action had been initiated against officials in this regard. He had recommended to the State government to follow the Madurai model of monitoring the functioning of Direct Procurement Centres involving a team of farmers to avoid such irregularities.

The officials seized 875 bags of adulterated paddy in the godown, 668 bags loaded in a truck parked in the godown and 400 bags loaded in a lorry parked in a brick kiln. Two procurement officers were suspended and arrested. Two quality control officers of the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC) were placed under suspension. The brick kiln owner was arrested, he noted. "I had involved a senior vigilance officer and the TNCSC General Manager during the inspection," he said.

Mr. Devarajan also raised the issue of allowing farmers to do away with wild boars that were damaging crops in farms near reserve forests. "We are not killing the animals in the forests, but only those in the Public Works Department tanks and in the farms," he said.

However, Forest Range Officer V. Raveendran said killing of wild boars that were covered under Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act was prohibited. The animals were coming out of the forests in search of food and water, he added.

When a farmer, M. Seetharaman of Vadipatti, complained that the forest officials were neither taking steps to chase away the animals or coming to the rescue of the farmers when alerted, the Collector asked the officials to take efforts to chase away the animals. He asked them to speedily process the applications seeking compensation for the loss of crops destroyed by wild animals.

District Revenue Officer K. Velusamy, Joint Director of Agriculture A.J.A. Jeyasingh Gnanadurai, TNCSC Senior Regional Manager S. Ayyappan, Joint Registrar of Cooperatives Venkatesan were also present.

### **Crop insurance disbursal from first week of May**

District Collector K Nanthakumar has announced that the State government has released its share and the disbursement of crop insurance to more than one lakh farmers in the district for the season 2013-14 would start in the first week of May.

The Collector made the much-awaited announcement at the farmers' grievance redressal meeting here on Friday after the farmers raised the issue and wanted to know whether they would be paid the crop insurance or not. Pacifying the farmers who were upset over the delay in payment, the Collector said the State government had issued a Government Order recently, releasing its share of Rs 196 crore and after the Centre released its share, the National Agriculture Insurance Company would announce the percentage of compensation to the farmers.

The Insurance Company is expected to complete the process of working out firka-wise percentage of compensation by the month end and the disbursement of insurance amount would begin by May 4 or during the first week of May.

In the last meeting, the Collector had said that the district administration had sent a report, seeking a total compensation of Rs. 240 crore for the farmers in the district, stating that they suffered almost total loss due to failure of both south west and north east monsoons during 2013-14.

Kanagaraj, Personal Assistant to Collector (Agriculture) said 14,420 loanee farmers had paid a total premium of Rs. 54 lakh and the 85,929 non-loanee farmers, Rs. 2.72 crore.

The district administration would disburse the crop insurance to the farmers through the Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Societies (PACCS). As demanded by the farmers, the insurance amount would be paid through cheques, he said.

*The insurance company is expected to complete process of working out firka-wise percentage of compensation by month-end*

### **‘No shortage of fertilizer’**

The Agriculture Department have ruled out scarcity of fertilizers in the district.

K. V. Vetrimani, a farmer of Kottavadi, raised the issue of shortage of fertilizers in the cooperative societies at the farmers' grievances day meeting and pleaded with the agricultural department officials to ensure adequate availability of fertilizers.

N. Elango, Joint Director of Agriculture, replied that the district had adequate stock of all sorts of fertilizers. The district at present possessed about 12,900 tonnes of fertilizers, including urea 6,500 tonnes, DAP 5,000 tonnes and Potash 1,300 tonnes.

All the cooperative and private retail outlets have adequate stock of fertilizers across the district and the farmers need not worry about the same, Mr. Elango said.

### **Raichur receives pre-monsoon rain**

After a brief interval of two days, some parts of the Raichur district experienced pre-monsoon showers on Thursday night. Some of the harvested and standing paddy crops in Sindhanur and Manvi taluks have been destroyed.

