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# THE HINDU

## Brightening the future with the sun and wind



The Renewable Energy (RE) Global Investor's Meet inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 15 invited participation in funding India's RE growth ambitions, which include almost 1,00,000 MW of growth in solar power in just seven years (about 40 per cent of today's total installed capacity) and some 50,000 MW of wind power. This is bold and ambitious to say the least. The event was a success, finding investment commitments for some 2, 60,000 MW of RE!

But a serious question facing Indians is whether at a time when most people are struggling to keep the lights on at home, because of the shortage of power, do citizens really care about carbon emissions and climate change, which have become the primary rationale for pushing green energy? Also if Indians are as notoriously price-sensitive as pundits claim, how much of a premium will they be willing to pay for RE?

Let's not beat around the bush — RE, attractive as it might sound and improving in price performance every year, does require support. Support isn't inappropriate, especially given the benefits of RE, but there are also externalities of another kind including implications for the rest of the grid. This needs deeper analysis.

### **Contextualising RE**

In the West, utilities are already worrying about the Utility Death Spiral, where RE and storage and smart grids mean some consumers reduce, if not

cut off, their utility purchases. This raises costs for the rest of the grid, which must still keep the system in balance and stable, and also serve the least profitable consumers. This prompts others to exit the system, and so on. While India isn't quite there yet, we must first understand that an end consumer opting for RE and finding it worthwhile is based on his/her comparing retail tariff with generation costs, which aren't comparable. First, distribution has its own costs, even after accounting for savings in distribution losses. Second, retail tariffs for so-called paying customers (especially commercial and industrial) are artificially high, since they cross-subsidise other users.

Renewables in India are different from renewables deployed in the U.S. and Europe, and understanding the differences is the key to viable policies. The triad of "usual" challenges of renewables remains in India, such as: intermittency/variability; location-specific potential (concentrated in areas sometimes away from consumers or the grid); and higher costs. However, there are specific differences and needs that demand deeper analysis for the long-term viability of renewable energy.

In India, our peak demand is mostly in the evening, and the sun surely isn't very bright at 7 p.m. Storage technologies are niche and expensive today, so solar power helps with energy (kilowatt-hour) needs, but not with our capacity needs. Wind is not much better, given its seasonality.

One of the typical calculations that power systems operators do is estimate how much RE the grid can handle. Typical figures from elsewhere are in the range of 20-30 per cent, with more requiring significant investments in transmission or peaker plants. India is different because its grid is very weak and unstable, and instead of having a reasonable reserve margin (which is typically 15-20 per cent in the West), there is a shortfall in the grid, officially in the range of 5 per cent or so, but actually much higher. The grid is kept afloat through massive "load-shedding" (feeder-level cut outs of supply).

There are other technical reasons why the Indian grid is weak, including lack of ancillary services (systems designed to keep the grid stable, instead of just pricing kilowatt-hours), and even a lack of time-of-day pricing for bulk procurement of power. There are few peaker plants (which would operate only some 5-10 per cent of hours in a year), since there isn't sufficient incentive for these. Without incentives for plants that can ramp up quickly

but may not get used much, how will the grid handle 20 per cent renewables?

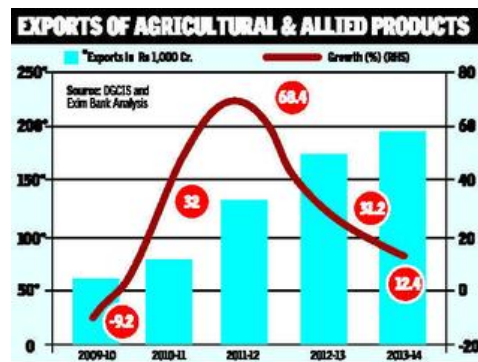
Even worse, the types of plants capable of fast ramping are limited in near-term growth in India — hydropower (due to land and social/environmental challenges) and natural gas (due to supply constraints). Hydropower has an additional constraint when considering peaking or storage — its additional duty for water management (irrigation) limits when water can be stored versus released. Also, natural gas has overwhelmingly been built for baseload needs (with combined cycle plants), which cannot meet peaking requirements.

