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THE HINDU

Continue MSP regime in agriculture, says Badal

During a series of meetings with various Union Ministers, Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Thursday sought the continuation of the minimum support price (MSP) regime in agriculture, immediate release of Rs. 5,187.75 crore for improving urban infrastructure in the State and expediting the process of setting up an Indian Institute of Management (IIM) in Amritsar.

Mr. Badal appealed to Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh to continue with the MSP, which should be worked out in accordance with the M.S. Swaminathan formula to provide at least a 50 per cent profit over the costs incurred by the farmer in producing foodgrains.

Mr. Badal warned that doing away with the MSP would lead to unrest, especially when agriculture had become a non-profitable venture because of increasing costs and diminishing returns, leading to a spiralling debt burden. To ensure the success of the crop diversification programme, the Union government must bring alternative crops under the MSP regime. He sought the implementation of the promised crop insurance scheme, as well as revision of the norms for relief and compensation for crops damaged in natural calamities.

Seeking interest-free, short-term crop loans for small and marginal farmers, Mr. Badal said the Union Finance Ministry should reintroduce income tax exemption for cooperative banks which was withdrawn in 2007. He appealed for the expeditious release of Rs. 21 crore to the ICAR for setting up a regional centre of the Central Institute of Fresh Water Aquaculture at Bathinda.

At his meeting with Union Urban Development and Housing Minister M. Venkaiah Naidu, he demanded immediate release of Rs. 5,187.75 crore, saying funds were required to ensure 100 per cent coverage under water supply schemes in 30 towns, to revamp sewerage in 79 towns and install 86 sewage treatment plants, besides modernising roads and streetlights. Mr. Badal wanted Ludhiana, Amritsar, Mohali, New Chandigarh, Zirakpur, Dera Bassi, Kharar, Tarn Taran, Sri Muktsar Sahib, Jalandhar, Bathinda and Patiala included in the 'Smart City' scheme.

He pleaded for the release of the last instalment of JNNURM sewerage funds in Ludhiana.

The Chief Minister urged Human Resource Development Minister Smriti Irani to expedite constituting a site selection committee for setting up an IIM in Amritsar.

Madha Public School displays experiments



The Parents' Review Day was held in Madha Public School on January 31, from which the students learnt a lot.

The walls were decorated with various works and the bulletin board was filled with pictures of the students performing different activities throughout the year.

It was a display of all the projects prepared by the wards, right from Standard I to Standard VII.

The students explained their experiments to the parents and the visitors with great enthusiasm.

The experiments such as 'Conserving Agricultural Irrigation Water', 'What do Plants need most', 'Compost' and 'Comparing Varying Levels of Oxygen Aeration in Increasing Plant Production' etc. were the highlights.

On hunger

The word might not ring a bell for those souls who live in luxury and whose nights aren't haunted by the fear of not knowing if there will be food next morning. The challenge is that there are millions who live in poverty because there are too many people. Measures need to be taken to

put an end to this spurt in population. Family planning methods have to be adopted, especially at the grassroot level. People must be made aware. New agricultural practices like high-yielding seeds must be employed to increase crop yield. The government must ensure two square meals for all its citizens. Age-old practices did not allow farmers to reap benefits. They must be allowed to use advanced methods.

S. Swethalaxmi, VII A1, S.S.B, Tiruchi

EPOS to ensure better service at fair price shops

<p>KEEPING A TAB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The system allows sale of commodities only after taking thumb impressions of cardholders 	<p>EPOS SYSTEM WILL BE INTRODUCED IN 1,981 FAIR PRICE SHOPS IN SRIKAKULAM DISTRICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ It also enables officials to keep a tab on the exact stock position at the respective shops
<p>WHAT WENT WRONG?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Essential commodities were being diverted when cardholders failed to buy their quota from fair price shops ❖ No mechanism to verify if the original cardholder has collected his or her quota of essential commodities 	
<p>BETTER MONITORING</p> <p>“So far, we have depended on details provided by officials. The EPOS system will enable us to know the stock position in no time. We will introduce the system first at municipal and mandal headquarters in the first phase. Later, we will extend the facility to gram panchayats</p> <p>VIVEK YADAV, Srikakulam Joint Collector</p>	

Srikakulam Joint Collector Vivek Yadav has said the Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) system would be introduced in all 1,981 fair price shops in the district to ensure transparency and prevent diversion of subsidised essential goods. The move is expected to benefit 7 lakh cardholders in the district.