Apart from the destruction of standing crops, two cows and a bullock have also been struck dead by lightning in Lingasugur taluk. Maximum rainfall of 95 mm has been recorded at Balganur, Sindhanur taluk. Low-lying areas in Raichur, Lingasugur and Manvi were inundated for hours, throwing normal life out of gear. As per the recent report submitted by the district administration to State government (before the Thursday's rain), 19,468



hectares of agriculture area have been affected by pre-monsoon rain. Major crop destruction has been reported from the irrigated areas along Tungabhadra Left Bank Canal in Sindhanur, Manvi and Raichur taluks.

### **Icrisat to take up agri research in dry lands of Ethiopia**

New approaches and priority international investments have been agreed for agricultural research and development in the dry lands of Ethiopia. This comes from a series of strategy meetings between the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (Icrisat).

Four areas with greatest opportunities have been identified - intensification of legumes for better human and environmental health, expanding cereal production by promoting the industrial potential of sorghum and other millets, scaling up of watershed management for more intensive agriculture, and new approaches to help farmers manage climate variability.

“These identified opportunities can only be tackled through partnership at all levels on the value chain and making sure each step on this vertical chain has what it needs to act,” said Dr. Fentahun Mengistu the Director General of EIAR, according to a release here on Friday by Icrisat.

“We need to bring in new innovations and skills to capitalise on these opportunities. For long-term sustainability of these efforts, agri-business incubators are important for building entrepreneurial skills and capacity in Ethiopia. Icrisat has experience in setting up agribusiness incubators throughout India and now in other parts of Africa. South-south

collaborations between India and Africa can accelerate these initiatives. It will also be important to involve women and youth as entrepreneurs and seeing agriculture as a viable and exciting business opportunity with the adoption of new technologies and leveraging ICT tools to support market integration,” emphasised Dr. David Bergvinson, Icrisat Director General.

These new investments were launched in Ethiopia during the Icrisat Governing Board meeting held at Addis Ababa on April 24.

*The institute will set up agri-business incubators that are important for building entrepreneurial skills and capacity*

### **Mango and fish for delicious curry**



Mangoes are all time favourites, with rich nutrition content and exotic tastes. When mixed with fish varieties the dish spreads mouth watering aroma, the temptation of which is unbeatable.

Try some of these mango fish delicacies.

## MANGO KARIMEEN KURUMA

### **Ingredients**

Mango: 1

Karimeen (medium-sized): 3

Shallots (small onions): 15

Green chillies: 3

Coconut milk: 2 cups

Pepper powder: 1 teaspoon

Turmeric powder: Half teaspoon

Curry leaves: 2

Coconut oil: 1 teaspoon

### **Method**

Clean and cut the karimeen into three pieces each. Cut shallots and green chillies into small pieces and crush. Add little oil to it and squeeze.

Keep aside half cup of the first thick milk. Pour oil in a pan and sauté the shallots and green chillies mixture in medium heat and add the second milk, sliced mango pieces and stir.

Then put the karimeen pieces and gently shake the pan and in medium fire, till the fish pieces are cooked. Pan the first milk and salt to taste and keep in a low fire for five minutes. Add curry leaves and coconut oil, shake the pan and remove from fire. Serve hot the fish and mango pieces with thick gravy in a plate.

## MANGO SEER FISH MASALA

### **Ingredients**

Mango: 1

Seer fish: Half kg

Onion: 1

Ginger: 1

Green chillies: 2

Garlic: 2

Coconut milk: 2 cups

Button Tomatoes: 4

### **Masala**

Coriander: 2 teaspoon

Chilli powder: 1 teaspoon

Pepper powder: 1 teaspoon

Coconut milk: 2 cups

### **Method**

Clean and cut the seer fish pieces into medium size. Heat oil in a pan and sauté the sliced onion and the masala and stir till oil oozes out. Put the fish and mango pieces and shake the pan gently.

Keep in a low fire and when the fish is cooked add the first milk and keep in a low fire for 5 minutes. Then, serve hot in a plate decorated with curry leaves.

### **MANGO PRAWN CURRY**

#### **Ingredients**

Mango: 1

Medium prawns: Half kg

Coconut: Half

Onion, sliced: 1

Green chilli, sliced: 4

Garlic, sliced: 1

Ginger, sliced: 1

Curry leaves: 2

### **Masala**

Coriander powder: 3 teaspoon

Chilli powder: 2 teaspoon

Pepper: 1 teaspoon

Turmeric: 1 teaspoon

### **Method**

Slice the coconut into thin square pieces and mango into long pieces. Put this into a pressure cooker and add the masala items, salt to taste and half cup of water and cook. Then transfer it with gravy into a plate and keep aside. Pour oil in a clay vessel (chatti), add mustard and sliced items and curry leaves.