### **Making RE sustainable**

Renewables can and should play a greater role in our sustainable energy future, but we need proper accounting and specialised effort to understand their grid implications and scalability. As part of a recent book on *Making Renewable Power Sustainable in India*, launched by Piyush Goyal, Minister for Power, Renewables, and Coal, we at Brookings India identified a number of policy imperatives for making RE sustainable. While the technical details need working out, especially in terms of regulations, support and incentive mechanisms, grid management, etc., we also identified a need to ramp up skills and innovation. All solar cells are imported today — this shouldn't remain so. The first step towards making RE sustainable is a nuanced examination of the issues and trade-offs, and dialogue among all the stakeholders, especially state utilities, which ultimately deliver electricity to consumers.

Renewables have a bright future, and must play a leading role in India's power security and growth. They aren't a silver bullet, but a vital tool in the broader spectrum of India's energy future. Most importantly, renewables should not be viewed in isolation, as a drop-in supply-side solution, but rather as part of a transition if not transformation of the grid, which includes variable and dynamic pricing, distributed generation, storage technologies and smart grids. If RE is referred to as the energy source of the future, that future is well-nigh.

## Growth in export of agri products slide



Growth in exports of agricultural products is seen sliding, causing a concern.

Decline in commodity prices, glut in global markets, and import ban by several countries have led to a slowdown in agri exports, after registering a consistent growth..

According to available data, the year-on-year growth in agricultural exports has reduced considerably in 2012-13 and 2013-14. Though in absolute terms, agri products exports have increased to Rs.1.96 lakh crore in 2013-14 from Rs.1.74 lakh crore in 2012-13, it is significantly lower than 68.4 per cent growth (y-o-y) registered in 2011-12 (Rs.1.33 lakh crore in 2011-12 against Rs.78,854 crore in 2010-11).

“Post global economic slowdown in 2008-09, agricultural exports have been instrumental in keeping India’s export afloat. When most primary commodities had registered slower or negative growth, agricultural products exports from India had registered a steady growth, which is now seen falling,” said Exim Bank of India Chief Manager Suman Sarkar said. Commerce Ministry data until December, 2014, indicate a negative growth in exports of a number of agricultural products, including tea, cereals (except non-basmati rice), spices, fruits and vegetables, tobacco and oil meals.

Guar gum shows a steep fall after rising steadily in recent years. Meat and meat products, rice (non-basmati), cashew and oilseeds, however, continued to register a healthy growth. Exports of basmati rice also have registered a negative growth, mainly on account of ban imposed by Iran recently.

“Besides decrease in global demand for certain commodities, exports have been significantly affected by factors, including inferior quality and presence

of pests and chemicals. Recent ban by Saudi Arabia and the EU has had a negative impact,” Ms. Sarkar said . She said a decline in trade might have a significant impact on production levels as well as on the income of farmers.

“The decline in growth is a concern from the point of view of forex earnings. Agri exports account for around 12-14 per cent of our total exports and, hence, they are critical from our balance of payments position. The reason for lower exports is due to high production levels in other countries and domestic issues like quality. Also, prices have come down in global markets which makes it difficult for Indian exporters to compete,” said CARE Ratings Deputy Managing Director Rajesh Mokashi. According to Mr. Mokashi, agri exports are important as most of this demand is based on the pull factor rather than the push factor. “There are limited options to support such exports. Exploring more markets is the way out,” he said.

Despite setbacks, Russia’s decision to open its markets for Indian agricultural products can be a game changer.

## **Ragi: the Mighty millet**



Ragi, also called as finger millet, is one of the most important variety in millet species. Historically and culturally, the gruel made from ragi had been considered as an indispensable food item.

But somewhere down the line, with the lifestyle changes, rice and wheat gained prominence over ragi.

Dr. G. Nammalvar, farming activist and P. Satheesh, head, the Deccan Development Society, Hyderabad have played key role in popularising millet as an everyday food, to the extent that it is available in major food outlets in the metros.

### **Nutritional value**

Ragi is rich in calcium which builds bones and teeth. It is also rich in other minerals and fibres. It contains good amounts of Vitamin B1 and B2 which help in different biological functions. The high calcium, high fibre, low fat and low glycemic content of this malted grain helps in controlling blood glucose level. It is considered as the coolest options for people with diabetes. And it also tastes good.

