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Dispossession under neoliberalism

While liberalisation's backers are not squeamish in admitting that democracy is an impediment to the free market economic model, farmers who are dispossessed of land argue that they are undercompensated and that the profit of private companies is not a public purpose

Since it was passed by Parliament in September 2013, the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act (LARR) has been criticised from all sides. Farmers and social movements argued that LARR failed to adequately compensate land losers, contained large loopholes such as exempting irrigation projects, and, most importantly, continued to allow land acquisition for private companies. Industrialists, developers, and State governments, on the other hand, complained that the bill would delay projects, increase the costs of land acquisition, and impede economic growth. It was no secret that the government shared the latter view, and it was no surprise when it diluted many of LARR's key provisions through an ordinance issued on December 31.

The ordinance effectively eliminates the main features of LARR that gave rural people some protection from arbitrary dispossession. First, it removes the requirement that the government obtain the consent of 80 per cent of affected people before taking their land for private projects, and 70 per cent of affected people for public-private partnership (PPP) projects. The ordinance thus restores the ability of the government to acquire land for any private purpose it likes, with no need to win the support of the affected. Second, the ordinance eliminates the Social Impact Assessments (SIA) that LARR had mandated as a pre-condition for proceeding with land acquisition. This restores the ability of the government to dispossess land from people without even assessing its negative consequences, much less weighing them against projected benefits. Without SIAs, there is no way to even determine who is affected, thus undermining the bill's promise that non-land owners — such as labourers, sharecroppers, artisans, and fishworkers — will also be compensated. In addition to these major changes, the ordinance increases the amount of time that a government or company

can keep unutilised land, and removes LARR's strong penalties for non-complying officials. By making these sweeping changes through an ordinance, the government has undermined by executive fiat the spirit of a law that was passed with bipartisan support after seven years of public debate and revision.

The argument, of course, is that this move was necessary because LARR had become a large obstacle to economic growth. While there is no evidence to support this argument, economist Sanjoy Chakravorty provided one of its clearest articulations when he defended the ordinance in these pages (The Hindu, "Improving an unworkable law," January 7, 2015). Chakravorty argued that LARR created a "windfall for land-losers" by doubling or quadrupling already high market prices, thus raising the cost of land acquisition to "unsustainable levels." The ordinance, while keeping generous compensation levels in place, would helpfully reduce the indirect costs entailed by conducting SIAs and obtaining consent from affected people. Even with the ordinance, Chakravorty worried that compensation levels are still too high under LARR, and "may make many public projects unaffordable and private projects uncompetitive." This position is widely shared within the private sector, state governments, and the economics profession.

Calculating compensation

"Capturing the dispossession windfall itself became the purpose of land acquisition as State governments quietly morphed into land brokers for private capital."

But there are several problems with this argument. The first is that it rests on a misleading picture of how compensation is calculated under LARR. While it is true that land prices have skyrocketed in recent years, it is wrong to suggest that this forms the basis of how farmers are compensated under LARR. Like the Land Acquisition Act (LAA) that preceded it, LARR takes as its starting point the land's assessed market value — what is known as the "circle rate." The circle rate is based on the land's past agricultural value and not its potential value as industrial, commercial, or residential land. It is no secret that it is kept deliberately low to minimise stamp duty. The difference between the circle rate and the market rate is usually vast. The Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA), for example, became

notorious for acquiring land at Rs.820 per square metre and reselling it to developers at Rs.35,000 per square metre — which is itself a fraction of the ultimate price of the high-end flats built on the land. But we should not single out GNIDA — this is the common practice of urban development authorities and industrial development corporations across the country.

Capturing the huge gap between market prices and compensation prices is, in fact, the primary motive behind much land acquisition in India today. We might call this gap the “dispossession windfall” — it exists only because the government is willing to force farmers into selling, and provides a subsidy to whoever receives the land. The transparent injustice of this practice was one factor behind the widespread farmer protests that finally pressured the United Progressive Alliance — with Bharatiya Janata Party support — into passing LARR. But it is important to note that LARR did not eliminate the dispossession windfall. LARR’s compensation formula involves multiplying the circle rate — not the market rate — by two in urban areas and four in rural areas (a distinction, moreover, it leaves for States to establish). Although one might argue that this multiplier is arbitrary, it certainly does not bring compensation prices up to market prices. To argue that farmers are reaping a windfall from LARR at the expense of the private sector is to reverse reality. To argue for a reduction in compensation to farmers is to defend the use of eminent domain for generating corporate super-profits.

In the name of development

The second problem with this argument is that by focussing on prices, it evades the more fundamental question of politics: why should a democratic government forcibly take land from farmers and give it to private companies? Since at least the English enclosures, governments have justified taking land from one group to give to another (usually wealthier) group with claims to be fulfilling a “public” or “national” purpose. In the last century, this has usually been done in the name of development. Most economists assume that any “higher value” land use than agriculture constitutes development and thus a public purpose. But what constitutes development, and whether that development is a “public purpose” worthy of dispossessing farmers, is not a technical or even a legal question, but a political one. And it is a political question that should be put in historical perspective.

During the post-Independence years, the Indian state mostly acquired land for public sector projects. Land acquisition for private companies was legal under LAA, but was limited in practice due to the existence of a

development model in which the public sector built infrastructure and controlled the “commanding heights” of the economy. Most land acquisition was for public sector dams, mines, and industry. While tens of millions of people were dispossessed of their land for these projects, the Nehruvian state was fairly effective at convincing the public that these projects served the national interest in state-led development. Eventually, people began to point out that those dispossessed for this development received scandalously little compensation. And by the 1980s, groups like the Narmada Bachao Andolan began to pose the more fundamental question: development for whom?

Dispossession under neoliberalism

This question has only become more relevant since economic liberalisation prompted State governments to start acquiring land for private companies on a large scale. The reforms of the early 1990s gave greater importance to the private sector, which began demanding land not just for manufacturing (which remained fairly stagnant), but for real estate, mineral extraction, and all manner of infrastructure under PPP agreements. State governments, now competing with each other for this investment, began systematically acquiring land for private companies for almost any private purpose, whether elite housing colonies, hotels, private colleges, or Formula 1 race tracks. This new regime of dispossession reached scale in the mid-2000s with Special Economic Zones and the practice of urban development authorities simply auctioning off acquired land to private developers. Capturing the dispossession windfall itself became the purpose of land acquisition as State governments quietly morphed into land brokers for private capital. The flagrant injustices of this land brokering produced the “land wars” of the last 10 years, and generated the political pressure for LARR.

The question now facing India is about politics, not prices: should the government systematically redistribute land from farmers to private companies? Advocates of liberalisation say yes, ironically conceding that growth in a “free market” economy requires government expropriation of private property. They claim that this growth will trickle down to the poor, including those rural people asked to give their land for it. They are often not squeamish in admitting that democracy is an impediment to their model of economic growth. Many farmers, on the other hand, have voiced their scepticism, arguing not only that they are undercompensated but also that the profit of private companies is not a public purpose. They have expressed

doubt that SEZs, hi-tech parks and real estate colonies represent “development” that will provide them with jobs or other benefits. And they have used the institutions of electoral democracy to challenge dispossession for these purposes. The land protests of the last decade, in short, represent a basic disagreement over the meaning of both development and democracy.

The current government has ambitious plans to push forward rapid growth through private investment in mega-projects such as industrial corridors, smart cities, and the like. The recent ordinance demonstrates that it is willing to subvert the democratic process to get the land for it. When more farmer protests erupt, what other threats to democracy are in store?

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Leaving people out of development



The Hindu

FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL: “All over India there are struggles against projects which threaten to displace people, and deprive them of their livelihoods and land.” Picture shows the Dongria Kondhs, tribals who emerged triumphant in a battle against Vedanta, in Niyamgiri hills. Photo: A. Roy Chowdhury

In the urgency to grant industry its due with promises of 'Make in India,' the marginalised cannot continue to be victims of grave policy neglect and continuing alienation

For some years now, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has been perceived as a roadblock to development or a facilitator for the industry depending on which side you are on. Former Union Environment Minister Jayanthi Natarajan's recent letter to Sonia Gandhi also alludes to the conflict in the Ministry.

The Ministry had humble beginnings: it began as a department in 1980 and was set up as a Ministry in 1985 after India's participation in the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. It was in many ways Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's leadership and participation in Stockholm which prompted the Ministry's inception. Now, India has a plethora of laws which relate to the environment and its regulation.