The district administration observed that essential goods such as rice and kerosene were being diverted when cardholders failed to buy their quota from fair price shops. Also, there is no mechanism to verify if the original cardholder has collected his or her quota of essential goods. The EPOS system will allow the sale of essential commodities only after taking the thumb impressions of cardholders. Moreover, it enables officials to keep a tab on the exact stock position at the respective shops.

“So far, we have depended on details provided by officials. The EPOS system will enable us to know the stock position in no time. We will introduce the system first at municipal and mandal headquarters in the

first phase. Later, we will extend the facility to gram panchayats. Machines will be supplied to dealers free of cost,” Mr. Yadav said. He added that transparency would be maintained in the registration of properties and agriculture lands. “After the registration, the details have to be updated in revenue records.

However, mutation is not taking place with the delay in transfer of details from the Registration Department to revenue sections. That is why we are going to utilize WEB Land technology, which allows Tehsildars to know the details of registrations without waiting to get them from the offices concerned,” he said.

He asked farmers not to worry about mutation, as the e-pattadar facility would help in updating records automatically. The software is being upgraded in all revenue office to get details through Web Land technology.

Refresher courses for teachers



The University Grants Commission-Academic Staff College will organise refresher courses in Life Sciences (Botany, Zoology, Microbiology, Biotechnology, Genetics, Biological Sciences, Environmental Sciences, Biochemistry and Agricultural Sciences) and Education Technology (Education, Physical Education and Psychology) for under-graduate and post-graduate teachers.

The course will be held between February 18 and March 10. Details can be collected from the Director of the College, Jnana Bharathi campus, Bangalore University, Bengaluru - 560056, according to 'a release.

ICAR to set up model mechanised farms at 100 villages across country

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has planned to set up model mechanised farm units at select 100 centres particularly in peripheral villages of agricultural colleges and research institutes across the country to motivate farmers understand and apply advantages of the latest technology in agriculture.

Each unit will be spread over 40 acres and it will be an all-machinery site – right from sowing seeds, clearing of weeds and harvesting produce. Villages in and around leading research colleges and institutes will be accorded preference. The ICAR will set up all machinery at these institutes.

In Tiruchi district, Kumulur has been identified for the programme as the TNAU Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute is located in this village, said A. Alagusundaram, Deputy Director General of ICAR. Speaking to *The Hindu* at Kumulur near here on Thursday, he said that mechanisation had come to stay in agriculture.

He said that the project has been a success story at a couple of places – the Punjab Agricultural University and the Central Institute of Agricultural Engineering in Bhopal.

On the advantages of the programme, he said that farmers would be motivated to understand various mechanisation techniques being adopted in different fields and would adopt them in their fields.

The villagers would be motivated to float groups on the lines of the self-help groups and the groups would be responsible for utilisation of the machinery.

They could hire the machinery on fair rental basis and the profit generated could be utilised for maintenance and upkeep of the machinery, he said.

Post-harvest technique

Mr. Alagusundaram urged farmers to adopt post-harvest technique optimally for registering maximum returns. Although farmers were highly skilled in producing crop, there was a strong case for enhancing their expertise in post-harvest technique, he added.

Urea stock arrives



The arrival of 2,626 metric tonnes of urea on Thursday has ensured more than adequate availability for farmers undertaking second cycle of cultivation in the ayacut areas of Thadapalli-Arakankottai and Kalingarayan canals.

The consignment despatched by IFFCO (Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited) from the Mangalore port was unloaded and sent to the 163 Primary Agricultural Cooperative Credit Societies, Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies S. Ramdoss, said

The stock has been replenished comfortably. On the previous occasion, Erode district, received supply of over 3,000 metric tonnes of urea last December, he said.