If we have to compare ragi and rice: rice is a poor source of calcium with a value of 10 mg where as ragi has an enormous amount of calcium with 344 mg per 100 gms. Among all the millets, ragi is easily digested.

Ragi requires only a fifth of the water needed for cultivation of rice. They need no pesticides, are hardy and can grow in any soil conditions. With their extensive root systems, they improve soil fertility and thrive in dry regions. For instance Thar Desert in Rajasthan gets less than 100 millimetres of rainfall annually but millets can grow here and is the staple food here. Millets have long lasting shelf-life and are drought resistant.

### ***RAGI ROTI RECIPE***

#### ***Things needed***

***Finger millet flour - 500g,***

***Water and salt***

#### ***Method of preparation***

***Take a handful of Ragi flour, and add water to it to make soft dough***

***Squeeze the dough into a lemon- sized ball***

***Take a wooden board, and sprinkle some flour on it.***

***Place the dough-ball on the board, press gently with both hands, and pat into a round roti (disc).***

***Heat an iron pan and gently place the roti on the heated pan***

***Sprinkle a little water on the roti to cover it evenly***

***Roast it on an even flame on both sides till it is cooked.***

*Dosa, kheer, laddu, murukku, uppuma can also be prepared from ragi*

## **Laptops distributed to Revenue Inspectors**



Laptops were distributed to 11 Revenue Inspectors on Tuesday as a part of the e-governance project being implemented in the district.

### **e-governance project**

Under the project, applicants could apply for certificates such as community, income, nativity, first graduate and destitute widow issued by the revenue authorities at public service centres online.

The service centres are functioning at the offices of the Revenue Inspectors, taluk offices, 54 primary agricultural cooperative societies and 35 poverty eradication societies functioning under the Puduvazhu Scheme, Collector Darez Ahamed said.

Applications filed at the service centres are scanned and uploaded to the online system.

The applications would be verified by village administrative officers, revenue inspectors, special tahsildhars and tahsildars before issuing the certificates with the electronic signature of the tahsildar concerned.

Applicants need not apply again for such certificates for other members of his/ her family and can simply quote the original application numbers to get the certificates.

So far, 1.85 lakhs certificates have been issued through the e-governance project.

The authenticity of the certificates can be verified by scanning them using a software.

The laptops were being given to the Revenue Inspectors for the effective functioning of the system.

Mr. Darez Ahamed handed over the laptops to the Revenue Inspectors, the press release said.

### **KSCADC projects for Rs.31.63 crore in Kollam**

Fisheries Minister K. Babu has said that the Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC) is implementing 55 educational infrastructure development projects to the tune of Rs.54.72 crore across the State.

He was speaking while laying the foundation stone for a new building under the project for Arya Samajam High School at Puthenthura, near Neendakara, here on Tuesday.

The project has been launched with support from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). The building, to be constructed at a cost of Rs.1.17 crore, will have an area of 577 sq m comprising 10 classrooms.

The Minister said that apart from the Araya Samajam School, the KSCADC would implement the project at Government Regional Fisheries Technical High School, Karunagapally, at a cost of Rs.3.15 crore.

The Minister said the KSCADC had submitted a proposal to NABARD for the construction of a building for Rs.2.94 crore for the Mayyanad high school in the district.

He said the KSCADC was implementing projects for Rs.31.63 crore in Kollam district. Minister for Labour Shibu Baby John presided over the function.

### **Aquarium Reforms Bill scuttled, says former Fisheries Minister**



Former Fisheries Minister S. Sarma has accused the UDF government of scuttling the Aquarium Reforms Bill, which was prepared by the previous LDF government with an intention of ensuring ownership rights for fishermen over the marine territory that they fish.

He was speaking while inaugurating a one-day seminar on 'Fisheries sector and coastal area development', organised by the AKG Centre for Research and Studies here on Tuesday as part of the CPI(M) State Conference.

Mr. Sarma lamented that the LDF government was unable to implement the policy that was synonymous to that of providing agricultural land for the farmer, which had been introduced by EMS Namboodiripad as part of land reforms. He, however, took pride for having taken the lead in implementing development activities worth Rs. 3,000 crore in the sector during the LDF rule. This was in contrast to projects worth Rs. 650 crore that were undertaken since the formation of the State until 2006, he claimed.