Over time, even as many notifications have come into force after Supreme Court orders, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) was set up in 2010 — infinitely more effective than the earlier National Environment Appellate Authority. However, enforcement is far from satisfactory.

The raging debate between environment and development is even more intense now as the country is on an ambitious growth path and there is scant regard for people's rights or natural resources. Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar has repeatedly said there will be no destructive development. Yet, ordinances on the proposed changes to the Land Acquisition Act and on mines and minerals have led to fears that amendments to environmental laws will be brought in through ordinances.

All over the country there are struggles against projects which threaten to displace people, deprive them of land and livelihoods and give them no decent alternatives. Northeast India, ignored by policymakers for long, has become the new battleground against massive hydel projects. In this scenario, protection of the environment and people's livelihoods are pitted against the powerful industry lobby and there are no prizes for guessing who is winning. The recent ordinances on land acquisition and mining leave no room for doubt that business interests have prevailed.

Reviewing laws

There are also threats to dilute the Forest Rights Act (FRA). Last August, the MoEF decided to appoint a High-Level Committee (HLC) headed by a former Cabinet Secretary to review six environmental laws. As the committee's report created disquiet, it is now being reviewed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment which has already heard one round of criticism from leading environmentalists in the country.

The HLC went straight for the jugular and targeted the regulatory mechanism. The only reasoned suggestion it seems to have made is on genetically modified (GM) crops where it advocates caution.

“Protection of the environment and people’s livelihoods are now pitted against the powerful industry lobby”

Besides that, that it has proposed a new Environment Law (Management) Act under which new offences are prescribed, applicants who want environmental clearances for projects are expected to be honest and truthful, and the concept of ‘utmost good faith’ is statutorily introduced. The HLC dilutes the role of the NGT; the Tribunal will only be able to judicially review the decision of Appellate Boards. It introduces special environment courts and proposes new agencies — the National Environment Management Authority at the national level and the State Environment Management Authority to replace the Central Pollution Control Board and State Pollution Control Boards, both of which are notorious for their inaction and corruption. Replacing them with a new set of committees is not going to improve efficiency or honesty. Little wonder then that the report of the HLC has sparked nationwide outrage.

While Mr. Javadekar said the report was a historic achievement that would strengthen processes to balance developmental commitments and environment protection, the criticism is that it seeks to dismantle the basic structure of India’s environmental law. The report violates Article 21 of the Constitution since interests of industry have been given importance, and overrides the right to clean air, water and a balanced ecosystem, said a critique titled “A Recipe for Climate Disaster and Silencing People’s Voice” by environmental lawyer Ritwick Dutta, and activists Himanshu Thakkar and Manoj Mishra and Debi Goenka. The critique notes that

recommendations of the HLC suggest dispensing with public hearings in projects of “strategic” and “national importance” and dispensing with public hearings in most regions that are already severely polluted. This is based on the theory that there is no need to hear the affected public since the situation cannot possibly get worse. The power sector and coal mining projects undefined ‘fast track treatment’ through ‘Special Procedure’ that appear likely to short-circuit or eliminate public hearings and gram sabha approval. The way in which the revised procedure is recommended, approval will be a matter of right, the critique says.

Further, in the 113-page report, the word “speed” in the context of speedy clearances is mentioned 13 times, the critique added. The emphasis swiftly shifts from concern for the environment to “time-consuming clearance processes.” In addition to exempting the public from hearing these projects, the committee has also made recommendations on who can participate in the public hearing and what issues can be raised. For instance, only environmental, rehabilitation and resettlement issues can be heard by the public, though the present Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) notification 2006 allows all persons to participate in the public consultation process.

In addition, the report enforces the stereotype that environmentalists obstruct development. It refers to “genuine public participation” as though public hearings are not genuine otherwise.

Curbing laws

The government’s decisions to block funding for Greenpeace and other environment NGOs and not allow a campaigner to go abroad to speak on coal mining in Mahan are clear indications that dissent is not going to be tolerated. Last year’s Intelligence Bureau report on NGOs explicitly sets out an agenda to curb movements which question the current development path. In Gujarat the fisherfolk of Mundra who have been displaced by a major power plant have not been given project-affected status; in Odisha, gram sabhas’ opposition to coal mining has been disregarded. People fighting battles for survival have only one option: to approach the courts or the NGT. Sometimes, even court orders are not obeyed.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the nodal agency for the FRA, has been writing stern letters to the Environment Ministry emphasising the fact that

the FRA is not delaying project clearances. The multilayered approach for project clearances is time-consuming. While appreciating the need for speedy approvals, public participation must not be lost sight of.

India is rife with examples of development refugees — farmers have been displaced by the Bargi dam in Madhya Pradesh, the Baiga are being evicted from forests where they once thrived, fisherfolk are struggling for survival, among other examples. To add to this, there is a new genre of climate refugees who are affected by the rise in sea levels, changes in cropping patterns and other climate change impacts.

Sustainable development needs serious commitment, capacity building at the local level and urgent action. Science has clearly underscored the need for urgent action if the world has to be saved from the irreversible impacts of climate change. The HLC is silent on climate change for the most part and it will be astounding if India, poised to grow more, doesn't factor in climate change while "streamlining" its environmental laws. In the urgency to grant industry its due with promises of 'Make in India,' those already in India, especially the marginalised, cannot continue to be victims of grave policy neglect and continuing alienation.

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Almost extinct medicinal rice variety



• P. Narayanan Unni. Photo: M. J. Prabu

There are different varieties of rice -- long grained, bold grained, rices in different colours such as white, red, black; perfumed and medicinal.

The grain plays a key role in many social and cultural functions. It is intertwined in our culture and heritage.

Acknowledging the importance of this agricultural product, the Food and Agriculture Organisation [FAO] of the United Nation [UN] celebrated the year 2004 as the International Year of Rice.

Did you know that long time ago there was nearly 11 lakh rice varieties in the country and today many of them have vanished as we have not accorded much importance to preserving them?

But there are a few people who have dedicated their life to preserve native and traditional seeds and you have been reading some of them in the past weeks.

In the last of this series, you will get to know about red coloured rice called Navara and the person who has been preserving it and how his farm is drawing a number of visitors from across the globe.

Called Navara Eco farm, the farm is nestled on the banks of the quietly flowing Shokanashini River in Chittur, Palghat district, Kerala. The unique aspect of the farm is that it has the largest navara rice growing field (12 acres) in the State.

Medicinal variety

“Navara is a medicinal rice variety and its cultivation is almost extinct. Many reasons such as non-availability of pure seeds, low yield and high production cost are attributed as reasons. The speciality is that this is the only organically grown navara rice farm in the region,” says P. Narayanan Unni, a third generation marketing executive-turned-farmer, running the everyday activities of the farm.

Unlike other rice varieties, which are white in colour, navara is deep red and has been cultivated in the Palghat region for more than 2,000 years but in the last 40- 50 years it has come close to being completely wiped out due to several new hybrid varieties being introduced.

Navara has a rich history: It has been cultivated since as early as 2,000 ago and is used in some parts of Kerala. It is used in Kerala’s Ayurveda system of medicine for treating arthritis, paralysis, polio in children.

Including it in the diet like rice powder in the form of pudding for children, flakes as breakfast cereal are good options.

From 1995, for the last 20 years, Navara Eco Farm works for the conservation of the variety.

Organic variety

Navara has been traditionally cultivated only organically lest it might lose the medicinal properties.

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Model programme to boost farm income in AP1



The Hindu

SynTech Research Inc. president and CEO Khosro Khodayari shaking hands with A.P. Agriculture Minister P. Pulla Rao at a conference on innovations in agribusiness in Visakhapatnam, on Tuesday. State HRD Minister G. Srinivasa Rao and Labour Minister K. Atcham Naidu also seen. Photo: K.R. Deepak

Minister for Agriculture Prattipati Pulla Rao has said as a first step towards making farming profitable, “Chandranna Rythu Kshetram” programme has been taken up. Under the programme, in 50,000 acres demonstration would

be launched reducing input cost that goes into farming and increasing the output.

Addressing a “Global conference on agribusiness innovations and contract research” organised by SynTech in collaboration with the Government of Andhra Pradesh here on Tuesday, he said that 6,500 multiple extension officers would be taken on contract basis. In the first spell 2,500 would be appointed by March. The programme was launched in Rabi.

By Kharif it would be expanded and each of the officers would be accountable for 10 ha, he said. The Government would provide an input subsidy of Rs.5,000 per acre.

