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THE HINDU

India fastest growing economy

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) said on Monday that India is set to grow 7.4 per cent and cross the \$2.1-trillion mark this year against 6.9 per cent in 2013-14.

India grew 7.5 per cent in the October-December quarter, according to the estimates released, overtaking China's 7.3 per cent growth in the same quarter, to become the fastest growing major economy in the world.

The smart economic pick-up is largely on the back of robust manufacturing sector performance and a surge in public expenditure.

Capital formation, an indicator for the investment growth in the economy, dropped to 29.8 per cent during April-December 2014 from 30.7 per cent in April-December 2013.

The overall economic situation in the country is looking better and the basic parameters of the Indian economy are moving in the right direction, Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said ahead of the release of the advanced estimates by CSO. "India's growth rate would be better than last year as per the old system," he said addressing a parliamentary consultative committee.

Releasing the advance estimates based on a new way of calculating gross domestic product (GDP), CSO Additional Director-General Ashish Kumar told reporters that the methodology was consistent with global norms.

"The government can immediately use these numbers for policy-making," he said, replying to a question on a reported statement of Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian about his reluctance to use the revised estimates for policy purposes. Mr. Kumar also said that though the estimates put India's growth ahead of China, the fact was India's economy was many times smaller in size than China's and, therefore, the two could not be compared.

The manufacturing sector grew 10.1 per cent in the October-December quarter, against 8.7 per cent in the previous quarter. Public services grew 20 per cent against 6 per cent.

The estimates show a sharp unexpected dip in construction growth to 1.7 per cent in the three months from October to December in 2014 from 7.3 per cent in the July-September quarter. Agriculture output contracted minus 0.4 per cent during the October quarter on the back of the unfavourable kharif harvest.

With the advance estimate for the nominal GDP for 2014-15 of Rs. 126 trillion being somewhat lower than the level assumed in the Union budget Mr. Jaitley presented in July,

the Finance Minister's stated challenge of restricting the fiscal deficit to 4.1 per cent of GDP has become more stringent, said Aditi Nayar, Senior Economist, ICRA.

The advance estimates are on a new base year of 2011-12 against 2004-05 used earlier.

The coverage is also greater with manufacturing now including previously under-represented sectors supplemented with data from the government's corporate database.

'Biotech can offer solution to viral fevers'



Deputy Chief Minister K.E. Krishna Murthy addressing the workshop at KVR College in Kurnool on Monday.

The importance of biotechnology doubled in the wake of outbreak of dreaded diseases like Ebola, swine flu and other chronic viral infections, Deputy Chief Minister K.E. Krishna Murthy said.

Addressing a meeting after inaugurating the national-level workshop on Biotechnology at KVR College here on Monday, he said the medical field was facing challenges on account of outbreak of virulent diseases and growing cost of treatment. Only biotechnology could offer a solution to the problem.

He said the medical related research should be promoted to provide immediate relief to the humanity. He wanted the biotechnology students to take up career in medical research for a bright future.

He said agriculture also offered great scope for research, especially in the area of dry land farming. The farmers in backward areas like Rayalaseema could not afford expensive fertilizers and pesticides. Biotechnologists could offer low-cost solutions to the poorest farmers to place them on an even keel with their counterparts in rich coastal Andhra.

Mr. Krishna Murthy said apart from cost-reduction, biotechnology solutions brought down the chemical use and helped grow organic food which human would prefer in the days to come.

Asking the students to understand the myriad applications of biotechnology, he said treatment of solid, liquid and gaseous wastes could be effectively handled by biotechnology applications.

The Deputy CM asked the college authorities to organise campus interviews for biotechnology students so that more students could evince interest in the subject.

Biotechnology offered job opportunities in the disciplines of animal husbandry, agriculture, medicine, marine, chemical and plant technology. He complimented the teachers and students of KVR College for cherishing the long tradition and upholding the standards in education.

T. Pullanna, president of Indian Botanical Society, HP Guru Shankara of Central University, Kerala, P. Srinivasa Rao, NIT, Warangal and principal Purushotham Reddy were present.

Poultry sector in doldrums

Poultry sector in the State is going through tough times mainly due to rise in cost of inputs including feed and partly because of the bird flu scare that started in Kerala late last year.

The rise in cost of production of poultry feed is mainly attributed to higher Minimum Support Prices fetched by maize farmers in the country.

