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THE HINDU

The journey of little millets



Little millet, also known as Small millet, is a species of millet commonly cultivated in southern parts of India.

(Common names of little millet in different languages are: in Bengali : Sama, Gujarati : Gajro, Hindi is called Kuri, Kannada is same, in Marathi it is Save, in Oriya it is called as Suan, in Punjabi it is swank, in Tamil it is called Samai and in Telugu it is Samalu)

World's food

According to references available with Pristine and Sahaja organics, an NGO which have brought out a book titled “Millet in your meals,” sponsored by National Bank for agriculture and rural development there are about 6,000 varieties of millets throughout the world with grains varying in colours from pale yellow, gray, white, and red. Archaeologists say that foxtail millet is so old that no wild plant of the species is known to exist today.

It also says that the grain has been a part of the human food system from time immemorial. According to the book, many types of millet have been found in Harappan & Mohenjodaro archaeological sites. Africa, the cradle of human civilization, the Mayans, Incas & Aztecs were known to use millets in their culinary courses.

Hindu vedic scriptures make references to the millets in Sathapatha Brahmana. In ‘Shakuntala,’ Kalidasa has spoken about a sage Kanva who pours foxtail millet while bidding farewell to Shakuntala in Dushanta’s court.

The oldest historical roots of millet are to be found in China, where it was considered a sacred crop. The leader of the Shang Dynasty in the 2nd

millennium BC was known as Hou Chi 'The ruler of Millet.' The book says that people of Northern India were also cultivating millet, during the prehistoric times. Millet has travelled throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa where it became a staple. It further became typical food of the Sumerian diet about 2500 BC. Even the Hebrew bible makes mentions about the humble millet.

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were said to have included millet among their treasured plants. Through trading with Eritrea and Somalia circa 3000 BC, the early Egyptians learned from the Africans how to cultivate millet, which would grow well in the dry Sahara, where wheat and barley were unable to thrive. The interesting fact is that this is also pointed out in the Bible, and was used during those days to prepare bread.

Self-pollinating crop

Millet is a self pollinating crop. Small, yellow and gluten free. Little millet is another reliable catch crop as it is resistant against extreme agro-climatic conditions. It has received comparatively little attention from plant breeders. The plant varies in height between 30 and 90 cm. It is mostly grown along with other millets, pulses and oilseeds. The seeds of little millet are smaller than those of common millet. Eating little millet in summer is the best way to beat the heat. Hence, it is called "cool food." The millet grains are rich in dietary fibre, protein and minerals and guards us against diabetes, blood pressure, constipation and obesity. Its easy digestible property makes it an ideal crunchy breakfast snack for all age groups.

A.P. invites investments in farm sector



Agriculture Minister Prattipati Pulla Rao has invited investments in agriculture and allied sectors by private companies to increase yields and make farming profitable in Andhra Pradesh.

Companies should take up demonstration adopting 5,000 to 25,000 acres with the aim of increasing yield by two to five quintals and the government will provide Rs.5,000 per acre, he said.

He was addressing a conference on “Agricultural investment opportunities in Andhra Pradesh,” organised by the Agriculture Department, Small Farmers Agri-business Consortium (SFAC) of the Government of India and FICCI here.

CMDs and representatives of 25 companies are participating. The State has opportunities to set up warehouses, seed and fertilizer units at international standards, he said.

The State stood first in fisheries with more than 50 per cent exports.

The Chief Minister had discussions with companies like WALMART, Jubilant and Pepsico to explore horticulture potential.

He said companies may come out with proposals for entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with the State government after a meeting with the Chief Minister. Under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVV) State and Central governments would offer subsidies.

Managing Director of SFAC Parvesh Sharma said the basic aim of Public Private Partnership in Integrated Agriculture Development was to increase the primary producer’s share in the value chain from 25-30 per cent to the international average of 50 per cent.

While the government would contribute 50 per cent of the cost of projects, the remaining should come from private companies or from farmers.

CMD of NSPL M. Prabhakara Rao said providing market linkages would benefit farmers, investors and consumers. After participation for three years in Maharashtra, his company would submit proposals for fourth year.