Mr. Pulla Rao said that the Government would strive to help farmers realise 50 per cent of investment as income as envisaged by noted agricultural scientist M. S. Swaminathan. e-Marketing would also be introduced.

The Minister said that the State stood first in poultry, oil palm and fisheries.

Setting up of agri-based industries would improve the prospects for farming. During the visit of the Chief Minister to Davos, Walmart and PepsiCo expressed keenness to procure horticulture produce like coconut and mango. He welcomed research efforts of SynTech and said they would act as incubation centres.

SynTech president and CEO Khosro Khodayari said contract research organisations would consolidate in the next 15 years with small companies integrating and merging with few large MNCs. As of now, there was more investment in seed R&D than agrochemicals, he said. Describing SynTech as science-based R&D service provider, he said

Its strategy would be to focus on field testing, lab testing and registrations.

SynTech director, Asia-Pacific Paul French and country head Simma Netaji spoke. HRD Minister Ganta Srinivasa Rao and Labour Minister K. Achan Naidu participated.

Farmers seek more procurement centres

Officials hopeful of meeting procurement target



Villagers at work on a paddy field near Ponduru in Srikakulam district.—

Photo: By arrangement

Paddy procurement in Srikakulam district is progressing at a snail's pace despite the government's claims of setting up 115 centres to speed up the process by end of this month. It is estimated that paddy production is around 9 lakh tonnes a year, but the procurement so far has not been even one third of it.

Farmers are expected to keep around 2 lakh tonnes for their own consumption, and the remaining paddy is sold out through government procurement centres. According to sources, the government has procured only 1.9 lakh tonnes of the targeted 3.89 lakh tonnes.

Centres opened

The government has already opened 121 centres with the support of DCCB, DCMS, GCC and Velugu organisations. Moreover, farmers have sought more centres so that procurement could be done without delay.

“We are depending on traders and millers to sell our produce, as there is delay in the procurement process. The payments may be adjusted for our agricultural loans,” said V. Ramana Murthy, a farmer from Ponduru mandal.

Ryots worried

The government pays around Rs. 1,400 for a quintal of paddy and has already spent more than Rs. 203 crore on procurement.

Several farmers are worried over the delay in adjustment of their amount for the previous loans despite orders from District Collector P. Lakshmi Narasimham and Joint Collector Vivek Yadav.

Mr. Yadav said many farmers had given their loan account numbers, leading to adjustment of their amount generated through sale of paddy.

He promised that all pending bills would be cleared within 48 hours, while asking farmers to provide the bank account numbers along with IFSC code.

He hoped that the government would reach the procurement target with the good response to its initiative.

‘Need for ambitious projects in bioinformatics’

Research and educational centres, working in the field of bioinformatics, should focus on envisaging ambitious projects with implications in the application-related fields such as agriculture, public health, environment and several others, said Alok Bhattacharya, Task Force Chairman at Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

Interacting with the audience during the inaugural of 26th BTISnet Annual Coordinators Meeting at Sri Venkateswara University (SVU) here on Tuesday, Dr. Bhattacharya urged the participants to think big by coming out of their comfort zones and chart out a path for ambitious projects. “Bioinformatics, in the country, has come a long way promoting biological sciences along with its developments. Various centres related to Bioinformatics should come together, by forming clusters, and embark on projects which will change the way,” he added.

Dr. Bhattacharya further emphasised on setting up a centralised database to store the research data and maintained that the ‘Super Computer Infrastructure’, soon to be set up at a cost of Rs.4,500 crore, would help the research to a great extent.

Blast disease reduces ‘Andhra ponni’ yield

Advathur farmers are worst hit; workers agree to reduce wages



Farmers display damaged paddy crop at Kumara Vayalur near Tiruchi on Tuesday.— PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Farmers who have raised “Andhra Ponni” (BPT 5204 variety) are at a loss as the crop has been damaged because of the blast disease.

A number of farmers of Advathur near Tiruchi who have raised this crop are the worst-hit, as the disease has caused extensive damage.

Farmers who have raised the crop said that while they were expecting at least 50 bags an acre, the yield was just 10 bags. The blast had eaten away the crop and they wanted the State government to sanction adequate relief.

Gesture

The gravity of the loss is so serious that even farmer workers who had come to harvest the field, have volunteered to reduce their wages, particularly after ascertaining the poor yield.

“I can easily walk along carrying this bundle as it is not of much weight because there is not much productive tillers,” says one of agricultural labourer P. Ramalingam, who was harvesting about three acres of field at Somarasampettai village near Kumara Vayalur on Tuesday.

S. Balamurugan, another labourer, said that 25 workers from different parts of the district harvested the field for three days. Although they had demanded about seven bags of paddy towards wages, they had reduced it to six-and-a-half bags, considering the gravity of the poor yield.

Officials said that the Andhra Ponni, though a good crop, was susceptible to blast disease.

Three types of blast diseases classified in to 'leaf blast', 'sheath blast', and 'neck blast' were reported in the paddy. Although the 'leaf blast' could be controlled to some extent, the problem got aggravated by the other types, resulting in total damage of the productive tillers.

The disease attacked the crop during the excess moisture or fall in temperature below 24 degree Centigrade.

Cotton to be auctioned on Wednesdays

With a view to help cotton farmers, indirect auction of cotton will be conducted on Wednesdays every week at the regulated market here, according to a press release issued by Collector A. Saravanelraj.

This is in response to a demand made at the grievance day meeting on January 29 for steps to sell their cotton for price not less than the Minimum Support Price announced by the Central Government.

He took the decision after discussing the issue with farmers, representatives of farmers associations and officials of agriculture and agri business departments. Cotton brought by farmers should be pure. It should be dried in shadow. Moisture content should be less than eight per cent.

Ragi to get pride of place

Change in food habits has affected health of farmers too

Bargur produces ragi in organic way Farmers will benefit as ragi products will fetch good revenue Marketing will be through Uzhavan Angadi Value-addition for ragi crop raised by cultivators on the Bargur hills is round the corner.

The Myrada Krishi Vigyan Kendra based at Gobichettipalayam has taken an initiative to establish a facility at Bargur for converting ragi into powder, biscuits, nutrition balls and other products that have ready market.

Farmers believe that value-added products made of organically grown ragi would have a niche market.

The machinery for converting ragi into value-added products would be installed shortly at Bargur, said P. Alagesan, Head, Myrada KVK, Gobichettipalayam. Such value-added products sold through the KVK-promoted Uzhavan Angadi at Gobichettipalayam are patronised well by buyers, Mr. Alagesan said.

Value-addition for ragi, according to a senior Agriculture Department official, has become a necessity to encourage the farmers to stick-on to ragi cultivation.

Over the last few years, farmers have been switching over to tapioca cultivation in anticipation of higher returns.

Tapioca

Though the tapioca is of high-quality their economic condition has only deteriorated as they have become victims of market manipulation by middlemen procuring the tapioca under a buy-back system for the chips-making industry.

Because of the transition, a section of farmers who used to consume only ragi till a few years back, have started facing health problems after depending on rice as staple food.

Malnutrition was becoming common among children because of the changed food habit, official sources said, citing the extent of visits the tribal people undertake to hospitals in Anthiyur. Better remuneration for ragi that would be made possible through value addition. And, higher marketability would prompt farmers to revert to traditional food habits and cultivation pattern, officials say.

Through the value-addition centre, the ragi could be powdered for making porridges, puddings, cakes, and pancakes. Beverages made of malted ragi are quite popular in the market, official sources said.

Go organic, reap benefits



Ample use of organic manure has been the main the reason for Erode farmers bagging the Chief Minister's Award for obtaining highest paddy yield for two consecutive years.

This year's award recipient K.P. Duraisamy of Thatharakadu village, near Sivagiri in Kodumudi block, could achieve paddy production of 15,325 kg a hectare through large-scale use of organic manure.

Before sowing CR 1009 (Savithri) paddy variety under System of Rice Intensification method, the farmer had cultivated daincha crop and mulched it before flowering. In nursery preparation, the farmer had applied 100 kg of farm yard manure and two kg Azospyrillum. Though the department had recommended usage of 10 tonnes of organic manure, the farmer had applied double the extent of farm yard manure before readying the field for cultivation, said Joint Director of Agriculture M. Selvaraj.

Mr. Duraisamy had planted the saplings with spacing of 23cm x 23cm.

Last year too, a farmer of Erode district, Parameswaran of Nasiyanur, received the Chief Minister's Award for achieving high paddy yield.