This caused a fall in the realisation on eggs and chicken. The steep increase in cost of production remains a concern while consumption kept registering a significant increase.

National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) executive member D. Sudhakar told *The Hindu* that the cost of an egg rose from Rs 3 to Rs. 3.50 but the return was less than Rs. 3. The realisation on chicken stood at about Rs. 60, which is Rs. 3 less than the cost of production.

The realisations will continue to be poor till the costs come down. The costs will fall only if the Central government tinkers with the MSP which is easier said than done due to sensitivity of the issue involving farmers who are also under tremendous pressure to meet the rising costs that plagued their sector.

According to Mr. Sudhakar, nearly half of the four crore eggs produced per day by about 4.50 crore layers in the State are consumed locally and the rest are exported to Assam, Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal. An approximate 1.75 crore broilers come for placement every month each weighing on an average 2.50 kgs. The meat output stands at 3.50 crore kgs in a month, which is roughly 11.667 lakh kgs per day.

It is evident from this that the production of both eggs and meat is quite good but it is low prices that are worrisome for hatcheries.

Conferring 'agriculture' status to poultry sector which is considered 'industry' now and reducing the electricity tariff will bring down the cost of operations.

Mr. Sudhakar lamented that the threat of bird flu was blown out of proportions as the birds that afflicted in Kerala were ducks but not the cocks and hens grown for consumption of meat and eggs. Nevertheless, fear of the epidemic did some damage.

Expressing similar view, Suresh Chitturi, vice-chairman & managing director Srinivasa Hatcheries Limited, said unplanned growth and also scare of avian influenza had an adverse impact on the sector.

A high-level poultry industry meeting is scheduled to be held in Hyderabad in a few days to take stock of the situation.

Japanese team attends workshop

A Japanese team participated in a workshop on farm mechanisation at Zilla Parishad guest house on Monday.

The team inspected farming tools given to Rythu Seva Kendras, their function, defects, etc. and also interacted with farmers.

Joint Director (Agriculture) D. Prameela, food security mission consultant N.D.R.C. Sarma, scientists from farm research centres in Vizianagaram and Anakapalle participated in the workshop.

Organic farming in novel way



K. P. Subramanian

Though born into an agrarian family, K.P. Subramanian (68) of Athimarathottam hamlet, a postgraduate in Economics, till recently was better known in the social circles in Tirupur knitwear cluster as a successful textile entrepreneur.

After handing over the mantle of the apparel export business to his son, Mr. Subramanian decided to return to agriculture farms.

Now, the 35-acre plot he owns is an epitome of novel integrated organic farming practices with each of the activity taken up been interlinked to another. He now holds on the plot a dairy with more than 60 cattle, cultivates organic amla, maize, organic fodder, coconut, and also produces enriched vermin compost as well as an organic tonic that could stimulate growth of plants.

Interlinking of activities was made possible by using the dung and urine of the cows to prepare manure for the fodder that was used in return to feed the cattle.

Similarly, the dung and urine of the cow was also used to prepare the organic tonic for stimulating the growth of plants raised in his farm besides the application of the enriched vermin compost.

“We produce tonic by mixing the dung and urine of the cow with black sugar, ghee and tender coconut in certain propositions. In the case of vermin compost, we not only introduce earth worms in its preparation but also add certain other organic matters to make it enriched,” Mr. Subramanian told *The Hindu* .

The cow milk, the vermin compost and the organic tonic he produces were now getting buyers in large scale.

“Even when he ventured into textile business producing grey fabrics and later apparels, I always wanted to spend my latter years in agriculture but without harming the environment and hence, opted organic method with a firm ‘no’ to chemicals at any stage of the integrated farming,” Mr. Subramanian pointed out.

Training on hygienic handling of fish

The M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation will impart training to fishermen of coastal areas in the district on hygienic handling of fish with a view to sensitise fishermen to the importance of proper handling of the catch.

Speaking on the sidelines of a function held here on Monday to felicitate 13 volunteers who had been conferred the Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy Fellowship, R.Rajkumar, Senior Scientist of the Village Resource Centre of the Foundation here, said that 20 fishermen would be trained under the programme.

Fishermen incurred big losses due to unhygienic handling of catch.

The training would include skills on proper preservation of the catch with ice cubes and cleaning the boats.