Panchayat Raj Minister Ch. Ayyanna Patrudu, HRD Minister Ganta Srinivasa Rao, Minister for Labour K. Achhen Naidu and Agriculture Commissioner K. Madhusudhana Rao spoke.

Special Chief Secretary, Planning, S P Tucker, was present. Ruchira Saini from FICCI coordinated.

Wheat Field Day celebrated

Wheat Field Day was celebrated under the aegis of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), Regional Station at Wellington near Coonoor on Tuesday.

M.Sivasamy, head of the station, listed the advantages of cultivating wheat as an alternate viable and profitable crop. Stating that it was ideal for cultivation through organic methods, he said that it does not need any chemicals either to control diseases or pests. Wheat can also be cultivated as an inter crop in coconut, mango and banana plantations and as a mixed crop with tapioca, coriander, marigold etc. O.P.S.Khola, Head, Indian Institute of soil and water conservation, said that wheat can help enhance food security in places like The Nilgiris. It can also ensure the physical well-being of the people and conserve water.

G. Ramamurthy, Head, United Planters Association of Southern India-Krishi Vigyan Kendra, recalled that the people of The Nilgiris for long depended only on traditional crops like wheat, ragi and samai.

A field demonstration was held to popularise a recently released high yielding, multiple disease resistant wheat variety developed by the regional station and the TNAU.

Millets Fest from Feb. 27

The fourth edition of Millet Fest-2015 will be held at the People's Plaza here between February 27 and March 1, to promote the use of protein-rich millets, crops that are drought, pest and disease-resistant and need very little water to grow.

The focus of the festival is to sensitise urban and rural communities to the benefits of incorporating millets into their daily diet and create market linkages for farmers producing these crops.

The Millet Fest-2015 is being organised by the Department of Agriculture, Government of Telangana, Prof. Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University (PJTSAU) and the College of Home Science.

Agriculture Commissioner Priyadarshini and Director of Research D. Raji Reddy said that between 1966 and 2006, 44 per cent of millet-cultivated areas were occupied by other crops, signifying an extraordinary loss to India's food and farming systems.

They said that declining State support in terms of crop loans and crop insurance had significantly contributed to the decline and fall of millets in the Indian agriculture system.

Unless this is halted through a slew of policy and financial incentives, millets might disappear from the agrarian landscape of India over the next 50 years, they said.

Indoor aquaculture prevents pollution: researchers



Researchers in Marine Biology, Fisheries and Aquaculture are of the view that indoor aquaculture will help preventing pollution and improving quality of fish and shrimp produce.

The practice is already adopted by a few countries where prospective farmers are engaged in fish and shrimp culture in indoor tanks which will save water and prevent spread of viruses. There is a need to enlighten farmers on enclosed aquaculture, the experts said.

Scientists, researchers, students and farmers who attended Aqua Aquaria India 2015 which concluded here on Sunday, discussed about the problems faced by the farmers. They shared ideas relating to best practices and participated in lively debates on the possibilities of indoor aquaculture.

“Indoor aquaculture will prevent pollution in groundwater, soil and environment. This will also ensure protection from certain diseases. Aquaculture taken up in containers requires less water and will have disease resistance,” said a Marine Biology researcher V. Satish.

A Master’s degree holder in Fisheries Sciences, K. Aravind, said that farmers have taken up indoor aquaculture in United States of America, Europe, Israel and other countries. He stressed the need for introducing indoor culture which has been proved more productive.

A farmer, Ch. Stayanarayana, said there was land scarcity in many districts for taking up aquaculture and the agriculture farmers are objecting for fish and shrimp tanks citing salinity and groundwater pollution.

“In future there will be severe land and water problem. We have to adopt latest technologies to improve quality, avoid viruses and improve market,” said an MPEDA officer.

“We can prevent birds, direct sunlight, rain water, weed and algae in indoor ponds which will go a long way in reducing the incidence of diseases. Indoor ponds can be completely sterilised before taking up cultivation every time so that farmers can do culture with minimum drugs,” said the official.