He also alleged that the UDF government has degraded the State Fishermen Debt Relief Commission into a powerless entity. Unrest was growing among the coastal community owing to the constant neglect of the government, Mr. Sarma cautioned.

Speaking on the occasion, Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) Vice Chancellor B. Madhusoodana Kurup stressed on the pitiable conditions the fishermen lived in despite the vital role they played in the economic growth of the State. "The sector generated nearly Rs. 4,000 crore in the domestic market, besides Rs. 4.8 crore through exports. While the State benefited by at least Rs. 1 lakh through the efforts of each fisherman, their annual income stood at a lowly Rs. 50,000. Moreover, while the State boasted of having the highest Human Development Index in the country, such progress has not reflected upon the fishing community," he said.

### **Price rise expected in March-April: farmers advised to stock cumbu, ragi**

The Agro Market Intelligence and Business Promotion Centre (AMI&BPC), Tiruchi, has advised farmers to store cumbu and ragi and sell them in March-April when the price is expected to rise.

Econometric analysis of the AMI&BPC indicated that the price of cumbu would rule in the range of Rs.1, 500 to 1,700 a quintal and of fully cleaned ragi would rule around Rs.1,800-2,000 a quintal during March-April.

The advisory was issued based on the analysis of price of cumbu over the last 12 years at the Villupuram regulated market and the price of ragi for the last 10 years at Tindivanam regulated market.

The analysis was conducted by the AMI&BPC back office at the Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development Studies (CARDS) in the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

The current price of cumbu is Rs.1, 350 a quintal and ragi is Rs.1,750 a quintal.

In Tamil Nadu, cumbu is cultivated mostly in two seasons: May-June and October-November.

It is sown mainly during October-November based on the rainfall received during the northeast monsoon. In 2012-13, cumbu was grown in an area of about 0.43 lakh hectares with a production of 0.57 lakh tonnes.

The average productivity was 1.31 tonnes per hectare. Villupuram district has the highest production of 11 lakh tonnes followed by Thoothukudi, Cuddalore, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Madurai, and Theni districts.

The area under cumbu declined by seven per cent during 2012-13 compared to 2011-12, the advisory said.

During 2012-13, ragi was grown in an area of about 0.70 lakh hectares in Tamil Nadu with a production of 1.38 lakh tonnes. Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri, Vellore, Salem and Erode districts accounted for 96 per cent of the total area and 95 per cent of the State's production.

The ragi crop is sown during September and October, the release said.



## **Lost in translation: Is NITI Aayog a commission or an institution?**

Some members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance have a question on NITI Aayog, the body that has replaced the Planning

Commission. Is NITI Aayog an ‘aayog’, or commission, or is it merely an ‘institution’, as the acronym NITI — National Institution for Transforming India — says?

Asked this question at a meeting of the standing committee last week, Sindhushree Khullar, CEO of NITI Aayog, is learnt to have said in a lighter vein, “Abhi to bachchi paida hui hai. Usey sabke sahyog aur samarthan ki zaroorat hai (The baby has just been born. She needs everyone’s support and cooperation).”

Bhratruhari Mahtab, BJD Lok Sabha member from Cuttack who sources said had pointed out the apparent confusion, is learnt to have told representatives of the NITI Aayog, “I will refer to it only as ‘NITI’ and not ‘NITI Ayog’.” Interestingly, as the meeting progressed, Khullar too referred only to ‘NITI’, sources who were present told The Indian Express.

The sources said Committee chairman M Veerappa Moily made the point that “it would have been better if this decision (to create the NITI Aayog) was taken after a discussion in Parliament and ascertaining the views of all parties.”

Moily, the sources said, asked Khullar, “There is no clarity on many issues... Are you present here as CEO of NITI Aayog or Secretary of Planning?” Khullar is learnt to have responded, “Sir, I am representing both.”

BJP Lok Sabha MP from Godda, Nishikant Dubey, reportedly wanted to know, “What will be the role of National Development Council and Inter-State Council in the new set up?”

S S Ahluwalia, BJP MP from Darjeeling, is learnt to have asked officials, “Have you done a critical analysis of the functioning of Planning Commission? We need to know whether its agenda was exhausted, or was it failed?”