Sauté for few minutes and then add the cooked items and stir. Pour one cup of water, add salt to taste and shake the vessel thoroughly. Close the lid and keep it in a medium fire until the prawns are cooked.

Once the gravy thickens add two spoons of coconut oil and shake. Serve hot with rice.

## **Government facility providing farm implements on rent to farmers evokes good response**

Providing agricultural machinery and implements to farmers on rent since January through Custom Hire Service Centres (CHSC) seems to have received a tremendous response in the Mysuru district, and thousands of farmers have availed themselves of the services in the last three months. The seven CHSCs in the district were jointly established by the State government and the Shree Kshethra Darmasthala Rural Development Project.

The seven CHSCs have collected Rs.1,55,000 to Rs. 4,95,000 in the past three months from farmers towards rent on agricultural implements.

With an objective to help farmers who are unable to buy implements on their own, the government along with the SKDRDP set up seven CHSCs in the district and each taluk has a centre. They are in Anthrasanthe in H.D. Kote taluk, Bilikere in Hunsur taluk, Chuchanakatte in K.R. Nagar taluk, Varuna in Mysuru taluk, Biligere in Nanjangud taluk, Bettadapura in Periyapatna taluk, and Bannur in T. Narasipura taluk.

The agricultural implements that have been rented out for farmers in need were purchased at the cost of Rs. 50 lakh. While the government contributed 75 per cent of the cost, SKDRDP contributed the rest. M. Mahanteshappa, Joint Director, Department of Agriculture, told *The Hindu* here on Friday that the District Steering Committee (DSC) had been formed under the chairmanship of the Chief Executive Officer of the Mysuru Zilla Panchayat, and the panel decides on the rent to be charged on each implement of machinery being given to farmers. According to A. Shrihari, Regional

Director of the SKDRDP, told The Hindu that the Custom Hire Service Centres also educates farmers on scientific and modern cultivation.

### **Farmers seek compensation for banana crop**



Seeking compensation for over a lakh banana saplings destroyed in the rain and gale in Nanguneri taluk a couple of days ago, farmers submitted a petition to Collector M. Karunakaran at the monthly farmers' grievance day meeting here on Friday.

They had brought a few banana bunches to show them to the Collector. The farmers said the unforeseen rain and strong wind had destroyed banana cultivated in Nanguneri, Marukalkurichi, Singaneri, Karankadu, Pattarpuram, Thennimalai, Manjankulam, Perumpaththu, Pattarpillaipudur,



Chidambarapuram, Kovilpaththu, Paththai, Manjuvilai, Kaduvetti, Devanallur, Idaiyankulam and Padmaneri villages.

“Since the damaged banana crop was around 10-month-old, the farmers, who had cultivated it after getting loans from cooperative societies and nationalised banks, have suffered huge losses. Hence, the Collector should recommend to the government to give Rs. 100 per plantain tree as compensation,” said P. Velumayil, district secretary of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam.

Dr. Karunakaran assured the farmers that he would send a report to the government based on damage assessment to be done shortly. When the farmers complained about the erratic supply of three-phase power, officials said the situation would improve after summer. The agriculturists also complained about delay in desilting waterbodies and renovating channels.

A farmer from Vadakarai, K. Zakhir Hussein, appealed to the Collector to simplify the procedure to get permission for using silt removed from the tanks for agricultural purposes.

The farmers, who criticised the State government for the “inordinate delay” in completing the Tamirabharani–Karumaeniyar and Nambiyar linking scheme, said the government should expedite the project for the benefit of the farmers living in the dry Nanguneri, Thisaiyanvilai and Sattankulam areas. “After the flood carrier channel was dug for about 35 km, the project has been shelved. The Rs. 235 crore allotted in the State Budget was not used and sent back to the government. The government, after purchasing the

land required for this project at market price, should expedite the scheme,” they said.