The foundation would also impart three-day training on diesel engine mechanism to another batch of 20 fishermen from February 12.

To benefit fisherwomen, the foundation would impart five-day training on producing value-added products in fish from February 24, he said.

On the fellowship, he said that rural volunteers were identified by the foundation, Nehru Yuva Kendra, and the Agriculture Department.

About 260 persons had been honoured with the fellowship in the last one year.

S. Ganesh, District Collector, felicitated those who received the fellowship.

New dairy plant in Namakkal



To provide training in value addition of milk, and preparation of milk products, a new dairy plant was inaugurated at the Veterinary College and Research Institute here recently.

It is funded by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi, under the National Agriculture Development Programme.

K.M.L. Pathak, Deputy Director General (Animal Science), inaugurated the plant.

A bovine infertility diagnostic and training centre, an avian molecular laboratory, a frozen semen bank, and a students day centre too were established, all at a cost of around Rs. 2 crore.

Dr. Pathak asked teachers to encourage students to carry out more research works to address the problems of farming community. S. Thilagar, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, said that farmers can use the dairy plant to convert the raw milk into value added milk, and milk products so that they get more profit. The major problem faced by the dairy farmers was bovine infertility.

The bovine infertility diagnostic and training centre would help veterinarians treat infertile dairy animals, and train farmers in controlling infertility.

Frozen semen bank would help the farmers get quality frozen semen straws from superior germ plasm to improve the productivity of animals. The avian molecular laboratory would help diagnose diseases in poultry.

K.A. Doraisamy, Dean, welcomed the gathering. A. Elango, Professor and Head, Department of Livestock Products Technology (Dairy Science), proposed a vote of thanks.

Health measures reviewed

Secretary Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, S. Vijayakumar, who is the District monitoring officer, on Monday, reviewed the plan and non plan schemes of various departments and measures being taken to handle the threat of dengue and swine flu in the district.

Mr. Vijayakumar, accompanied by Projector Director A. Palani and officials from Agriculture, Health and Animal Husbandry visited Kombothi panchayat in Thirupullani panchayat union and inspected the treatment given to milch animals, distributed to the farmers free of cost.

He also inspected the farm ponds dug by Agriculture Engineering department, roads laid by the District Rural Development Agency and the fogging operation launched by the health and allied departments in Erwadi and Kilakarai areas to prevent spread of vector borne diseases, official sources said.

After making the field visits in the morning, the monitoring officer, reviewed the progress of both plan and non plan schemes in the district in the evening, interacting with the heads of various departments in the presence of Collector K. Nanthakumar.

Later, Mr. Vijayakumar reviewed the works being done by the departments to keep under control the menace of dengue and swine flu in the district.

Pointing out there were nil cases of dengue and swine flu 'as on date', the monitoring officer congratulated the district administration and health department officials for keeping the dreaded diseases under check, when the threat of the fever put the health officials on their toes in the southern districts, especially, the neighbouring Virudhunagar district.

Joint Director (Health services) S. M. Ravi said as on date, there was no dengue or swine flu case in the district. Three cases of dengue were reported in Paramakudi and all the three patients were treated and discharged.

He said one person was tested positive for swine flu in Panaikulam and the patient was undergoing treatment in Madurai.

Farmers apprehensive of proposed sanctuary


Hundreds of farmers, mostly coffee growers and horticulturists, in lower Kodaikanal hill took out a rally at Thandigudi on Monday against bringing it under the proposed sanctuary. They fear it would paralyse farming activities and threaten their livelihood.

Expressing concern at rules of the proposed sanctuary, they said it would prevent people from raising cash and horticulture crops. Felling of even dry trees in private farms would not be allowed. Renovation and rehabilitation of irrigation sources would become tough, they complained. Agriculture in lower Kodaikanal hill would come to a grinding halt, leaving thousands of farmers jobless, they said.

Fresh guidelines of the proposed sanctuary prevented many private farms from taking up any activity as they were close to the reserve forests, they pointed out.

However, forest officials have clarified that there would be no threat to people in private patta lands and their activities.