Khullar reportedly told the members that the Hindi word neeti meant ‘policy’, but they pointed out that NITI was a specific acronym, not a word.

Fourteen members were present at the meeting, which focused on the NITI Aayog. The Committee is scheduled to meet again on Wednesday.

Moily, Mahtab, Ahluwalia, Dubey and Khullar all declined to speak on the record. Sources said former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who has also been chairman of the Planning Commission, and finance minister, did not give his views on the matter.

The NITI Aayog will be an advisory body, and the power to allocate funds will lie with the Finance Ministry. The Planning Commission could allocate funds to union ministries and state governments.

### **Meditation helps improve sleep quality, lifestyle**

Regular meditation may improve sleep quality and also prevent insomnia among the older people, finds new research.

Mindfulness meditation practices – in which people learn to pay better attention to what they are feeling physically and mentally from moment to moment — resulted in improved sleep quality for older adults with moderate sleep disturbance in a clinical trial.

“According to our findings, mindfulness meditation appears to have a role in addressing the prevalent burden of sleep problems among older adults,” said David Black from University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Moderate sleep disturbances in older adults are associated with higher levels of fatigue, disturbed mood such as depressive symptoms and a reduced quality of life.

The researchers conducted the small clinical trial in Los Angeles in 2012 and their analysis included 49 individuals (average age 66).

The trial included 24 individuals who took part in a standardised mindful awareness practices (MAPs) intervention and 25 individuals who participated in a sleep hygiene education (SHE) intervention.

Participants in the MAPs group showed improvement compared to those in the SHE group.

The MAPs group also showed improvement as compared to the SHE group on secondary measures of symptoms of insomnia, depression, fatigue interference and its severity.



## THE TIMES OF INDIA

### **World cereal production at an all-time high**

World cereal production reached a new all-time record of nearly 2,534 million tonnes (MT) in 2014, beating the previous record of the 2013 by over 13 MT, according to latest estimates put out by the UN affiliated Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). In one decade, global cereal production has gone up by almost 25%, setting all-time high records in five years out of 10.

Are these bountiful harvest leading to reduction of global hunger? There are over 805 million hungry people in the world according to FAO estimates for 2012-14. That is down about 100 million in a decade — the same decade that saw just cereal production go up by nearly 500 MT and world population grow by about 700 million.

Indian cereal production was 245.5 MT in 2013-14, also a record, registering an uptick of nearly 33% over a decade, according to agriculture ministry estimates. Both wheat (96 MT) and rice (106.5 MT) were produced at record breaking levels.

While favourable weather conditions have boosted production, higher demand from growing economies and use of cereals for animal feed are underlying global trends, according to Shenggen Fan, director of Washington based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

In fact, according to the FAO, global food demand is expected to rise 60% by 2050, Fan told TOI. As a result of the record breaking global harvest, year ending stocks are at an all-time high of nearly 623 MT. Another consequence of the series of record harvests with not so bad years in

between is that prices of cereals — wheat, rice and coarse grains — are down sharply, reflecting big stocks and good prospects for 2015. Globally 1104 MT of cereals would be used for food consumption, while 876 MT for feeding animals, which will ultimately be consumed as meat. The reasons for hunger in the world are not solely based on cereal production or trade flows, asserts Emilia Casella of the UN World Food Programme.

"Poverty is a main reason for hunger. Even where food is plentiful, if people cannot afford to buy it then they will go hungry. Lack of investment in agriculture also has an impact," Casella said.

### **Relaxation in Tenancy Act benefits over 26,000 farmers**

As many as 26,864 farmers from Nashik district have benefitted after the state government relaxed the condition on transfer of land under the Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, 1948, last year. It has helped the collectorate clear 80% of the cases registered with it.

Earlier, the landowners had to seek government clearance for transferring land as they fell under the Act. It had restrained them from transferring the land to other parties without permission from the state government. The government made amendments to the Act and decided to relieve all such landholders who have been tilling the land for more than 10 years at least.

"Since the condition was relaxed, large numbers of farmers started filing their applications. So far, the administration has cleared up to 80% of the cases," said B H Palve, additional district collector.

As many as 30,424 farmers from the district had applied for clearing the 7/12 land extract, which had remark by the government, thereby restricting the transfer of land.