Red gram fetching record price



The record prices for red gram in the wholesale market has brought back the smiles on the faces of growers who were in distress, initially due to the failure of the monsoon during cultivation and later, due to the excessive rainfall and hailstorm in a few parts of Kalaburagi district.

The prices of red gram are now hovering between Rs. 5,700 and Rs. 5,800 a quintal, which is an all-time high.

Experts and farmer leaders attribute the abnormal increase in the prices to the low yield of the crop this year due to the failure of monsoon and the extended dry spells in the crucial period of the growth of the crop.

Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha president Maruti Manpade and Red Gram Growers Association leader Basavaraj Ingin told *The Hindu* that the increase in prices was due to a fall in production. The State government should strengthen the Red Gram Development Board and upgrade it on the lines of the Karnataka Milk Federation to ensure the involvement of growers in its activities, they said.

Secretary of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee C.S. Karaddi said that the price of red gram in the market yard did not fall below Rs. 5,200 a quintal this year and it had steadily ruled around Rs. 5,000 a quintal after the harvested produce started arriving in December 2014.

Arrivals are also expected to be the highest in the recent years due to the high prices available in the market. Till February 2009, the total arrival of red gram in the market yard was more than 18.04 lakh quintal and this is likely to cross 19.25 lakh quintal at the end of March with fresh arrivals. Last year, the total arrivals were 19.18 lakh quintal.

Basavaraj Sangavi, a farmer from Sangavi village in Sedam taluk, who had brought the harvested red gram to the market yard, was all smiles. “Although the yield was less this year, I will make up the loss due to the high price available for the produce. I will be able to pay off all the loans and save some money for my daughter’s marriage,” he added.

TNAU comes up with a pulse seeder to reduce wastage



The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has designed a new pulse seeder for avoiding wastage during sowing to help farmers register higher yield.

The tractor-driven pulse seeder has five box-like chambers called 'plates' in which processed seeds are stocked. The seeder helps to sow the seeds uniformly in the field with a spacing of 30 cm between successive rows and 10 cm between successive plants.

The device not only helps speedy sowing but also helps farmers save on expense incurred in employing farmhands. The seeder could cover one hectare of land a day. Explaining the advantages of the seeder at TNAU-Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute at Kumulur near here on Thursday, K.Ramaswamy, Dean, said that it could be used for raising green gram and black gram in central districts.

Its efficacy had already been evaluated in the TNAU farms, and the per-hectare yield has nearly doubled from the normal 400 kg. Similar trials were being carried out in select 10 fields in and around Lalgudi and Kumulur and the machines efficiency was being evaluated.

"Apart from the pattern followed for sowing the seeds, yield also depends on various factors, including water availability. Hence, the TNAU has been conducting an evaluation study, he said.

K.Alagusundaram, Deputy Director General of Indian Council of Agricultural Research, who inspected the seeder, appealed to farmers to make use of the contraption to improve the yield. It is better than the conventional method in vogue as the seeder would ensure synchronised maturing of pulses, he said.

Later, Mr.Alagusundarm inaugurated the Kumulur chapter of the Indian Society of Agricultural Engineers at the college. He said that the chapter would facilitate college students to publish articles in 'Journal of Agricultural Engineers' and 'Agricultural Engineering Today'.

Knowledge dissemination, sharing expertise in agricultural engineering, and opportunity to participate in annual conventions were the other advantages. He appealed to students to take maximum advantage of the society to improve their professional knowledge. The society had also instituted a scholarship and annual awards.

Manjhi announces free power to small farmers



Showering largesse, Bihar Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi on Thursday announced free electricity to small farmers owning up to five acres of land for agriculture purpose and promised to double the cap if he gets a chance to continue in office.

“I will call a meeting of the state cabinet in a day or two to approve the proposal of providing free electricity to small farmers owning up to five acres for agricultural purpose,” Mr. Manjhi, who is locked in a power struggle with Nitish Kumar and has to prove his strength in the Assembly on February 20, said in his speech after inaugurating ‘Agro Bihar 2015’ organised by Agriculture Department.