ACCIF to help in development of 500 villages

The Andhra Chamber of Commerce and Industry Federation (ACCIF) came forward to help Andhra Pradesh government in creating civic infrastructure in 500 villages across the State as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

It has also offered to conduct entrepreneurship and employment training programs through its focus group called ‘NextGen’, and facilitate best agricultural practices through its affiliated entity National Organic Farmers’ Association (NOFA).

ACCIF president M. Murali Krishna said in a press release that companies such as KCP Sugars, Avanti Seeds and Nuziveedu Seeds and some of the leading entrepreneurs, like Chukkapalli R.K. Prasad, P. Veeraiiah Chowdary, Vallabhaneni Sudhakar Chowdary and Puttagunta Satish, took up development in villages adopted by them.

Details of such CSR activities were informed to Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu in a high-level meeting held in Hyderabad on February 23 and he promised to take necessary steps for giving the villages a facelift with the help of corporate entities.

Mr. Murali Krishna invited interested companies and non-government organisations to join the initiative to strengthen the hands of Chief Minister whose vision is to transform the State into a model for others.

Ayyanna Patrudu does some plain speaking on agriculture

At a conference on 'agriculture investment opportunities in Andhra Pradesh', where some 25 companies participated, Panchayat Raj Minister Ch. Ayyanna Patrudu did some plain speaking.

Stating that farmers would be highly successful if co-operation was extended to them and they were educated, he detailed the issues bogging down agriculture. Since land holdings were small - between one and three acres - reducing investment by farmers was necessary for improving viability and productivity.

Estimating requirement of any crop was essential as farmers were growing more and ending up without remunerative price, he said quoting the example of tomato that peaks at one time and thrown on to the roads when there was a glut.

Food processing units had come in a big way at one time but failed, Mr. Patrudu pointed out.

Floriculture

Flowers for any function or decoration were being brought from Bangalore though Araku offered an excellent opportunity for floriculture with export potential. Tamarind was available in plenty in the Agency area and could be turned into powder for better returns, he suggested.

Minister for Labour K. Acchem Naidu and Minister for HRD Ganta Srinivasa Rao also spoke.

Akhilesh's budget focuses on rural economy



With the year 2015-2016 declared as the “year of the farmer” (“Kisan Varsh”), the annual budget of the Samajwadi Party Government has laid emphasis on improving the rural economy and to simultaneously infuse integrated development affecting all sections of the population. The Uttar Pradesh Government’s emphasis on “going to the villages” assumes significance in the context of the next Assembly elections which are due in 2017 as the major chunk of the Samajwadi Party’s vote bank is in the rural areas.

Presenting the Rs. 302687.32-crore State budget for the fiscal 2015-16 in the Vidhan Sabha on Tuesday, Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav made it clear that in this year’s financial document stress has been given on taking the benefits of the Government schemes down to the lowest rung of the people. He said this was necessary to improve the living conditions of the poor and the most backward people.

This was fourth budget presented by Mr. Yadav, who holds the Finance portfolio, in as many years. Arrangements have been made in this fiscal’s budget for increasing the State’s own tax revenue by 13.5 per cent.

While the budget size of 2015-2016 is 10.2 per cent higher than the year 2014-2015, new schemes to the tune of Rs. 9388.79 crore have been included in the new budget. Among the new schemes is the decision to launch the “Agri Junction” scheme. The Chief Minister said the new scheme is being launched for the welfare of the farmers and to make rural youth with agricultural education self-sufficient. The youths would set up “one stop shops”, known as “agri junction”.

About 1000 “agri junctions” are proposed to be set up in 2015-2016. A subsidy of five per cent on the interest of the loan provided for the purpose by the bank would be given by the Government.

Another first is the announcement made by Mr. Yadav about framing a new law to guard the interests of the small investors. He said there have been several incidents wherein private financial companies have vanished with the money of small investors.

Some of the Samajwadi Party’s populist measures like the Kanya Vidya Dhan scheme which were suspended following the party’s rout in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections make a return with a budgetary allocation of Rs. 300 crore.