Most beneficiaries are from Igatpuri, Niphad and Yeola. In Igatpuri 3,347 farmers benefitted from the new clause.

### **Punjab plans agri promotion bureau**

To introduce single window system for farmers, Punjab has decided to set up 'Bureau Of Agriculture Promotion' in the state. A spokesperson in the chief minister's office said that it would be on the lines of bureau of investment

promotion and would work to give further fillip to farming sector in the state.

The bureau would provide all facilities to the farmers under a single roof for developing the agriculture as a more remunerative proposition. Likewise, the bureau would also act as a catalyst for research and design activities in agriculture besides promoting new farm practices on scientific lines in the state.

It has also been decided to promote Punjab as a hub of litchi cultivation. The CM has also asked the agriculture department to set up a litchi estate at Pathankot. Acceding to demand made by a delegation of litchi growers of Punjab, which called on the CM Parkash Singh Badal a few days back, he has said that the estate must be equipped with an ultra-modern laboratory and a state-of-the-art nursery.

Likewise, he has also asked the department to constitute a litchi company for the trading of the fruit from the estate besides providing pack house facility to ensure grading and packing of litchis. A litchi board will be set up in the state for giving boost to the cultivation of the stone fruit.

Also, the agriculture department will come up with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) at Pathankot to be manned by horticulture. An officer will be designated for promoting litchi cultivation in the Pathankot belt.

### [Mangoes make pricey entry into markets](#)

Mangoes make many mouths water, but the first batch of the king of fruits is presently drawing tears, with prices fit for royalty—a single Mankurad is Rs 200, while Pairi and Alphonso are at Rs 100 a piece.

"Pre-seasonal rates are always expensive," says Neville Alfonso, assistant director, department of agriculture, "As the season progresses and more produce come into the market, the rates will decrease."

A R Dessai, senior scientist, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Goa, explains that early flowering due to weather changes and induced ripening by some unscrupulous farmers are why the summertime fruit is already in the market. "Nearly 5% of the crop has already been harvested and is available in markets of Margao, Panaji and Mapusa," says Dessai.

But the cost of the ripened fruit has few buyers. "I have 25 dozen mangoes

for sale, but only a few takers," says Nissar Ahmed Nandihamdi. Another vendor, Abid Kalaigar adds, "Currently only Goan produce from Siolim, Mapusa, Bicholim, Valpoi, Sakhali, etc are available. The stock from Bengaluru, Belgaum and Ratnagiri is expected in the second quarter of the year. Though there's lots of produce there are not enough takers."

Some vendors are playing it safe. Tabrez K K, one of the biggest fruit sellers in the Panaji market, claims, "People are willing to pay insane amounts of money for mangoes, yet I haven't bought any." Imtiyaz Dalal adds, "Most of us are not taking a risk and will wait till April-May to sell mangoes when the rates are at Rs 300-400 per kilo."

Margao-based businessman Mustaq Mulla is also waiting for summer—"The present prices are daunting. I will wait till mid-April to indulge."

A retired teacher, requesting anonymity, says in conclusion, "Though mangoes in the Margao market look good, I am not buying any since the season hasn't started in full swing yet."

## THE HINDU Business Line

### **AP Govt directs bankers to complete 2nd phase of debt redemption by Feb 23**



The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N Chandrababu Naidu, has directed bankers to complete the second phase of debt redemption by February 23.

At a review meeting with bankers on farm loans late on Monday, the Chief Minister said that bankers were told to identify the beneficiaries for



redemption and ensure that the benefit of debt redemption scheme reaches them.

He said that bankers should take initiative to close loans worth Rs. 50,000 or below under phase - I and asked them to expedite the process under second phase.

Under the second phase, he suggested the appointment of a nodal officer from the agriculture department who will coordinate with bankers and complete the process of debt redemption to the beneficiaries.

The Chief Minister said that the Government has come across instances where non-farm loans were also waived off by bankers.

He said the Government's intention was to relieve farmers of the debt burden and ensure the benefit reaches eligible farmers.

The bankers were told to inform farmers about the eligibility for this debt redemption programme.

The Chief Minister stated that despite several challenges, he has gone forward with the massive debt redemption programme.

Naidu said Andhra Pradesh has excelled in implementing Jan Dhan Yojana and suggested bankers and the Government to work together on educating people on improving their savings through a special campaign.