Later, Dr. Karunakaran honoured paddy, black gram and maize farmers, who reaped bumper harvest during 2014–2015.

### **Collector promises steps for open auction of onion**

The district administration will take steps for open auction of onion for ensuring attractive price for the produce. A decision to this effect taken at the monthly farmers’ grievances day meeting held here on Friday, when farmers and officials had a detailed discussion on the current marketing system.

P. Viswanathan, state president of Tamizhaga Eri matttrum Aatrupasana Vivasayigal Sangam, who initiated the discussion, said the indirect auction resulted in the distress sale of onion. Citing the success of open auction in a few other districts, including Perambalur, he wanted similar system to be introduced at the regulated market committee in Thuraiyur in Tiruchi district.

K.S. Palanisamy, District Collector, said he would take action for direct auction of the produce. The Collector hoped that the measure would ensure attractive price in commensurate with the quality and texture of onion.

### **Special camp**

The Collector said that about 87.5 per cent of population in the district had been covered under the Aadhaar card. Special camps would be held in villages where the residents were yet to be covered under the scheme.

Replying to a complaint by Ayilai Siva Suriyan, District secretary of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam that a few panchayat union offices denied work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme to villagers not possessing the card, the Collector said he would organise special camps at such villages immediately.

Mr. Suriyan wanted stern action against the sand and stone quarry managers where cases of drowning were reported because of stagnation of water.

C. Masilamani, District president of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, complained about delay in sanctioning relief to farmers affected by drought during 2012 and 2013. “Although the State government had declared the district as drought hit, relief had not been given to the farmers,” he said. The Collector replied that the district administration had written to the State government in this regard.

### **Promise to Ayyakannu**

When P. Ayyakannu, State president of Desiya Thenninthia Nadhigal Inaippur Vivasayigal Sangam, complained of some ill-treatment by prison authorities meted out to a few farmers during their recent judicial custody, the Collector advised Mr. Ayyakannu and others to approach the judicial officers. However, the Collector promised farmers that he would take steps to avoid such incidents.

N. Veerasekaran, coordinator of Ayyan Vaikkal Ayacutdars Welfare Association, wanted proper maintenance of 17 channels on the banks of the Cauvery during summer.

R. Subramaniam, deputy secretary of the Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, pleaded for drawing up a comprehensive plan for the maintenance of the Kattalai Mettu Vaikal for 62 km from Mayanur to Thaayanur. Sluices should be strengthened and additional shutters should be provided.



### **Diet Diary: It's comfortable but keep an eye on that microwave**



While the microwave oven has undeniably offered a convenient way to heat food, prompting its extensive use in urban homes and commercial properties, newer studies are, however, pointing out some concerns.

Though the microwave has enjoyed a fairly *good* safety record, it uses electromagnetic radiations that cause water, fat and sugar molecules in food to vibrate quickly and build-up heat energy. Heating in general destroys some heat labile nutrients. However, if cooking time is short as in microwaves, it does a better *job* of preserving those nutrients.

Regulatory health authorities consider it safe, if instructions are followed correctly.

Some studies have shown health concerns relating to its radiations and others to its nutritional aspect. It is well documented that nutritional value of microwaved food is preserved effectively, may be better than conventional cooking. However, losses of certain essential nutrients like antioxidants, flavanoid (disease fighting components), vitamins like vitamin B12 and other phenolic compounds have been reported. One of the studies have reported higher losses of flavonoids (97%), sinapic acid derivatives (74%) and caffeoyl-quinic acid derivatives (87%) in broccoli, when it was microwaved compared to conventional cooking methods.

Researchers suggest using water minimally during cooking of vegetables to help prevent these losses.

A word of caution for mothers who use the microwave for heating formula or breast milk. According a study published in the journal, Paediatrics, microwaving can destroy the essential disease-fighting components in breast milk that offer protection to infants. Microwaved breast milk loses lysozyme activity, antibodies, and may foster the growth of more potentially harmful bacteria.

Till further research evidence is gathered, it is suggested that microwaves are used with care, not as an alternative to conventional cooking and are better used for reheating. An occasional micro-waved meal will certainly not be harmful but a steady diet of eating foods cooked in microwave can certainly be a health concern.