“If I get another chance, free electricity to farmers for farm purposes would be doubled for up to 10 acres,” he said.

Spelling out the rationale for providing free electricity, he said at present people “manage” the payment of energy bill by giving bribe to officials so it is better to make it free for small farmers.

“Against a bill of Rs 5000 they pay a bribe of Rs 2000 to officials to settle it and the state government gets nothing in its kitty,” he said, sending the audience into peels of laughter.

Mr. Manjhi said in a bid to remove middleman, he would direct officials to give the subsidy on purchase of farm equipment directly in bank account of farmers after certifying that they have bought ISI brand machine from any shop.

For his SC/ST communities, his core support base, Mr. Manjhi promised to enhance subsidy for them for the purchase of farm equipment to 80 per cent from about 60 per cent at present.

The announcements come close on the heels of other populist decisions like reserving contract work for SC/ST for upto Rs 70 lakh, lowering attendance requirement from 75 per cent to 60 per cent for general and 55 per cent for SC/ST schools students and constructing press clubs in 36 districts of Bihar. These were approved in a cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh hit out at former Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar for having an ‘anti-farmer’ approach and “trying to destabilise” the Manjhi government which was working for the welfare of farmers and the poor.

Young bees try, fail to support foundering colonies



When honey bees die before their time, the younger bees among them try to search for food but often fail, contributing to the worrying phenomenon of colony collapse, researchers said on Monday.

Why does it happen?

Scientists are studying a range of factors — from the use of pesticides to loss of favoured plants to disease — as they try to understand why these important crop pollinators are declining worldwide.

The latest study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences points to a social breakdown in the hive as yet another contributing factor to colony collapse disorder, or CCD.

Researchers in Australia, Britain and the United States attached radio trackers to thousands of bees to study their movements.

Adaptation

Bees usually begin foraging when they are two to three weeks old, but when the colony is hit by disease, a lack of food or other chronic stress factors, the older bees die.

Younger bees try to replace them in their efforts, but are less likely to complete their foraging flights, and are far more likely to die during their first trip, they found. “Young bees leaving the hive early is likely to be an adaptive behaviour to a reduction in the number of older foraging bees,” explained Clint Perry from the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences at Queen Mary University of London.

“But if the increased death rate continues for too long or the hive isn’t big enough to withstand it in the short term, this natural response could upset the societal balance of the colony and have catastrophic consequences.” Researchers still do not know how to prevent colony collapse, but they may be able to get a good sense of the overall health of a hive by tracking the age at which foraging begins, he said.

Green pepper does a star turn for tribal farmers



The tribal farmers of Vancvhivayal, a settlement inside the Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR), are a happy lot.

For, they get the highest price for green pepper in the State as the entire lot is exported to Germany.

In this hill-locked fertile forestland, all farmers grow organic pepper thanks to the effort of the Periyar Tiger Conservation Foundation.

The 63 families at Vancvhivayal are busy harvesting the crop and the yield is expected to be over 20 tonnes this year. They get Rs.270 a kg this season for their produce, which Rs.110 more than the local market rate.

V.Radhakrishnan, secretary of the Eco-Development Committee (EDC), said the committee prompted the farmers to take up green pepper cultivation.

In 2005, 20,578 kg of organic pepper fetched Rs.5,14,470 and last year, the farmers got Rs.52,63,940 selling 23,027 kg.

“Every year, an international agency gives organic certification after testing the soil and the farmers are advised to stick to the organic mode. Moreover, it is their way of cultivation as they do not use chemical pesticides or fertilizers as the soil is rich. The farmers clear the weeds twice a year and the decayed leaves and weeds are the main agents that fertilise the soil,” says P.N. Sebastian, EDC facilitator.

A PTR official said the foundation used to directly export the produce to Germany. However, due to official constraints, it invited bids from private agencies to procure pepper before the harvest season every year.