## **Indian grapes sparkle in Europe, Australian wines**



**Seedless grapes from India have become an integral part of certain French sparkling wines and Australian wines. Even as some grape exporters are engaged in setting up sustainable business practices with European importers, many say some varieties have found favour in France and Australia despite both origins being major grape producers.**

India is one of the largest exporters of grapes. The Thompson Seedless variety, which are green in colour, and Sharad Seedless and Jumbo variety, black coloured ones, are exported chiefly to the Netherlands. From there, Indian grapes are distributed throughout Europe, with a sizeable amount landing in Australia and France.

“Grapes from India are used for blending certain wines in France,” said Sopan Kanchan, Chairman of Grape Growers Federation of India. “Exports of concentrated grape juice and even dried grapes have shot up considerably from Nasik, Sangli and Ahmednagar to the Netherlands and the European Union,” Kanchan told *BusinessLine* .

Ashwin Rodrigues, a wine maker who used to work in Australia, before turning manufacturer in India, says grapes from Nashik, Sangli and Pimpalgaon are regularly used in making Sauvignon Blanc, sparkling wines, white blends, and some rose wines in Australia.

While grapes from China, India, and other tropical countries are used for light dry wines, fine red wines are generally made from grapes grown in France’s Bordeaux and Rhone regions.

### **Exports resume**

In 2010, the European Union had stayed grape imports from India, given the excessive chemicals on the fruit. Kanchan said the EU wanted more chemicals to be monitored, and had hiked the range from 98 to 167. He said that the matter had been sorted out amicably and that exports resumed by end-2012. IG International Director Tarun Arora added that repeat orders from the UK for the Thompson Seedless variety of grapes was a welcome step. He added that the Jumbo variety of black grapes had a huge market in the Gulf countries.

In 2013-14, India exported 17,212.25 million tonnes of grapes to the United Arab Emirates, its fourth highest export destination. Exports were valued

at Rs. 129.62 crore, according to data on the APEDA (Agriculture and processed fruit products export development authority) website.

### **Top destinations**

The European Union is the largest international market for Indian grapes. In 2013-14, India exported 46,136.91 mt of grapes to the Netherlands, valued at Rs. 527 crore. While grape exports from India to the Netherlands were the highest, Russia secured the second spot, accounting for 24,503 mt.

“The grape harvest from Maharashtra, specifically designed for exports to the European market, has begun early this month,” said Kanchan. “It is normally around the second week of February but this year, it commenced during late January given the good crop,” he said.

“Last year, our exports were 4,200 containers (of 12-14 tonnes of produce each),” said the Chairman of the Grape Growers Federation of India, adding that many exporters were keen to engage with European importers so as to set up sustainable business practices.

# **Business Standard**

## **Badal gives nod to set up agri promotion bureau**



Punjab Chief Minister [Parkash Singh Badal](#) has given a nod to constitute the 'Bureau of Agriculture Promotion' in the state, to provide single-window system to farmers.

The bureau would provide all the facilities to farmers under single roof for developing the agriculture as a far more remunerative proposition. It will also act as a catalyst for research and design activities in agriculture, besides promoting new farm practices on scientific lines in the state.

According to the decision, the chief minister has asked officers to constitute the bureau on the lines of the 'Bureau of Investment Promotion'.

In another significant decision aimed at developing the state as a hub of Litchi cultivation, Badal has also asked the agriculture department to set up Litchi estate at Pathankot. Acceding to demand made by a delegation of Litchi growers of the state a few days back, Badal has said this estate must be equipped with ultra-modern laboratory and state-of-the-art nursery. He has also asked the department to constitute a Litchi Company for the trading of fruit from the estate, besides providing the pack house facility to ensure grading and packing of Litchis in it.

Badal had also asked officers to set up the Litchi board in the state to give boost to the cultivation of this fruit.

Badal has also asked the agriculture department to set up [Krishi Vigyan Kendra](#) (KVK) in Pathankot to be manned by the experts of Horticulture. He has also ordered that a special officer must be designated for promoting Litchi cultivation in the Pathankot belt.

"It is the high time that the state government must make endeavors for tapping the enormous potential of Litchi cultivation in this region" he said.