*Ishi Khosla is a former senior nutritionist at Escorts. She heads the Centre of Dietary Counselling and also runs a health food store. She feels that for complete well-being, one should integrate physical, mental and spiritual health. According to her: “To be healthy should be the ultimate goal for all.”*



## **THE TIMES OF INDIA**

### **75 farmer groups to take part in foodgrain fest from today**

The 10th edition of direct farmer-to-customer agriculture festival is set to begin on Saturday. This year almost 4,000 quintal of foodgrains from 75 farmer groups will be on sale.

The three-day fair, which is being organized by the district superintendent agriculture officer, Pune, department of agriculture and the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA), will be held from 9am to 9pm at the Sakhar Sankul near College of Agriculture, Shivajinagar. The fair will be inaugurated by district guardian minister Girish Bapat.

Farmers from 13 talukas of Pune, who are members of various groups, will bring both certified organic and non-organic foodgrain. "Food items devoid of any colours or additives will be available from districts such as Maval, Baramati, Saswad, Ambegaon and Haveli," said Subhash Katkar, district superintendent agriculture officer, Pune, while addressing a press conference in the city on Thursday.

Katkar said two stalls will sell organic items. "Although the demand for organic food products is huge, but there are still very few farmers who grow such produce. Farmers have to procure a certification and the procedure is lengthy. Hence, not many farmers have taken to growing organic foodgrains. There are around 35 farmers who grow organic grains," he added.

The agriculture festival benefits farmers as they get exposure and learn new marketing techniques. It also helps build long-term relationships between customers and farmers.

### **Humble turmeric can help treat oral cancers**

*Turmeric, the familiar yellow spice common in Indian cooking, may also help treat oral cancers caused by a virus, says a study co-authored by an Indian-origin researcher.*



One of the herb's key active ingredients - an antioxidant called curcumin - appears to have a quelling effect on the activity of human papillomavirus (HPV), the study pointed out.

"Turmeric has established antiviral and anti-cancer properties," said corresponding author Alok Mishra of the Emory University, Atlanta, US.

"And according to our new findings, we could say that it is good for oral health too," Mishra noted.

HPV is a virus that promotes the development of cervical and oral cancer. There is no cure, but the new findings suggest that curcumin may offer a means of future control.



Mishra's research group first noted the effect of curcumin on HPV and cervical cancer cells in 2005. The antioxidant slowed the expression of HPV, suggesting that curcumin could control the extent of HPV infection.

"Since HPV-related oral cancer cases are on the rise, we tested the same hypothesis on oral cancer," Mishra explained.

"They turned out to be some very interesting findings."

The new research indicates that curcumin turns down the expression of HPV in infected oral cancer cells by downregulating the levels of cellular transcription factors AP-1 and NF-kB.

The research was published in the journal *ecancermedicalsecience*.

## **7 superfoods for your child**



*The right kind of nutrition is extremely important, especially for a kid who is growing up.*

Here are seven nutrient-packed superfoods that should be a part of your child's diet.

**1. Oatmeal:** Research shows that kids who eat oatmeal are better able to concentrate and pay attention in school. Fiber-rich whole grains, like oatmeal, digest slowly, providing kids with a steady stream of energy.

**2. Spinach:** Spinach is an excellent source of iron, calcium, folic acid, and vitamins A and C — all great for growing bones and brains. It has a mild flavour and gets cooked very fast. Add some spinach to hot soups or toss it in tomato sauce and tuck it in a frankie.

**3. Sweet potatoes:** A great source of nutrition, sweet potatoes contain potassium, vitamin C, fiber, folate, vitamin A, calcium and iron, to name a few. You can replace potatoes with sweet potatoes in several recipes. They can be mashed, grilled, roasted or made into a delicious sweet casserole.

**4. Berries:** Blueberries, strawberries and raspberries contain potassium, vitamin C, fiber, carbohydrates and antioxidants. Moreover, they come with very little fat and no cholesterol. Since berries are sweet, your child will probably enjoy the taste. Add berries to oatmeal, yogurt and whole grain cereals to provide an extra vitamin kick.