Procurement centre opened at Pallipalayam



HELP AT HAND

- Civil supplies corporation expects to procure **25,000 tonnes paddy**
- Procurement price of Grade 'A' (fine) variety: **Rs. 1,470** a quintal (inclusive of a subsidy of Rs. 70)
- Procurement price of common variety: **Rs. 1,410** a quintal (inclusive of a subsidy of Rs. 50).
- Paddy procured during last year: **9,648 tonnes**

The Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation has opened a direct procurement centre for the benefit of the farmers of Kizhakkukarai Vaikal irrigation system in Pallipalayam taluk.

The centre, which started functioning from January 18, has been setup under the Decentralised Paddy Procurement Programme of the Union Government for the current kharif season.

The programme envisaged the setting up of the centre in a non-Cauvery delta area to protect the farmers from the fall in price of paddy in open market, and ensure them maximum profit.

Paddy has been raised in 4,282 hectares under the Kizhakkukarai Vaikal irrigation system in the Pallipalayam taluk. As the Agriculture Department is expecting a production of more than 25,000 tonnes of paddy during this season, the District Collector V. Dakshinamoorthy ordered the setting up of the procurement centre in the taluk.

The centre was set up in the Ponkalamman Marriage Hall in Elanthakuttai village. It was inaugurated by P.Thangamani, Minister for Industries, on January 18.

The civil supplies corporation has fixed a procurement price of Rs. 1,470 a quintal (including a subsidy of Rs. 70) for Grade 'A' (fine) variety paddy, and Rs. 1,410 a quintal (including a subsidy of Rs. 50) for common variety of paddy.

Mr. Dakshinamoorthy asked farmers at the monthly grievances redress meeting held here last week to take full advantage of the procurement centre to market paddy. The farmers could fetch reasonable price by depositing paddy in the centre, he said.

Last year, the civil supplies corporation through a procurement centre in the village had procured 9.648 tonnes of paddy, the Collector said.

Erode district set to attain six lakh metric tonnes food grains production

There are indications that agricultural production in the district will increase significantly this year owing to a combination of a few factors: high quantum of farm loans, adequacy of fertilizers, and most of all, ideal climatic condition, official sources said. The district was set to attain productivity of six lakh metric tonnes of paddy, pulses, and millets this year, which would be about 30 per cent more than last year, Joint Director of Agriculture Selvaraj said.

There was a stock of 10,000 phosphatic and potash fertilizers to be utilised for the second crop cultivation on 5,200 acres of Thadapalli-Arakankottai ayacut, and 2,000 acres of Kalingarayan ayacut.

As for agricultural loans, out of the Rs. 282 crore target set, Rs. 248 crore had been forwarded. Likewise, the adequacy of urea stock at the primary agricultural cooperative societies was being ensured. The combined stock of urea at the 163 cooperative societies at present was 10,000 tonnes. The Agriculture Department was expecting arrival of 700 tonnes of urea for Erode district, Mr. Selvaraj said. Sources said that farmers repaying loans promptly were entitled to subsidies. Agriculturists in the district had received interest subsidy of Rs. 42.43 crore for farm loans disbursed through cooperative societies during the last three years. During the period, loans to the tune of Rs. 702 crore was disbursed to 1,26,821 farmers of whom 1,18,877 benefitted from the subsidy scheme owing to prompt repayment.

Farmers cultivating high-quality paddy were provided with Rs. 15,500 in cash, fertilizers worth Rs. 4,200, pesticides worth Rs. 1,200, and seeds worth Rs. 1,300 per acre. Farmers, who had settled the loans within eight months, were entitled to the subsidy benefit.

Sugarcane cultivators were given loans of Rs. 23,000 per acre, besides Rs. 10,000 for fertilizers, pesticides worth Rs. 2,000, and seeds worth Rs. 10,000. For them, the repayment period was 15 months. Likewise, turmeric farmers received assistance of Rs. 49,500 per acre.

Trading centre becomes a sweet deal for raisin farmers



Farmers checking raisins at the trading centre in Vijayapura

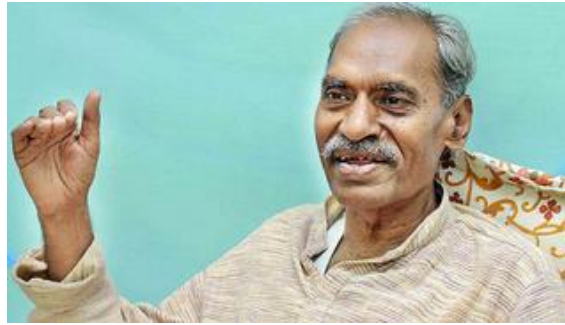
The raisin trading centre, which began its formal operation recently, is giving a platform for farmers and raisin buyers of the districts and the neighbouring States.