Mr. Parameswaran produced 6,119 kg of paddy an acre by adopting SRI method.

Mr. Parameswaran too had used a large quantity of organic manure to enrich soil fertility.

A healthy culture of large-scale usage of organic manure for turmeric cultivation has taken strong roots and has been extended for paddy cultivation as well, Mr. Selvaraj said.

Both Mr. Duraisamy and Mr. Parameswaran planted 14-day old paddy saplings, maintained a gap of 23cm between each plant.

Thanks to the ideal agro-climatic conditions, and alternate cropping pattern, a farmer in Erode block is in strong reckoning for the

Highest Yield award yet again. Production of IR-20 variety paddy in his farm would be assessed by a team shortly.

Farmers say they are motivated by the priority accorded to agriculture by former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa by way of fixing a prize money of Rs. 5 lakh for the winner of 'highest yield competition.'

World Ocean Congress to begin tomorrow

: The four-day World Ocean Science Congress, jointly organised by the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies and Swadeshi Science Movement, will begin at Jawaharlal Nehru International Stadium on February 5.

There will be four plenary sessions, 13 technical sessions, exhibitions, a round table on shipping and ocean resources and fishermen's meet. Kerala governor P. Sathasivam will inaugurate the Congress at 10 a.m.

Eminent oceanographers, environmentalists, naval experts and marine industrialists will attend the deliberations, said B. Madhusoodana Kurup, Vice Chancellor of the university. Mohanbhai Kalyanjibhai Kundariya, Union Minister of State for Agriculture, will attend the Congress. K. Babu, Minister for Fisheries, will preside over the function.

K.V. Thomas, MP; Dominic Presentation and S Sharma, MLAs; and M.V. Rao, the Chief Executive of the National Fisheries Development Board will participate.

Delegates from fishermen societies, R&D divisions of Indian Space Research Organisation, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Defence Research and Development Organisation, Union Ministry of Earth Sciences, Indian Navy, Coast Guard and Marine Products Export Development Authority will attend, the organisers said.

New cashew variety for coastal belt

Agricultural and horticultural research station, Ullal, under the University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences (UAHS), Shivamogga, will recommend farmers to plant Vengurla-7 variety of cashew in the coastal belt from this year, according to the head of the station Lakshmana.

In an informal chat with presspersons on the sidelines of a cashew festival at the station on Tuesday, he said this variety was cultivated in Maharashtra. After 10 years of study on whether it suited the coastal belt, now the research station has decided to recommend its cultivation as it yielded well here also.

He said that a nut of Vengurla-7 variety yielded seven grams and a tree yielded at least 16 kg of nuts.

This particular variety was resistant to tea mosquitoes affecting cashew trees. It starts flowering in December and harvest could be started from mid-January itself.

He said that for the past four years the station was conducting research on five varieties of cashew procured from the wild in Udupi district. Grafted saplings have been planted at the station for the study. It would require six more years to arrive at a conclusion whether the five new grafted varieties could be recommended for planting or not. Meanwhile, at the exhibition organised on the occasion, an entrepreneur from Mangaluru had displayed juice concentrate prepared from cashew apple. According to the entrepreneur it could be stored up to a year.

Varsity to take up research on YLD in arecanut

The University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences (UAHS), Shivamogga, in association with other government institutes, will soon take up a Rs. 5-crore research project to find a remedy to yellow leaf disease

(YLD) in arecanut plantations, according to its Vice-Chancellor C. Vasudevappa.

Speaking to presspersons on the sidelines of a cashew festival at the university's agricultural and horticultural research station at Ullal on Tuesday, he said the research centre of the project would be based in Sringeri. Arecanut plantations, both YLD-affected and non-affected, and old and new plantations in the radius of about 50 km of Sringeri would be selected to conduct experiments, in addition to the plantation of the university.

The research project would be taken up in association with the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI), Kasaragod, Kerala, and the National Bureau of Agriculturally Important Insects, Bengaluru.

The Union government would sponsor the project. He said the YLD had been noticed in water-logged arecanut plantations. In addition, the university would take up a project of developing oil palm varieties suitable to Malnad and the coastal belt as an alternative to arecanut. The experimental project would come up on 37 acre land at Bavikere, Tarikere, near Shivamogga. Bharatiya Krishi Anusandhana Parishat would sponsor this project.

Mr. Vasudevappa said there were about 15 varieties of oil palm, but all of them could not be recommended as an alternative crop to arecanut.

20 villages to get help in mechanised paddy farming

University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences (UAHS), Shivamogga, will adopt 20 villages, including a few in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi, to promote mechanised paddy cultivation under cooperation method, according to its Vice-Chancellor C. Vasudevappa.

Speaking to presspersons on the sidelines of a cashew festival of the university at its agricultural and horticultural research station at Ullal, he said that groups of youth or farmers would be trained, in cooperation with agriculture department, in mechanised paddy cultivation in such villages. These groups could cultivate in paddy fields that were abandoned due to shortage of labour by its owners. Such owners who would spare their paddy field for mechanised cultivation could be given a portion of the profit earned by the group.

He said that though the jurisdiction of the university covered seven districts — Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Shivamogga, Kodagu, Chikkamagaluru, Davangere and Chitradurga — and paddy cultivation would be promoted in four or five districts where paddy is being cultivated.

Cocoa cultivation

The Vice-Chancellor said the university would also promote cocoa as an inter-crop in arecanut and coconut plantations. It would provide technical information on methods of cultivation and arrange for market link with chocolate manufacturing companies.

He said that in addition to making chocolates cocoa was being used in manufacturing of biscuits and some condiments. An individual in Shivamogga was conducting research on whether juice could be manufactured from the rind of cocoa.

Mr. Vasudevappa said that rind of cocoa could also be used as food for fish in inland fish farming. Dropped leaves of cocoa plants served as a good bio-manure. The plan is to promote its cultivation on 2,000 acres to 3,000 acres as an inter-crop in Dakshina Kannada and Shivamogga districts from this year.

The university plans to promote cocoa as inter-crop for arecanut and coconut

‘Model programme to boost farm income’

Asserting that the TDP government will make farming profitable, Minister for Agriculture Prattipati Pulla Rao has said as a first step towards it “Chandranna Rythu Kshetram” programme has been taken up.

Under the programme, in 50,000 acres demonstration would be launched reducing input cost that goes into farming and increasing the output.

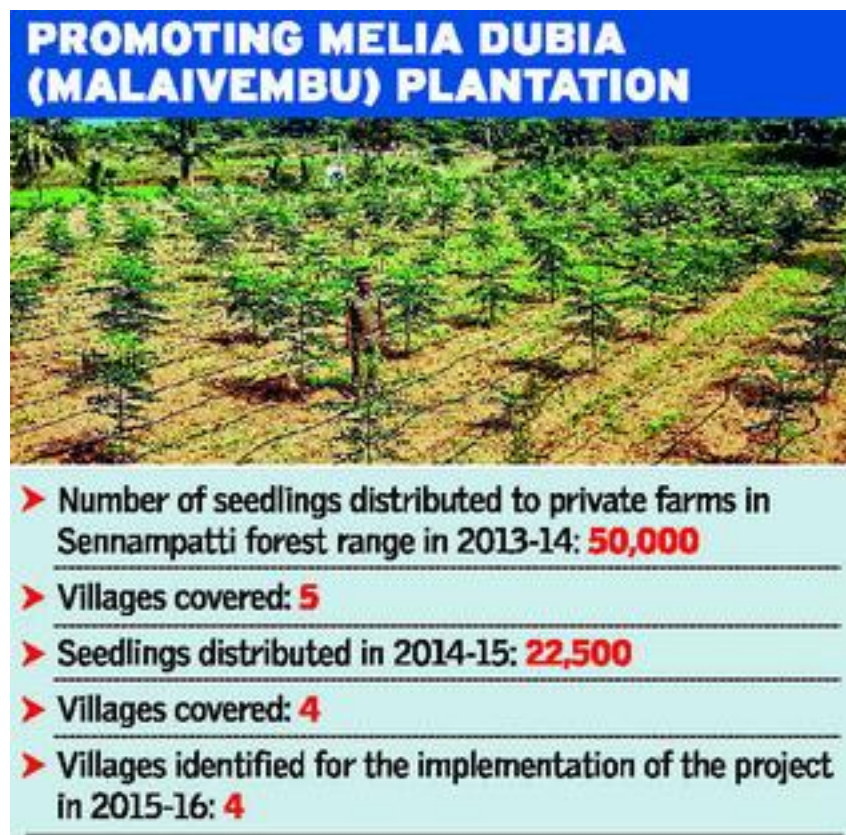
Addressing a “Global conference on agribusiness innovations and contract research” organised by SynTech in collaboration with the Government of Andhra Pradesh here on Tuesday, he said 6,500 multiple extension officers would be taken on contract basis. In the first spell 2,500 would be appointed by March. The programme was launched in Rabi.