“In 2013, 23,565 kg of pepper was sold at Rs.35,34,750 at Rs.150 a kg (market price Rs.129). Since we get a decent price, we are all happy to be pepper farmers,” says Remakutty, wife of Radhakrishnan.

Valsa Yesodaran, a farmer, said every week the price of the collected pepper would be remitted in their bank account.

“Other than arranging the organic certification and inviting quotations, the foundation does not have a role in collecting the material or transferring the money to the account holder. It is for ensuring transparency. All tribal farmers of Vancvshivayal are members on the EDC, which procures pepper from them,” a PTR official said.

‘Introduce crop rotation across the country’



The United Farmers Association, Tamil Nadu, urged the Centre and the State Government to take effective steps for the introduction of crop rotation pattern across the country.

Wet crops alone should be raised in the wet lands. Millets, pulses and oil seeds should be the favourite crops of the rainfed lands.

Pattern

Based on this, a crop rotation pattern should be introduced across the country, C. Vaiyapuri, president of the Association, said in a statement here on Tuesday.

The government should not hesitate to initiate legal action against the farmers who violate the crop rotation pattern. Both the governments should come out with announcements on the introduction of disease-free and disease-resistant crops. The announcement should also encourage fertilizer-free and bio-farming technologies in the country.

The governments should come forward to encourage the farmers who preferred raising millets, pulses and oil seeds in the rainfed lands, through subsidies. Mr. Vaiyapuri also demanded subsidy to the farmers for the purchase of farm livestock for farm activities.

He said that the East Coast Economical Corridor scheme was immensely harming surrounding environment. He suggested creation of sea side water ways on the line of Buckingham Canal. The water ways and the roads should be connected at various points. Forests should be raised in between the sea side water ways and the surface roads to act as barriers during natural calamities.

He urged both the Centre and the State Government to accord priority for protecting the environment and food protection as they do in the case of industries.

Cotton farmers register better yield



Timely onset of monsoon, disease-free season, and effective crop management have favoured cotton cultivation in the district this season as compared to last year when scanty rainfall posed a serious challenge to the cotton farmers.

Of the 14,000 hectares of rain-fed cotton area in the district, 13,000 hectares of crop is raised in Pullampadi and Manachanallur blocks as the black cotton soil in the block is highly suited for the crop.

Farmers of Kumulur, who were harvesting their fields on Thursday, said the crop was raised during the rain-fed season this year. Amudha, a woman farmer, said that she could harvest a higher yield this season as compared to last year.

“We incurred huge loss due to poor rain fall and sudden attack of diseases last year, however, this year, the disease attack was minimal,” she says. Farmers had raised Bt Cotton variety in August last year which has duration of 150 to 160 days. Official sources said that pre-monsoon sowing this season had paid dividends. Shortly after an initial spell of rain in August, most farmers had sown the seeds.

“The timely onset of monsoon and the equal distribution of rain during the three stages of the crop: sowing, flowering, and bulb formation had resulted in good yield this season,” sources said. On an average, the yield per acre stood at 15 quintals this season.

Allow export

The present minimum support price of Rs.40 a kg for cotton is very less and the Centre should allow export of cotton to help famers get attractive returns, they said.

Farmers want NCCF to procure paddy

Farmers have urged the National Cooperative Consumers’ Federation of India to initiate steps to procure paddy from farmers in non-delta districts, to ensure that farmers of such districts too get a fair price for their produce.

Although the State government has, a year ago, permitted the federation to procure paddy in the non-delta districts, the federation was yet to take any initiative, said A.Nagarajan, State president, Tamil Nadu Horticulture Crop Producers Association. The delay was affecting farmers who have

to sell their produce at a throwaway price. Minimum support price and incentive should also be sanctioned to these farmers.

He said that a delegation of farmers from Tamil Nadu called on Ramachandra Paswan, member, Standing Committee for Food and Consumer Affairs, and submitted a memorandum pleading for quick action by the federation. The memorandum also insisted that the federation should ensure disbursement of money instead of cheques so that farmers could get cash immediately. Last month, the federation has called for tenders from agencies and societies desirous of becoming its business associates for procuring paddy in the non-delta districts. The tenders must be finalised at once so that the procurement could start well during the current season, Mr.Nagarajan said.