Being the first-of-its-kind trading centre for raisins in the State, the centre is acting as a bridge between the buyers and the sellers of this fruit. The centre, as the first step to boost the raisin industry here, has started auctions, where the sellers bring their products.

“The staff at the centre will give a particular number to the crates. The buyers can bid the products and purchase, this would help the farmers get a good price,” said V. Ramesh, secretary, Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee.

He told *The Hindu* that though the building was constructed in 2012, with financial assistance from the Union government under the National Horticulture Mission, operations started only now. Admitting that the auction would not help the raisin industry earn its potential revenue, he said that the government is in a process of starting online trading. “The machine help in segregating the product based on its size and colour as per the international standards. The pictures of the graded product would be posed on website. This would enable the anyone place the order from anywhere in the world,” he said.

Self-reliance in food production is a myth: natural farming expert



Subash Palekar, promoter of Zero Budget Natural Farming, who was in Madurai recently to conduct a workshop.

The mismatch between increasing food needs and decreasing land and water resources is a puzzle everybody is trying to solve. Subash Palekar, who was in Madurai recently to conduct a workshop on ‘Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF),’ has some clues to solve this puzzle.

He offers not only technology but also the philosophy to get farming out of the shackles of exploitation. His model is for everyone, including traditional farmers, consumers and even IT professionals.

The current food production and consumption pattern, according to him, breeds disease among urban people and drives farmers to commit suicide. “Today, the farmer has no honour in society. In the absence of a secure future, rural people are migrating to urban areas, creating more social tension,” he says.

Mr. Palekar dismisses the contention that India is self-reliant on the food front. “Food means not only rice and wheat. It includes cereals, millets, pulses, edible oils, fruits and vegetables. If we are self-reliant, why should we import wheat, edible oil and fruits,” he queries.

“We have a duty to provide food for an ever-increasing population. We have to preserve the shrinking cultivable area for food production alone,” he says. “In the name of development, farm lands are taken up for construction of industries, dams and mega cities. The demand for food is going up and land availability is coming down.”

Mr. Palekar is firm that there is a bright future for farming. “That is the reason why many people, including software engineers and IT professionals, are ready to leave their jobs and take up farming.”

The agriculture graduate from Maharashtra is unhappy about the “development madness” prevailing all over the world. “We are not anti-development. We are for sustainable development; development without destroying natural resources.”

He points out that even our routine activities pollute the environment. Unmindful use of chemicals leaves the soil barren. “Food cannot be manufactured in factories. Only the soil can give food.” He is confident that there is a way out. “Everybody has a role to play in my movement. You can work to stop destruction of land by continuing with your service. We can stop use of materials that destroy the land in a non-violent way,” he says. More details about ZBNF can be found in www.palekarzerobudgets.piritualfarming.org.



How to reap a good harvest



I recently witnessed protests in Berlin, against industrialised farming and the planned free-trade agreement between the European Union and the United States, under the banner “We Are Fed Up”. Trade issues resonate across Europe, but in India, farmers are oblivious to the inevitable consequences of trade agreements. However, the government seems keen to address issues related to farmers. Yet, success on the farm front can be delusional if long-term objectives are sacrificed for short-term fixes, or the cause of a problem in the sector is misunderstood as the consequence of the problem.

The UPA refused to engage with farmers during its 10 [years](#) in office. It lost power primarily due to high inflation, stemming from the mismanagement of the farm space. Unlike during the UPA regime, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley called a meeting for pre-budget consultations on agriculture. Bharat Krishak Samaj advocated a long list of small [investments](#) that could smooth out the rough edges of existing policies, instead of grand gestures that amount to little. The idea was to push investments that will deliver growth and are economically and environmentally sustainable. We offered a strategic direction to the government that will help control food inflation, not by expending extra resources but by mere restructuring of existing allocations.

One part of the strategy would be to focus on increasing the production of perishables by identifying geographically distinct districts that have the ideal combination of weather, soil and water. Select four districts every year for the next five years, integrate all food

impacting government programmes and direct them to these districts. Accept farm advisory services offered from Israel, the Netherlands, Germany and such.