By Kharif it would be expanded and each of the officers would be accountable for 10 ha, he said. The government would provide an input subsidy of Rs.5,000 per acre.

Mr. Pulla Rao said the government would strive to help farmers realise 50 per cent of investment as income as envisaged by noted agricultural scientist M S Swaminathan. e-Marketing would also be introduced.

Project to raise forest trees with Government subsidy a success

More than 50,000 malaivembu seedlings were distributed to private farms



The Bio-Diversity and Greening Project of raising forest trees in private farms in the villages abutting the reserve forests with the Government subsidy has proved a success in Sennampatti Forest Range in the district.

Under a special project, the Forest Department is providing the seedlings of malaivembu (Melia Dubia), teak ((tectona gradis) and casurina to private farm owners to popularise these varieties. The seedlings were raised in the nursery maintained by the Forest Department in Sennampatti itself.

More than 50,000 malaivembu seedlings were distributed to private farms in the five villages of Ammapettai; Nerunjipettai; Ariyakavundanur; Boothapadi and Kannapalli in Sennampatti range in 2013-14. Each village was allotted 10,000 seedlings each.

During the current year, 22,500 seedlings were distributed and they were raised in the private farms in the four villages of Kumarayanur, Velli Tiruppur, Iluppur and Sennampalli.

Following the success of this project in the first two years, the department has decided to implement the same in four more villages during the next year. Kurichi, Kesarimangalam, Kaadappanallur and Manikampalayam are the villages identified for the next year's project, according to the Forest Department sources.

The farms are encouraged to take advantage of the drip irrigation system for raising these trees.

Incentive in the form of subsidy is given to the farmers at the end of third year of plantation. Subsidy will be distributed to the farmers of the villages where this scheme was introduced in 2013-14, next year.

M. Nagarajan, District Forest Officer, Erode, and V. Zakkariya, Forest Range Officer, Sennampatti, range inspected the plantations recently.

The trees raised in private farms were found in good condition and the forest personnel regularly inspected them, the sources say.

Tea-time snack: How about Aloo Bread Pakora this evening

Ads by Google



Bread Pakora (Source: nishamadhulika.com)

Pakora and tea is a perfect evening snack. Piping hot Aloo Bread Pakora is almost irresistible, especially for street food lovers. Check out a quick recipe.

Ingredients

- 2 cups gram flour
- 8 slices bread
- 5 potatoes (boiled)
- 2-3 tbsp green coriander (finely chopped)
- 1 tsp or grated ginger paste
- 1-2 (minced) green chilly
- Salt as per taste
- 1/4 tsp Cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp red chilly powder
- less than 1/4 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/2 tsp Mango powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder

1/4 tsp garam masala

Oil for frying

Method

* Take gram flour in a bowl. Add salt and red chilly powder. Add water little by little and prepare a batter.

* Preheat a pan and add 1 tbsp oil. Peel and mash potatoes. When oil is sufficiently hot, add cumin seeds, turmeric powder, green chilly and ginger paste into it.

* After sauteing for a while, add coriander powder, potato, mango powder, red chilly powder, garam masala, salt and green coriander and mix everything really well.

Saute for 2 minutes.

* Stuffing is ready, take it out in a plate and allow it to cool.

* Preheat oil in a pan. Take a bread slice, layer stuffing over it and place another slice on it. Press it very gently and seal. Cut bread into two pieces, giving it a triangular shape. Likewise, prepare all bread slices.

* Now, coat the bread with gram flour batter and place it in warm oil for frying. Fry the bread pakoras until they turn brown in color from both sides. Once fried, take them out in a plate with absorbent paper. Similarly, prepare all bread pakoras.

* Serve steaming stuffed bread pakoras with green coriander chutney, tomato sauce or any other thing.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Best winter warmers? Soup and tea!

Hungry? How about a piping hot, meaty or vegetable broth infused with fresh ginger or cardamom? Foodies will tell you there's nothing like a steaming cup of hot soup to cut into the cold air, that the city is currently feeling. And it's healthy too — soup is not called a 'meal on its own' for nothing. We suggest you go shopping for the season's freshest produce, put the pot to boil and get ready to get warmed up. Read on...

Why it works...

Experts say one must have five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. But as it can be difficult to hit that target, a single bowl of soup might solve that. It is an apt way to ensure you're getting at least two of those portions.

Mushroom chai

This one is not quite like its name. The Wild Mushroom Chai, served at an eatery at Juhu, is actually a soup. Here, truffle oil is converted into powder using molecular gastronomy to resemble a 'creamer', a teaspoon of which is added to the tea cup with dehydrated mushrooms (which look like dried tea leaves). The 'tea pot', comprising a consomme of varied mushrooms is then poured into the cup.

Asian noodle soup

How about some hearty Far Eastern fare? Says food blogger Purabi Naha, "When it is cold outside, you just need a bowl of this 'Asian vegetarian noodle soup' to warm you up. The heat from sriracha, the goodness of carrots, the refreshing smell of lemongrass, the flavour of mushrooms and the wholesomeness of tofu come together in this easy and hearty instant-noodle soup. The broth itself is so comforting! Made with easily available ingredients, this soup is my go-to recipe, these days." Here is her method...

How to make it:

Mix sriracha sauce, brown rice vinegar and honey, and coat tofu with this. Reserve the rest of the mixture. Grill the tofu for five minutes. Remove and set aside. Add light soy and hoisin sauces to water. Make a basic stock by boiling this for 10 minutes with garlic paste, spring onions, mushrooms, carrots, red bell pepper and lemongrass. Filter the stock. With a spoon, transfer the mushrooms, carrots and bell pepper back to the clear stock, leaving aside the lemongrass and spring onions. Add noodles to it and heat until done.

Firehouse chilly soup

Ingredients:

Tomato puree — 35 g
Chipotle sauce — 15 g
Tomato concasse — 10 g
Red capsicum — 5 g
Yellow capsicum — 5 g
Onion — 3 g
Green zucchini — 3 g
Refried beans — 5 g
Black bean — 5 g

Yellow cheddar — 6 g
Sour cream — 4 g
Garlic — 5 g
Clove — 1
Water — 200 ml
Olive oil — 10 ml
Salt, pepper — to taste
Tortilla chips, for garnish
Spring onion, for garnish

Method:

Saute garlic, clove and onion in olive oil. Add red capsicum, yellow capsicum and zucchini, saute again. Add tomato puree, water, chipotle sauce, tomato concasse and cook for two minutes. Add refried beans, black beans, salt and pepper. Cook for five more minutes. Garnish with yellow cheddar, sour cream and spring onions. Serve tortilla chips on the side.

— Chef Sandip Sonawane

Healthy dal soup

Very little compares to a comforting bowl of lentil soup. Packed with protein and flavoured with cilantro and fresh ginger, it makes for a strengthening bite. Lentils are a powerful source of calcium, potassium, zinc, niacin and vitamin K as well as dietary fiber, folate and iron. Use moong dal (green or yellow) or masoor dal.

How much? A cup of cooked dal gives 20 gms protein per cup, with less than 1 gram of fat, and zero cholesterol. Enjoy it with crusty garlic bread.

[Authentic South India recipes](#)

Tamarind Vettha Koyambhu

Ingredients: Tamarind- a small lemon size ball Asafoetida (Hing)- a pinch Mustard seeds (Raai)- 1/4 tsp Fenugreek Seeds (Methi)- 1/4 tsp Turmeric Powder (Haldi powder)- 1/2 tsp Chana Dal-1 tsp Sambhar Powder - 1/2 tsp Coriander Powder- 4 tsp Salt to taste Cut Drum Stick or cut lady figure -10 pieces Rice flour mixed in a little water Groundnut Oil- 5 tsp Curry leaves

Method: 1. Soak tamarind in 1/2 cup hot water for 15 minutes and extract

pulp. 2. Heat oil in a deep bottmed vessel. 3. Add Hing, Raai, Methi, chana dal, curry leaves and allow raai seeds to splutter. 4. Add cut pieces of drum sticks/lady fingers and fry till they turn slightly golden brown in colour. 5. Add tamarind extract, turmeric powder, sambhar powder, daniya powder and salt in the kadai and mix them well. 6. Bring it to boil and add rice flour (mixed in a little water). 7. Cook until the koyambhu becomes semi thick. (Not too watery and not too thick). 8 Serve with hot cooked rice.