[Agriculture fair attracts huge footfall](#)

Patna: Live demonstration of latest farming technologies attracted a huge footfall at the 'Agro Bihar 2015' exhibition on Thursday, which has been organized by the state agriculture department with the help of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

The exhibition, which started on Wednesday, was formally inaugurated by CM Jitan Ram Manjhi on Thursday. The CM announced a slew of sops for farmers in the state besides giving some agricultural tips. "There is a lot of potential in agriculture and farmers should shift their focus from quantitative production to a qualitative one," Manjhi said, adding new agro universities and colleges in the state are creating agriculture graduates who will help in promoting the sector.

Pitching for organic farming, the CM cautioned farmers against large-scale use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides which, he said, was not safe. "The agriculture road map has helped in increasing production in the state and Bihar farmers have twice been awarded the 'Krishi Karman Award'. Too much pesticide and fertilizer will deteriorate the quality of fruits and vegetables. We also need to think of the future of our coming generation," Manjhi said.

The event, now in its fifth edition, is a four-day exhibition where over 150 stalls have been put up by noted agro-machine manufacturers and

traders from other states, including Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Jharkhand. Seminars for the farmers are also being organized at the exhibition besides demonstration of latest technical developments that can be employed to increase crop productivity.

Training is also being imparted to operate different machines. Several new products were the centre of attraction, such as treadle pumps (costing Rs 8,000) which can pump water from 25 feet below and store it up to 25 ft height by a treadle. "The new arrival on our shelf is a home farming kit. It includes six buckets in which small plants grow in silicon-based material (no soil is needed) using only water.

We provide the set of seeds, fertilizer and a water tank etc for Rs 15,000 and people can use it for terrace farming," Yashachi Greens Private Limited director Manish Kumar said, adding, "Carpet grass grown on plastic which can be installed anywhere is also available for Rs 40-45 per square feet."

[Dhanuka Agritech launches herbicide to benefit sugarcane crops](#)

LUCKNOW: Dhanuka Agritech Limited, one of India's leading agrochemical formulation company of India has launched its much awaited herbicide-'SEMPRA' in Lucknow. SEMPRA is a product of Nissan Chemical Industries Ltd., Japan and has been launched for the first time in India by Dhanuka Agritech. The product is ecofriendly and is said to benefit sugarcane growing areas including Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Naidu.

The product has been evaluated and recommended by universities including UP Council of Sugarcane Research, Narendra Deva University of Agriculture and Technology, Faizabad (UP) and Vasantdada Sugar Institute (Maharashtra) etc.

Commenting on the launch of the new product, RG Agarwal, Group Chairman, Dhanuka Agritech Limited said, "In agriculture sector, sugarcane share is about 7% of total volume of agricultural output.

The national consumption for sugar which is the primary product of sugarcane is around 248 lakh MT while the current production is 250 lakh MT." It is estimated that by 2030, the national consumption will be around 330 lakh MT. "For almost two decades no herbicide has been introduced for sugarcane. Looking at the growing demand of sugarcane in

India, Dhanuka Agritech has developed a world class and revolutionary product-SEMPRA", he added.

MK. Dhanuka, Managing Director, Dhanuka Agritech Limited, said, "At Dhanuka Agritech Limited, we believe in developing innovative products for our customers. Our aim has always been to work for the farmer's prosperity and SEMPRA is a step in this direction. Our new product has been developed specially for control of Cyperus rotundus which is world's most difficult weed. With this launch, we are hopeful to become a favorite of sugarcane farmers & of sugar industry."

In India, more than 33% of agricultural production damage is caused by weeds. This in turn damages food production worth almost Rs 30,000 crore. In line with its aim of protecting the farmers and crops, Dhanuka Agritech has launched Sempra, a selective and systematic herbicide which comes with strong action and gets absorbed quickly for the control of Cyperus rotundus, increasing the yield of the crop to approximately 7-12 %.