**5. Egg:** The high protein content in egg makes it a superfood. Besides protein, eggs are full of more than a dozen necessary vitamins and minerals, and contain a huge concentration of choline — a nutrient vital for brain development in young children. You can cook either scrambled or fried eggs.

**6. Yogurt:** Rich in calcium and a good source of protein, yogurt helps build strong bones and teeth. It may also aid digestion and fight bad bacteria in the gut. Serving yogurt with fresh fruit is a good option.

**7. Basil:** This herb is packed with antioxidants, vitamins A, C, and K as well as iron, potassium, and calcium and can help improve digestion. Some research shows that basil may even ease headaches. The next time you cook pasta, grind some basil and mix it in the sauce. That way, the green flecks will be hidden from the kid's sight and yet make it to his/her diet.

### **5 teas that make you slim!**



*The brew that energises can also help you lose weight. Here's how...*

It's widely known that just one cup of tea can prevent strokes, arthritis, tooth decay and even keep cancer at bay. While it's regarded as nature's tranquiliser for its soothing properties, the brew also has another great benefit - it helps shed weight. Scientists have shown that tea has high levels of compounds that battle the absorption of fat.

Here are 5 teas that can result in a slimmer you...

### **Star anise tea: promotes digestion**

Star anise, the fruit of a small evergreen tree (*Illicium verum*) native to China, can be used in the treatment of digestive troubles such as an upset stomach, diarrhea, nausea etc. One may drink a tea made from it by steeping a whole pod in one cup of hot water for 10 minutes. Strain this and sweeten it if required. Sip on this slowly when an upset stomach occurs.

### **Peppermint tea: controls what you eat**

If you like peppermint tea then try and rotate that with a green tea drink as both speed up digestion and thus help you burn more calories. The peppermint leaves can be used to make a light, refreshing tea, which can be drunk either hot or chilled. To prepare the tea, take a tablespoon of fresh or dried leaves and add them to boiling water and let it steep for four to five minutes. Strain and add honey, if needed.

### **Green tea: builds metabolism**

Research says the chemical EGCG found in green tea that speeds up the body's metabolism, is responsible for helping people lose the kilos - it can burn a whopping 70 calories a day! Green tea also raises the level of antioxidants. It's believed the antioxidant catechins in green tea boost metabolism and helps burn fat (can burn a whopping 70 calories a day!) Steeping time for the tea: two to three minutes at 85 Degrees Celsius.

### **Rose tea: prevents constipation**

One of the oldest flavouring teas available, rose tea - made by mixing fresh roses and the bud of the tea - has a major therapeutic effect on the human body. Apart from clearing toxins and beautifying the skin, rose tea contains vitamins A, B3, C, D and E and is known to act against infections. It also prevents constipation and helps one lose weight.

### **Oolong tea: guards against obesity**

Research reveals that oolong, a semi-fermented tea may have a stronger effect than even green tea. It promotes fat burning is said to help reduce cholesterol and the concentration of fat in the body. About two cups per day is recommended. Steep oolong tea anywhere from 30 seconds to five minutes, for a more full-bodied cup.

**Poor mangosteen output to push up prices this year**



Poor output of mangosteen fruit in 2015 due to erroneous weather and a bumper crop last year is likely to push up its prices in the domestic market this year.

According to growers in Kerala, the production is expected to be below 50 per cent of that of the last year.

At the same time, increasing demand every year, especially from the metros and cities, probably based on its reported health benefits and remunerative prices, has prompted several farmers in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to take up planting of mangosteen, T Thomas, a botanist and Professor told *BusinessLine*.

He said trees in his garden in Kozhencherry in Kerala's Pathanamthitta district have only around 25 per cent of the normal yield this year.

The main reason for such a predicament could be the continuous rainfall during the flowering period. The trees did not receive the required dry spell before flowering, he said.

Because of the poor yield the traders, who used to buy the standing crop by paying a substantial amount as advance, have not turned up after assessing the crop, he said.

Joshua Daniel, a major planter and trader of mangosteen based in Konni in Kerala's Pathanamthitta district said that he had planted 2,000 saplings of three-year old last year and they would start yielding after 4 years.

The total gestation period, thus, is eight years and it would continue to stay yielding for over a century, he said.