KOTHAVARANGAI PARUPPU USILI Ingredients: Cluster Beans [*Gavar Falli* in Hindi] -150 gms Tuvar Dal - 2 cup Green Chillies - 1pc Red Chillies - 4 pcs Curry Leaves - 2 stems Salt to taste For Seasoning: Groundnut Oil - 4 tbsp Urid Dal - 2 tsp Asafoetida - a pinch(to taste) Curry Leaves - 2 stems

Method: 1. Soak dal for 4 hours. 2.Cut the cluster beans into small pieces and then boil them in a cooker with 2 whistles. 3. Strain all water from the soaked dal, add ingredients except the boiled cluster beans 4. Grind to a rough paste adding very little water, if necessary. 5. Heat the oil in a kadai. Add urid dal, asafoetida, salt & curry leaves and fry till urid dal turns slightly golden brown. 6. Add, already prepared tuvar dal paste also into the kadai and fry them in low flame till they disintegrate themselves. 7. Now add the boiled cluster beans and mix it for 2-3 minutes. 8. If necessary, add more oil and fry till crispy. 9. Mix it with cooked rice and enjoy delicious meal with tamarind Vettha koyambhu.

4 popular bedtime beverages

After a long day, all you want to do is unwind with a hot cup of steaming coffee. We list down a few delicious alternatives that you can sip on, on a cold wintry night.

Peppermint tea: This herbal tea has properties that will help your body de-stress, relax and eventually sleep better. It is a great option to calm jittery nerves, reduce nausea and relieve anxiety.

Cocoa: The most popular bedtime drink in the world, this is a winter favourite because of its delicious taste. Even the ancient Mayans consumed it by roasting the cocoa beans and adding some spice to it.

Chamomile Tea: Like peppermint tea, it is also another non-milk tea that has soothing qualities. For best results, drink this tea around 30 minutes before your bed time.

Hot toddy: This traditional alcoholic beverage involves pouring hot boiling water in a little whiskey and adding a twist of honey, lemon and cinnamon stick for flavour. It is good to prevent cold and flu during winter and is very delicious.

What's your food IQ?



Consider yourself a know-it-all on what one needs to eat to stay in shape? This 7 question challenge is for you.

What's healthier? Sushi or sandwich?

Answer: SANDWICH

Sushi might seem healthier than a sandwich but in reality, it's often little more than processed carbs with a side of salt. And certainly nowhere near the 140 g fish needed by the body per week. Sushi can also be massively high in salt. Plus, you are going to use soy sauce on the side for flavouring. A tablespoon of it has about 2.3 g of salt. That's 38 per cent of the maximum daily quota.

Bina Chedda, a registered clinical dietician at Cumballa Hill Hospital, says, "A sandwich gives greater satiety, whereas we eat 6-8 pieces of sushi without thinking."

If you are trying to lose weight, what should you pick - carrot cake or chocolate brownie?

Answer: NEITHER

A slice of carrot cake sounds healthier, but it's often one of the worst choices. A slice contains 560 calories - 28 per cent of your daily requirement. It also has around half the daily recommended intake of fat and sugar. On the other hand, a chocolate brownie accounts for 370 calories.

Which one comes packed with more fat - roast chicken or roast pork?

Answer: ROAST CHICKEN

Roast chicken is often promoted as the healthier choice for a Sunday brunch, but you are in for a shocker. A 100 g of roast chicken (a mix of light and dark meat) has about 7.5 g fat, while the same amount of roast pork leg has just 5.5 g of fat. The bright side? Poultry typically has a better iron quotient than pork. "In fact, studies have shown that mutton is the healthier meat in this regard," says Chedda.

You are on a veggie detox. What will you pick - pesto or salsa?

Answer: SALSA

Pesto, a sauce originating in Northern Italy, that's all the rage here, is perfect for whipping up a meal with pasta and veggies. But if you are vegetarian, it may need to be off limits. Pesto often contains either Parmesan (Parmigiano Reggiano) or Grana Padana, both of which are made with animal rennet. Other things vegetarians should watch out for are fish sauce in ready meals or cooking sauces and pork or beef gelatine in sweets and desserts like mousses.

What has more calories - honey or sugar?

Answer: HONEY

Honey has a healthy image but with 75% sugar, 25% water and tiny amounts of vitamins and minerals, it's no better than sugar and is just as bad for our teeth. Surprisingly, it's even worse for waistlines. A teaspoon of honey contains 25 calories, while a teaspoon of sugar has 16 calories. So if you

must, opt for the organic, dark-coloured varieties which usually mean more antioxidants like flavonoids.

What has more saturated fat - ice cream or Greek yoghurt?

Answer: GREEK YOGHURT

A dollop of Greek yoghurt on fruit might seem like a healthy choice since it is packed with protein and bone-building calcium. But when it comes to saturated fat, you might be better off with an ice cream cup. About three tablespoons of Greek yoghurt could contain as much as 8.5 g saturates. That's 43% of the recommended daily maximum of 20 g. In contrast, two scoops of a vanilla ice cream contains about 2.5 g saturates.

You want to feel light and airy. What will you order for takeaway - latte or cappuccino?

Answer: CAPPUCINO

A cappuccino is made with 1/3 espresso, 1/3 steamed milk and 1/3 foamed milk. This makes the total milk content lower than a latte, which is essentially espresso and steamed milk. Avoid whipped cream and any flavouring (vanilla, caramel, etc) to cut down on saturated fat and sugar. A no-fat milk cappuccino of about 0.3 litre has 40 calories. Compare that with a large, non-fat latte that packs in 100 calories.

Food safety basics



Foodborne illnesses or infections and irritation of the gastro-intestinal tract (GIT) are caused by foods that contain harmful bacteria, parasites, viruses or chemicals.

They are classically characterised by vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, blurred vision, headache, weakness, dizziness, fever and chills. Most foodborne illnesses are acute, meaning they happen suddenly and last for a short time, and most people recover on their own without treatment. Food safety is a shared responsibility of everyone. While we hope that at farming and manufacturing levels, these safety measures are carefully monitored, as consumers, we should keep the following points in mind: Avoid contact between raw and cooked food to avoid cross contamination. Do remember that no raw foods that reach the consumer are in a sterile state; they usually contain bacteria or other microbes, most of which are harmless. They may also occasionally contain pathogenic microbes, which could be a potential threat to food safety.

Separate raw meat or poultry from other foods while shopping for daily groceries to prevent the juices from dripping onto other foods, like vegetables and fruits that you may have also purchased.

Wash your hands before and after food handling, to prevent contamination. Cool cooked foods as quickly as possible and then refrigerate, preferably to below 5 degrees Celsius (if not consuming immediately). This slows down or stops microbial growth. Food safety experts stress on the 'two-hour rule' - perishable food items must not be kept at room temperatures for longer than two hours, as they multiply best in this danger zone (10 60 degrees Celsius).

Reheat food thoroughly and evenly through the dish, to kill any tiny microbes, which may have developed during storage.

Keep kitchen surfaces, cutting boards, storing utensils and your fridge under high cleanliness surveillance.

Don't buy cans that are bulging or dented. Also, don't buy jars that are cracked or have loose, bulging lids. Don't buy food products that have damaged safety seals.

Don't buy frozen food if the packing is damaged. Also, if the packaging is in a transparent pack, please see that there are no signs of ice crystals - this could mean that the food has been stored for a long time or is thawed or refrozen.

Use filtered drinking water or boil it to make it safe before drinking.

Lastly, don't not use food beyond its expiry date.

(Pooja Makhija, Consulting Nutritionist & Clinical Dietician)

Essential nutrients every woman needs

Women, don't take your health for granted. Ensure that these nutrients are a regular part of your diet...

Calcium: Women have a tendency to suffer from weak bones, especially as they age. This is why calcium is so very important to build strong bones. An estimated 30 million women suffer from osteoporosis in India. And while awareness has increased in recent years, women still need to wake up to the importance of calcium in their diet. Ensure you consume plenty of dairy products. Fortified juice, yogurt and soy milk are great sources of calcium.

Iron: A deficiency in iron can cause anaemia — a very common problem among women. Iron gets oxygen to your cells and a lack of it makes you lethargic and tired. Include lean meat like chicken and turkey as well as fortified cereals and beans in your diet.