The product will soon be available across India through a wide network of authorized dealers and distributors. The company has ambitious plans to market the new product through its training and educational activities. In this process, Dhanuka has already conducted 1200 field demos and shown the results to more than 25000 delighted farmers.

The company manufactures a wide range of farm input products to support the farmers. It has a pan-India presence through its marketing offices in all major states of India, with a network of more than 8,000 distributors and dealers selling to over 75,000 retailers across India reaching out to more than 10 million farmers. The company has technical tie-ups with 4 American and 4 Japanese companies.

Dhanuka Agritech is among the top five companies in India, in brand sales. With more than 200 registrations and 500 active SKUs, the company has one of the largest market penetrations. Dhanuka Agritech currently has 30 offices across India and 45 warehouses.

[Climate-smart agri debate from Feb 13](#)

RAJKOT: The Junagadh Agricultural University (JAU) will host a two-day national seminar on 'Water Management, and Climate Smart Agriculture' from February 13 where vice-chancellors from other universities of Gujarat and over 150 scientists from across the country

will lay guidelines to develop a climate-smart water management and agricultural policy for sustaining food security.

"Agriculture faces the challenge of fulfilling the ever-expanding global food demand in the context of changing climatic conditions that negatively affect food production. Higher temperatures, shifting seasons and rainfall patterns, more frequent and extreme floods and droughts, pests and diseases, greenhouse gas emissions, depleted soil fertility and stress on water resources wreak havoc on food production and farmers' livelihoods," said a JAU official.

"During the two-day seminar, experts will discuss the research outcome and available climatic resilient technologies to identify future techniques for researchers and recommendations for farmers and field workers," the official added.

[Union Budget must allocate more funds for agricultural research, TNAU vice-chancellor says](#)



MADURAI: The Union Budget should allocate more funds to promote research in agriculture, said Tamil Nadu Agricultural University vice-chancellor K Ramasamy on Thursday.

Speaking at the 36th Annual Conference and National Symposium on the "Challenges and Management Approaches for Crop Diseases of National Importance - Status and Prospects" at the Agricultural College and Research Institute here, Ramasamy said agriculture received lower funding in the Union Budget in comparison with other sectors.

He said government agencies like ICAR should assert their right on research. "Multinational companies are keen on starting centralized laboratories and involve in seed multiplication of GM crops. We respect

science, but in the name of science multinational companies can't dump things on India," he added.

Speaking on the occasion, P K Chakrabarty, assistant director general (Plant Protection & Bio-safety) of Indian Council of Agricultural Research genetic modification technology would throw open the opportunities of crop protection and resistance against plant diseases.

He pointed out that plant health become paramount in food security as 20 to 25 % of total food grain production of 265 million metric tonne suffer losses due to crop diseases.

At monetary level, it will be Rs 2 lakh crore per annum, equal to the amount set aside for defence budget by the country every year.

The loss occurs in spite of using 1.60 lakh tonne of pesticides as estimated by the government. Hence it is important that such loss is prevented so that production of food grains improves even if there is no increase in cultivation.

"When such loss is prevented, we will have enough food grains to feed Indian population which is estimated to touch 1.3 billion by 2030," he said.

"New diseases appear and old ones resurge with more vigour and there are challenges of climate change, mono-cropping and lack of domestic quarantine to prevent diseases spreading across," he said.

He stressed on the importance of developing the pesticide application technology to stop excessive use of pesticides while cultivating and promoting pollinators - insects that aid pollination.

Chakrabarty also insisted that there should be more research on integrated pest management, making it uniform across the crops.

"Genetic modification which is in testing will throw open more opportunities in crop protection that includes plant pathology and resistance against plant diseases", he added.

CPCRI to focus on coconut tissue culture to meet seedling demand

Development of a tissue culture protocol for coconut is the top priority for the Kasaragod-based Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI), according to its director.

P Chowdappa, Director of CPCRI, told *Business Line* on Wednesday that the total requirement of coconut seedlings in the country is around 10 million a year. However, the country produces only around 3.5 million seedlings. There is a huge gap of around 6.5 million seedlings, he said.