Although it is common knowledge that farm extension services have collapsed, its impact on farmers has not been fully grasped. The government must assign an agriculture graduate as extension agent for every 10 villages. It must also fund a joint mission involving the Small Farmers Agriculture Business Consortium and the National Dairy Development Board to grow and store, as well as for the controlled distribution of, essentials — including onions, potatoes and tomatoes — to ease price fluctuation.

The other part of the strategy should be to extend the white revolution across India. The milk yield of indigenous breeds could be doubled by setting up a regulatory framework that makes artificial insemination available. All farmers must have the [option](#) and opportunity to own good milch animals and access veterinary services at the farm gate. Similarly, it is paramount to optimise agriculture input use. India must target 10 per cent replacement of chemical fertilisers and pesticides by propagating integrated pest management with bio pesticides and bio fertilisers. Eighty per cent

of our farmers own less than two hectares of land. It is not viable for individual farmers to buy farm machinery, which has become the primary cause of debt in the irrigated parts. Hence, provisions should be made for farmers to lease farm machinery services. Policies that promote horticulture, dairy, poultry and fisheries will not only end malnutrition but also create five times the number of jobs over any other investment. We can further [link](#) production to nutrition by focusing on millets and fodder. For example, protein-rich soya could be included in the mid-day meal scheme instead of exporting it as feed.

All exports are not sustainable. The export of rice, for instance, is simply the export of precious ground water. As international commodity prices crash, the clamour for India to open its borders for high-value, low-volume imports will rise. It is important that we don't get swayed by the cultivated cacophony in the name of reforms. Ad hoc measures by the ministry of commerce over the [years](#) have caused farmer suicides.

I am confident that the new administration will favour a long-term agriculture exemption policy, which will allow farmers to export agriculture produce without any restrictions and impose maximum permissible import duty on perishable products. The talk of targeting self-sufficiency may seem antiquated in times of [trade](#) agreements, but the fact remains that the world is neither flat nor fair. It would be naïve to treat food at par with other commodities. Even the EU will tell you that.

Simultaneously, as farmers deliver on production, the government must create multiple connect points between producers and consumers. It must promote food processing. The government ought to increase access to markets by doubling the number of agriculture market yards. The private sector should be invited to enter the sector in order to ensure

competition. When funds are allocated for urban infrastructure, [make](#) it mandatory for cities to allocate space for farmer/ Sunday markets in residential areas.

Excess production without access to markets will be disastrous. As the saying goes, "When one farmer works hard, he gets rich. When all farmers work hard, all become poor." If the government also incorporates our propositions on [credit](#), irrigation and cooperatives, one can look forward to a future where the children of farmers will be infinitely better off than their forefathers. A failure to do so would lead to the situation cynically portrayed in Berlin at the International Green Week: Which month of the year are farmers upset? The answer is February, the month with the least number of days. It is also the month Jaitley will present his budget. We wait, with bated breath.



Organic farming catches fancy of HP farmers

SHIMLA: At a time when global warming has posed threat to apple plantation in Himachal Pradesh that was first introduced in 1870 in Kullu by British captain R C Scot and in 1916 at Thanedar area of Shimla by US citizen Samuel Evans Stokes later known as Satya Nand Stokes, organic farming has caught the fancy of famers under changed scenario.

Agricultural economy of Himachal Pradesh is set to change with 26,741 farmers showing their interest organic farming. Shimla district has taken the lead by having maximum area under organic farming. Already, 15,548 hectare land is under cultivation and the state government now intends to bring in 2,000 hectare more by spending Rs 8.64 crore this year. At the moment, Himachal Pradesh grows vegetables, cereals and fruits under organic farming which fetches farmers 20 to 30% more price in the market. Shimla, from where apple cultivation started in the state a century ago, has taken the lead this time too.

Dr Raghubir Singh from the agriculture department said that organic farming is increasing its base in the state due to low cost of input involved. "Farmers are not using chemicals and chemical based fertilizers which save them lot of [money](#) as they use the natural available resources," he added.

Another official said that Organic Certification Agency is also being set up in the state. He said that government is providing 50% subsidy on vermi compost units and special attention is being given on free soil testing. "A target of providing one lakh soil health card has been fixed for [current](#) fiscal," he added.

At present, farmers cluster of 25 to 500 members has been formed for organic farming but in the future, there is a plan to convert these clusters into block-wise societies to promote and run organic farming related programmes through cooperative movement, officials said.