Vitamin D: The calcium you consume will be useless if your body does not produce adequate vitamin D, which helps your body absorb calcium. Vitamin D is found in fish like tuna and salmon as well as in fortified orange juice.

Folic acid: While folic acid is very important for pregnant women, it is essential for the rest as well. Experts say that folic acid helps your cells divide and is found in green, leafy vegetables, juices, beans, fortified cereal and nuts.

Protein: An important nutrient in building healthy bones and muscles, protein also fights germs, breaks down everything you eat and controls your metabolism. Found in poultry, red meat, fish and nuts, studies say that

women require at least 45 grams of protein daily.

Fibre: Not only does fibre keep your blood sugar and cholesterol levels in check, it also help you digest your food better. Fibre is found in vegetables, fruits, whole-grain breads and cereals, nuts and beans.

Vitamin C: Want healthy bones and glowing skin? Make sure you're getting enough vitamin C. Stock up on red pepper, broccoli and citrus fruits. Drink orange juice at least thrice a week.

Omega-3 fatty acids: Omega-3 fatty acids are 'good' fats known to reduce the risk of heart disease. And you can find it in fish like sardines, salmon, herring, trout and mackerel. Walnuts and flaxseeds also contain omega-3 fatty acids.

[Foods that give you a glowing skin](#)



Wondering how to get a smooth complexion? Here's how...

Tofu: Known to be a good source of proteins, unsaturated fats, calcium, antioxidants and minerals, tofu is great for your skin. It's best eaten stir-fried so you don't have to worry about cooking it thoroughly. Also, what's great is that you don't have to be worried if you are lactose intolerant.

Brown rice: Steady blood sugar levels and healthy skin is related, it regulates the sugar levels in your body, thereby making your skin smoother and softer. Rich in vitamin B, minerals and antioxidants, brown rice

improves your overall health, which in turn makes your skin healthier too.

Nuts: A rich source of vitamin E, nuts are actually good for your overall health. Nuts help reduce scars, blemishes and acne as well. They increase the white blood cells in your body and strengthens your immunity as well.

Garlic: The benefit of garlic was known only to reduce joint pain. However, garlic boosts your skin a great deal too. It kills the harmful bacteria in your blood and also eliminates any virus present in your body. This in turn, makes your skin healthy and glowing.

[Here's why garlic's good for cough](#)



With the changing, season many of us are suffering from flu, cough and fever. While doctors prescribe medicines, here's one thing that can speed up your recovery. Raw garlic - one of the natural remedies to fend off seasonal ailments.

- After breakfast, swallow a small clove of garlic. Don't chew, just swallow. This improves your immunity and keeps you ready for seasonal upheavals.
- Chop some cloves, fry it in ghee, add to your food. Not only does this make food tastier, it also boosts digestion.
- Heat sesame oil to smoking point and put a few cloves of garlic in it. Bottle this, rub a few drops oil on your chest and on the soles when you have cough or cold. It relieves congestion and cures cold.

- Roast a clove of garlic and have it with a spoon of honey before going to bed. This provides you relief against cough.

Some benefits of dates



If you have been wondering why your gym instructor or coach has been insisting that you include dates in your diet, then it is because he or she understands how significantly it can contribute to your fitness and overall well being. Experts associate several benefits with consuming dates.

Some of them are:

- Dates have easily digestible flesh and have high calorific value. This means they can quickly replenish energy and leave you feeling strong swiftly.
- Dates have tannins, which have anti-inflammatory, anti-hemorrhagic and anti-infective properties.
- The antioxidant flavanoids in dates have been found to offer some protection from a number of cancers, including cancers of the colon, breast, prostate and lung.
- Dates are rich in iron, an important component of hemoglobin.
- The fruit is also known to have a considerable amount of Vitamin A, which also enhances vision.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Prospects for wheat exports turn bleak

Prices plunge in global market; India heads for bumper crop



No takers There are hardly any enquiries for the Indian wheat, which is not viable for exports at current prices.

Bengaluru, February 3:

Prospects for wheat exports in the new marketing season are turning bleak as global prices plunge and the country heads for a bumper crop this year.

The recent fall in euro against the dollar has made the French wheat cheaper, thereby putting pressure on global prices. Wheat prices, which hovered around \$6.6 a bushel in Chicago in mid-December, are now down to \$5.

The French wheat is selling around \$210-215 a tonne, while the US origin is around \$232. Even the Australian wheat, currently at around \$270, is cheaper than the Indian wheat quoted at \$275. Also the export duty imposed by Russia on the Black Sea origin wheat to offset the falling rouble has not helped Indian exporters to take any advantage.

In addition to the falling international prices, the strengthening of the rupee against the dollar in recent months has made the Indian wheat unviable in the global arena.

“There are hardly any enquiries for the Indian wheat, which is not viable for exports at current prices,” said sources at a global trade house in Delhi. Normally, export enquiries for the new crop begin sometime in February.

Also, the Centre is yet to take any call on exporting surplus wheat from the Central pool stocks.

“In the absence of exports, a bigger harvest would only inflate the Government stocks, which is contrary to the recommendations of the high level committee on restructuring of the Food Corporation of India,” said Tejinder Narang, grains trade analyst. The committee had suggested that the Centre should make purchases of what is required.

The central pool wheat stocks were 25.11 million tonnes (mt) as on January 1, 2015, more than twice the buffer and strategic reserve norm of 11.2 mt. The general expectation among the trade and government sources is that wheat output this year would be higher than last year’s production of 95.91 mt, aided by a favourable climate. FCI had procured 25 mt last year – down from 31 mt in the previous year. For the current year, FCI is yet to announce its procurement target.

The private trade is keenly waiting for the government to spell out its strategy on wheat procurement. Any decline in procurement by the Government could possibly influence prices in markets such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, from where the private trade including makes its purchases from the open market. Currently, wheat is traded between Rs. 1,450 and Rs. 1,500 a quintal in the UP markets. Wheat exports in the April-December period were around 26 lakh tonnes, lower than 40 lakh tonnes during the same period a year ago. “The Government should heavily subsidise the wheat exports to make it competitive in the international market,” said Anil Monga, Managing Director of Emmsons International, a Delhi-based exporter.

NBHC, Canara Bank to promote warehouse receipt financing

Growers of pulses in North Karnataka will be main beneficiaries



Anil Choudhary, MD and CEO, National Bulk Handling Corporation (NBHC), VS Krishna Kumar, MD and CEO, Canara Bank, PS Rawat, Executive Director, Canara Bank and SS Bhat, CGM, Canara Bank at an MoU signing at the press conference in Bengaluru on Tuesday. GRN Somashekar

Bengaluru, February 3:

National Bulk Handling Corporation (NBHC), a warehousing, commodity and collateral management service provider, and Canara Bank have tied up to extend warehouse receipt financing for farmers.

Canara Bank has become the 45th banking partner of NBHC and is expected to help the warehousing entity to tap additional geographies.

“The tie-up will promote warehouse receipt financing among farmers. We will be targeting growers of pulses, mainly in North Karnataka, through this tie-up,” SS Bhat, Chief General Manager, Canara Bank, said. By end-March, Canara Bank is aiming at additional agri-credit disbursals of Rs. 150 crore and about Rs. 500 crore in the medium term through this tie-up, Bhat said.

Growth in lending

Canara Bank, which has agri credit exposure of Rs. 56,000 crore with some 45 lakh farmers across the country, expects its lending to the sector to grow by 22 per cent this year, Bhat said.

Anil Chaudhary, MD and CEO, NBHC said the company was currently handling Rs. 6,500 crore worth of agri-commodities on an average through

its owned, lease, franchise and accredited warehouses throughout the country.

NHBC, currently owned by the India Value Fund, has expertise in managing over 190 commodities that includes grains and cash crops such as cotton and various non-agri commodities.

The tie-up with Canara Bank is another step in attracting institutional finance to the commodity ecosystem, mainly the post-harvest segment.

“It could be a big game-changer,” Chaudhary said.

NHBC has managed about Rs. 65,000 crore of assets for 44 banks, enabling post harvest agri-credit of about Rs. 45,000 crore with a dedicated focus on farmers.

In quantity terms, the company has managed about 27 million tonnes for banks alone and carried out preventive treatment and fumigation for about 42 million tonnes of commodities.

Coconut oil traders crack the whip on adulteration

Kochi, February 3:

At least three local brands have disappeared from the market following the Cochin Oil Merchants Association’s drive against adulterated coconut oil.