He has harvested the crop in Chalakkudy where it was only 20 tonnes against 40 tonnes last season.

The product was processed, packed and sold to the wholesalers in Chennai at ₹500 a kg. Whereas, last year it was sold at ₹120-150, he said.

Its harvesting is during March-August in Kerala, Thomas said.

### **Funds inadequate for agricultural research: TNAU VC**

Production of pearl millets has improved significantly over the years despite a 22 per cent decline in area, noted Ishwar Singh Solanki, Assistant Director General (Food and Fodder Crop), Indian Council of Agricultural Research, hailing the private sector seed companies for their effort.

But the Vice Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University K Ramasamy voiced his objection to this by stating that the contribution by the private companies was only 17 per cent against the 83 per cent by public sector.

“Despite the constraints in research funding, scientists in the public system were the first to identify hybrids. We have until now concentrated only on enhancing productivity,” Ramasamy said, urging the research community to look into quality parameters and nutritional values.

But the research fund allocation is a 15 per cent and more often not enough to conduct field trails, he said, emphasising upon the ICAR to give greater impetus to funding for research.



Delivering the special address at 50th Annual Group Meet of all India Coordinated Research Project on Pearl Millets, Solanki called upon the researchers to look at improving nutritional factors, production without compromising on quality and water conservation techniques. “Go for demand-driven achievement to popularise these millets,” he said.

### **Karnataka government to help farmers affected by hailstorm**

The Karnataka Government has taken steps to disburse compensation to the farmers affected by hailstorm recently, according the state Chief Minister.

Speaking to presspersons at Mangalore International Airport during his visit on Friday, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, said that around 64,000 hectares of land in the state was affected by hailstorm recently. The Government has decided to disburse compensation of ₹25,000 a hectare for those affected by hailstorm.

Hailstorm and winds had affected crops on around 64,000 hectares of land in Koppal, Raichur, Gulbarga, Bellary, Bidar, Bijapur and Gadag from April 8-16.

Earlier also the Government has come to the rescue for arecanut and sugarcane growers, and those who have taken up horticulture activities when they faced crisis either in the form of diseases in their plantations or price fall, he said.

To a query on the farmers suicides, he said that farmers should not commit suicide. The Government is with them during the hour of crisis, and help them by all means, he said.

# Business Standard

**Parliament panel wants govt to assess damage due to unseasonal rains**



The parliamentary standing committee on agriculture has recommended the government should leave no stone unturned to assess the damage caused to farmers in the recent unseasonal rains and hailstorm that wreaked havoc in several parts of the country.

In its report tabled on Friday, the committee said the government should first assess the damage and then get their insurance claims verified and settled by the insurance companies at the earliest.

“If the government adopts a proactive role herein and ensures speedy settlement of claims, the effect of these unseasonal rains would be mitigated to a certain extent and motivate farmers to start preparatory work for the ensuring kharif season,” the panel said.

The committee in its report also pulled up the government for not giving the agriculture sector its due in fund allocations and suggested a quantum jump in that to boost the farm sector.

“In spite of our economy being agri-dominant and one which sustains more than half of our population, the committee notes with concern that when the issue of distribution of financial resources crops up, the agriculture sector is not given its due by the government,” the committee said.

The report comes amid the government facing criticism over farmers committing suicides on account of stress in the sector, including last month's unseasonal rains and hailstorms that destroyed crops in many parts of the country.

The outlay for entire agriculture and allied sectors in 2015-16 has been increased to Rs 11,657 crore, which is about 2.8 per cent of the total central plan outlay of Rs 5, 78,382 crore, the committee said.

“This is meagre amount” that pales in comparison with the allocation to

some of the other vital sectors such as energy of Rs 1,67,342 crore, which is 29 per cent of the central plan outlay, it added.

The allocation for the science and technology sector is Rs 19,023 crore, which is 3.3 per cent of the central plan outlay.

“Being well aware of the precarious state of agriculture sector in the country, the committee fails to understand this rather sordid state of affairs,” the report said.

If the government is serious about reinvigorating the farm sector, the panel said that “the first step in the right direction would be a quantum enhancement in allocation of funds for agriculture and allied sectors”.