Recipe: Vegetable soup



Ingredients

One small cauliflower
1/2 kg peas
1 red carrot (chopped)
4 onions
3 tomatoes
4 cinnamon sticks
4 peppercorns
Some macaroni if you wish
2 bouillon cubes
1 tablespoon oil

Method

Put one tablespoon oil in a pan and fry cinnamon sticks and peppercorns. Add chopped onions and fry till transparent. Add tomatoes and fry till done. Add two bouillon veg cubes and stir till it melts. Add two cups of water, and stir. Add the veggies and macaroni and bring to a boil. Serve hot. This can be had with toasted bread or hard brun pav.

Tips you can use

This dish can be made with different variations from mushroom tomato and onions to macaroni, tomato and onions. However, the more veggies you add the more filling and nutritious it will be. If you prefer chicken you can use chicken bouillon cubes instead of vegetable, and add steamed, shredded pieces of chicken. It's essentially a clear soup that is ideal for those on a diet or those looking for a quick, tasty and light meal. French beans and macaroni are other variations that you can try. Some people prefer making the chicken broth at [home](#), that is an [option](#) you can explore if you have the time.

Recipe: Banana & walnut loaf cake



The addition of Walnuts gives this cake a lovely texture but you can substitute any nuts you prefer-pistachios or hazelnuts also work well.

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking: 35 minutes

Serves: 8

Ingredients:

2 ripe bananas

115g butter, softened

115g caster sugar, plus 1 tbsp

2 large eggs

115g flour

3 tbsp buttermilk

2 tsp ground cinnamon

1 tsp ground mixed spice

100g Walnuts, coarsely chopped

For the caramel Glaze

1 tbsp butter

1 tbsp soft light brown sugar

1 tbsp golden syrup

¼tsp fine sea salt

Method:

Heat oven to 180C/gas 4. Grease and line 2x450g loaf tins. Put the bananas in a bowl and mash with a fork.

Put the butter and sugar in a mixing bowl and whisk until light creamy. Add the eggs one at a time, whisking after each addition. Add the mashed banana, flour, buttermilk, cinnamon, mixed spice and Walnuts, and fold in until everything is incorporated.

Divide the batter between prepared loaf tins and bake in the oven for 25-30 minutes, until the cakes are firm to the touch and a knife inserted in the middle of each cake comes out

clean. Allow the loaves to cool slightly while you [make](#) the glaze.

To make the salted caramel glaze heat the butter sugar, syrup and salt in a saucepan until the butter has melted and the sugar dissolved. drizzle the caramel over the warm cakes to glaze and leave for a few minutes before turning out onto a wire rack to cool. These cakes will keep for up to 3 days if stored in an airtight container.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Coffee exports drop 27% in January on sluggish prices



Coffee exports fell over 27 per cent to 18,475 tonnes in [January](#) due to volatile global prices and lower supplies of the old crop.

The country had shipped 25,355 tonnes of coffee in the same month last year, according to Coffee Board's latest data.

“Our traders are exercising caution as global prices have been very volatile in past two months due to production concerns in Brazil, the world's biggest coffee producer,” a senior Coffee Board official told PTI.

Besides, the supply of old crop in the domestic market is getting exhausted and farmers are not releasing new crop as they are concerned over the sluggish price trend, the official said.

Harvesting of arabica variety of coffee has got over and robusta is underway. Farmers are awaiting good prices to sell their new crop in the market, the official added.

In the global market, arabica rates at present are ruling down at 165 cents per pound, while that of robusta at USD 1,950 per tonne.

As per the Board's latest data, arabica exports fell by 47 per cent to 4,826 tonnes in January this year from 9,120 tonnes in the year-ago period, while that of robusta declined by 30.5 per cent to 5,736 tonnes from 9,693 tonnes in the same period.

However, the shipment of instant coffee more than doubled to 5,328 tonnes in January this year as against 2,182 tonnes in the same month of corresponding year.

Maximum exports were to Italy (3,785 tonnes), followed by Turkey (1,645 tonnes), Germany (1,460 tonnes) and Ukrain (999 tonnes) in January this year.

The country's overall coffee production is estimated to be reasonably good at 3.31 lakh tonnes this year as against 3.04 lakh tonnes last year, according to Coffee Board.