Stating that there is no technology protocol for coconut as of now, he said: “Development of tissue culture protocol for coconut is the top priority for us now.”

CPCRI, which is making efforts to develop a protocol for that, wants to involve different institutes of national level with funding from Department of Biotechnology for this purpose.

He said CPCRI recently conducted a workshop on ‘planting material production in coconut’ for evolving strategies for enhancing availability of quality coconut seedlings to meet the growing demand.

The workshop discussed the suggestion of developing technology for tissue culture of coconut for the rapid multiplication of planting materials in coconut, he said.

Other strategies such as strengthening the existing nurseries and seed gardens; and preparing inventory of existing mother palms in research stations and nurseries under state agriculture and horticulture departments, farmers’ gardens and private nurseries were also discussed at the workshop.

He said that delegates from different states representing agricultural universities, departments of agriculture and horticulture, entrepreneurs, farmers and non-governmental organisations participated in the workshop.

‘Make in India’ thrust can give a global edge

The sugar industry, with its current surplus production and depressed global prices, needs the impetus of a ‘Make in India’ budget. With an annual production of 25 million tonnes, it needs to be globally competitive. I feel the Government has a great opportunity to put into practice its stated intention of making more in India.

The industry hopes that the financial assistance for export of up to 2.5 million tonnes of raw sugar continues and import duty is hiked to 40 per cent to protect domestic mills, as global prices are at a low. To tackle domestic surplus and ensure cash flow to mills, sugar can be diverted to ethanol production for use in the ethanol-blended fuel programme. But the mills will have to be compensated for the revenue loss. Currently, the central excise duty on ethanol is around ₹5 a litre. The molasses excise duty of ₹750 a tonne has to be waived as an incentive.

The Centre should consider using the Sugar Development Fund and other agricultural support programmes to create a strategic sugar stock of 2 million tonnes to bring retail prices to reasonable levels and ensure that farmers also get their due for cane. This will prevent cane payment arrears to farmers and subsequent NPAs with banks.

Pricing policy of sugarcane should be brought on a par with other competing crops like wheat and paddy to check distortions. If a State government sets sugarcane price higher than the Fair and Remunerative Price fixed by the Centre, it should pay the balance. For instance, in the case of wheat and paddy, State governments pay farmers a bonus over and above the minimum support price fixed by the Centre. States can directly transfer the subsidy to farmers’ bank account as all cane payments to farmers are even now made through banks. The NDA Government recently allowed the Food Corporation of India to decide against procuring wheat and paddy in States that announce a bonus over the MSP.

Business Standard

Badal urges Centre to continue MSP regime

The Punjab CM says any change in this could lead to a serious unrest among farmers

[Punjab](#) Chief Minister [Parkash Singh Badal](#) on Thursday impressed upon Union [Agriculture](#) Minister [Radha Mohan Singh](#) to continue the minimum support price (MSP) regime for procurement.

Badal met Singh at Krishi Bhavan in New Delhi. He said for revival of agriculture sector, the continuation of procurement at MSP was the need of the hour.

He also said any change in this could lead to a serious unrest among farmers. Badal asked the minister to make necessary recommendations to the concerned quarters for continuing the system of price support mechanism to farmers.

Pleading the case of implementing Swaminathan's formula, which includes cost and 50 per cent profit, the chief minister said it was one of the viable solution to spur a turnaround in the agriculture economy of the country. He said it was also the major issue of National Democratic Alliance's agenda.

Badal also said for the success of crop diversification program, the Centre must evolve a mechanism for procurement of alternative crops such as maize and basmati by providing MSP to them.

Seeking crop insurance scheme for the farmers to protect them from vagaries of nature and climate change, the chief minister said it was the need of the hour, as due to squeezing margins of profit, agriculture was no longer a profitable venture now.

He also urged the Union minister to revise the norms for relief of damage to crops due to natural calamities thereby re-fixing compensation in case of complete crop loss to at least Rs 20,000 an acre instead of existing Rs 3,600 an acre, which was too meagre and inadequate.