According to Thalath Mahmood, Director, COMA, adulteration had become a major issue of late in Kerala.

This, in particular, is the case with consignments arriving from neighbouring centres.

Protests from various quarters have prompted the Association to carry out laboratory tests on several local brands.

This initiative forced some brands to shut down their operations temporarily.

Lab tests

Lab tests results will be soon forwarded to the Food Safety Commissioner, Commercial Taxes department, Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation, with a request to keep a vigil on these brands, he said.

Meanwhile, the coconut oil market in Kerala and Tamil Nadu is ruling in a steady line this week with a reported increase of Rs. 100 per quintal. Prices in Kerala are quoting at Rs. 13,900 per quintal, while in Tamil Nadu, it stood at Rs. 13,500.

Copra prices in both States have gone up and were quoted in the same level of Rs. 9,900 per quintal.

The market, he said, is witnessing a buying trend, which resulted in the price surge.

High demand

There was a high demand for raw coconuts from North Kerala especially from powder manufacturing companies and also from Bangladesh for converting it into edible copra. The rising trend in prices is likely to continue for some more weeks and by March, it is expected to come down.

However, Bharat Khona, former Board Member, said that the market is witnessing low arrivals even after the commencement of the season.

With the prices still ruling high, there was no genuine demand from upcountry buyers.

Global market centre for coconut proposed in Kochi

Kochi, February 3:

A proposal to set up an International Market Centre for Coconut (IMCC) for Asia at Kochi has been mooted at the Asia Pacific Coconut Community meet.

In a presentation at the ongoing APCC's 18-member ministerial meeting, TK Jose, Chairman, Coconut Development Board, said that APCC accounts for over 90 per cent of world coconut production but farmers are compelled to market their products in the buyers' markets where cartels decide prices.

An international centre will focus on issues of production and marketing to improve the price discovery mechanism.

“Being the headquarters of Coconut Development Board and Coir Board, Kochi will be an ideal location for the Asia centre,” he said. It will benefit the coconut producing countries to find ways to have a better marketing arrangement and improved pricing for value-added products. At present, the reference point for international trading for coconut oil, copra, copra meal is Rotterdam market in Europe, which is a buyers’ market. The rates quoted in this market highly influence market price at Asia and Pacific region. Hence, it is important to have international coconut product markets in major producing countries, one each in Asia and Pacific region for the benefit of coconut farmers world-over, he said.

Establishment of IMCC for coconut products in India is expected to have substantial flow of benefits to Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia and to many South Pacific nations that rely heavily on export revenue generated by the coconut industry. He said there was also a proposal to set up an International Centre of Excellence-Coconut in India.

Rain forecast for N-W, central parts and peninsula

Thiruvananthapuram, February 3:

A fresh wet spell is being forecast for not just central and adjoining north-west India but also for parts of peninsular India from the weekend as another bout of interactive weather unfolds.

Rain, snow In J&K

An incoming western disturbance or two from across the international border in the north-west and a trough of low in southeast and adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal would be key players here.

A winter weather-maker western disturbance has called in over north Pakistan and adjoining and adjoining Jammu and Kashmir bringing with it heavy snowfall and rain for the region.

An India Met Department update said on Tuesday that most places of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh were affected as were many places in Uttarakhand during the 24 hours ending in the morning.

Rain or thundershowers broke out expectedly over the adjoining plains of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi.

The warmth associated with the western disturbance due to presence of moisture helped lift up the minimum (night) temperatures over the plains, offering respite from the severe cold.

The ongoing rains are a godsend for Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh as they are among the three Met subdivisions featuring a rain deficit (71 per cent and 23 per cent) since the dawn of the New Year.

But the situation remained grim in west Rajasthan (49 per cent), the third in the list. The rest of northwest India and entire central India has received excess showers during the period under reference. Incremental rain expected from the weekend is likely to benefit central and west peninsular India and parts of east India, according to an outlook by the US Climate Prediction Centre.

Cooler east

Minimum temperatures are above normal by two-five degree Celsius at most places in the hills and plains in north and northwest India. Cooler climes have migrated mainly to east India including West Bengal, Sikkim and Odisha.

Minimum temperatures would once again head south from Wednesday as the current western disturbance leaves it to the east and out of the country.

This would open up the space for colder northerly to northwesterly winds and bring down the mercury by two-five degree Celsius, the Met said.

The cold spell trend would in turn be reversed when the follow-up western disturbance rolls in and impacts weather in the region from later during the weekend.

Business Standard

Cotton cultivation in next kharif may dip 15% if prices remain low

In 2014-15, cotton area under cultivation was around 13 mn hectares in India for 2014-15, about 1.5 mn hectares higher than the previous year's

After witnessing a year of record production, cultivation of [cotton](#) in 2015-16 is projected to fall 20 per cent in India. According to cotton traders and mill owners, on the one hand, while global demand for cotton and [cotton yarn](#) dropped in recent months, cotton prices also fell owing to lack of good quality cotton in the market.

Arun Dalal, a leading cotton trader and exporter, estimated that low prices and lower demand may discourage farmers leading to reduced cotton cultivation in 2015-16 by 15-20 per cent.

“Prices fell due to several reasons, including oversupply and reduced demand. Add to that, prices also fell due to non-availability of good quality cotton. This has discouraged farmers heavily. If the situation remains more or less the same till April, cotton cultivation for 2015-16 in India could fall by 15-20 per cent,” said Dalal. In 2014-15, cotton area was in around 13 million hectares in India for 2014-15, about 1.5 million hectares higher than previous year.

Global factors like decline in cotton yarn exports and overall global demand for cotton being low, cotton prices took a hit globally. From an average 90 cents per pound, cotton prices globally ranged between 50 cents and 60 cents per pound in some cases.

“China also stopped importing cotton that impacted global cotton markets. Also, demand from mills also came down drastically due to reduced exports. All these factors led to fall in cotton prices. If prices do not improve much or global as well as domestic markets do not improve, then there could be fall in cotton cultivation by at least 10 per cent,” said [K Selvaraju](#) of South Indian Mills Association.

This year, cotton yarn exports too have come down, from 140 million kg last year to about 100 million kg this year.

Globally also, cotton cultivation is projected to be down by six per cent in 2015-16. “Low cotton prices are expected to persist through the rest of 2014-15 when farmers in the northern hemisphere make their planting decisions. As a result, world cotton area in 2015-16 is projected down six per cent to 31.6 million hectares. Assuming a world average yield of 777 kg/ha, world cotton production is forecast to fall six per cent to 24.6 million tonnes, which is the lowest volume since 2009-10,” said the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC).

At the same time, [ICAC](#) expects world cotton consumption to increase by two per cent to 24.7 million tonnes, making 2015/16 the first time in five seasons where consumption overtakes production. "Although consumption could surpass production by about 100,000 tons, this would only be a small dent in the large stockpile of cotton," the global body further stated.

[Tea Board sets stage for Tea Act amendment](#)

A significant addition to the Act is the definition of 'small tea grower'

[Tea Board](#) of India is planning to propose amendments to the [Tea Act](#) 1953 for ratifying and eliminating some archaic laws, while regularising some others.

There are several reasons for this move. Take, the International Tea Agreement, for instance. Under this agreement, which expired in 1956, there was a quota for exports. In the light of World Trade Organization norms, the agreement is now irrelevant.

The proposed amendment in the Act is expected to boost the development of the tea sector, besides promoting research on Indian tea varieties.

“Tea Board has been licensing manufacturers, brokers. This Act proposes to formalise it,” said a producer.

The sector is unsure as to when the amendments , which have been in the works for the past many years, would actually be passed.

Among the more significant additions to the Act is the definition of ‘small tea grower’. In tandem with the Land Ceiling Act in West Bengal and

Assam, the Tea Board has proposed to define [small tea grower](#) as a person owning less than 25 acres of tea estate in his name.

The Tea Board has justified that it is important to include the definition as many small growers were foraying into tea plantation.

Small growers have been gaining ground over the past few years. In 2011, Tea Board had to revise production figures to include production by small tea growers and the figure jumped from 988 million kg to a billion kg.

Tea Board would be entrusted with the role of protecting the intellectual property rights of tea of Indian origin within India and abroad. The protection would be by way of registering the Indian tea in accordance with the procedures laid under the prevailing laws and instituting legal action against infringement.

“These are all roles that the Tea Board is currently undertaking. But the amendments have been in the air for the past eight years. It should now be done without further delay,” said a producer.