The laptop distribution scheme has also been included, but unlike in the past the laptops would be given only to meritorious students and Rs. 100 crore has been allocated under this head.

“Special emphasis has been on the introduction of productive infrastructural facilities in order to speed up the growth rate. The interests of the backwards and the deprived sections have been given priority”, Mr. Yadav said. He took pride in the fact that State’s growth rate was better than that of the country. “The growth rate which has been assessed at 5 per cent on the basis of the estimates of 2013-14 was better than the country’s growth rate of 4.7 per cent”, the Chief Minister said.

Mr. Yadav said these days it has become a fad to talk about inclusive and equitable growth, or sustainable development. “Which, indeed is the basis of the Samajwadi philosophy”, he stated. He said the Development Agenda for 2015-2016 has three main components --- participatory development to ensure benefits are delivered to farmers, poor, labourers, women and minorities; use of latest techniques in the schemes’ implementation; and, effective and transparent administration.

Addressing a Press conference after presenting the budget, Mr. Yadav said infrastructure development has been taken on a priority basis. He mentioned the Agra-Lucknow Expressway, four-lane highways and steps taken to improve power generation and transmission.

Sugarcane growers seek payment of Rs. 1,600 crore arrears



Sugarcane growers on Tuesday placed a list of 25 demands before the State government and sought immediate payment of arrears of Rs. 1,600 crore to them from the sugar mills.

Office-bearers of Karnataka Sugarcane Growers’ Association led by its President Kurubur Shanta Kumar placed the list of demands before Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during a pre-budget meeting here.

Growers expressed concern that sugar factories had not paid last year's arrears amounting to Rs. 1,600 crore to them and demanded that the Government itself should pay the arrears to them and recover it later from the factories.

Similar example had been followed in Tamil Nadu, where the government had paid arrears of about Rs. 1,200 crore owed by cooperative sugar units, they said.

In the memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister, Mr. Kumar demanded allocation of Rs. 40,000 crore to the agriculture sector in the State budget which is scheduled to be presented on March 13.

Other major demands of sugarcane growers are: crop insurance for sugarcane and equal payment of insurance premium by factories and growers; a revolving fund for sugarcane for the benefit of cane growers during the crisis period; fix compensation for crop loss on scientific lines; sanctioning of loans at an interest rate of zero per cent by nationalised banks; pension for growers who have attained age of 60 years; and autonomy to agriculture price commission and appointment of five farmers to the commission.

The chocolate doctors



Chocolate lovers take heart — a greenhouse near London is helping ensure that cocoa crops globally remain disease-free and bountiful to cope with the growing appetite for sweet treats.

On a winter morning, the temperature is a chilly eight degrees Celsius but inside the International Cocoa Quarantine Centre (ICQC), which simulates tropical conditions, the air is a balmy 23 degrees.

“Cocoa plants are generally quite difficult plants to grow,” said Heather Lake, a technician at the newly-revamped centre, which is funded half by the British chocolate industry and half by the U.S. government.

“They don't like too much sunlight, they don't like too much shade. It's quite difficult to get the climate correct,” she told AFP at the facility, which is hosted by the University of Reading.

Situated in the village of Arborfield, west of London, the ICQC boasts around 10,760 square feet of greenhouse space and 400 cocoa plant varieties.

The centre's aim is to reduce the amount of disease affecting cocoa plants by quarantining them before sharing them with different countries to produce new, more resistant varieties.

The plants are often collected in the wild on expeditions to the tropics on which researchers collect cuttings or seeds from disease-free samples.

At a time when changing tastes in emerging economies like China and India are fuelling global demand for chocolate, the centre acts as a vital resource for producer countries when pests or droughts strike crops.

“That's where we come into play,” said Andrew Daymond, manager of the ICQC, which was set up 30 years ago. “We are the main hub for international movements of cocoa plants.”

Cocoa originates from South America but west Africa now dominates production, accounting for 73 percent of global output, according to the International Cocoa Organisation.

Prices leapt to almost \$3,400 a tonne in New York in September amid fears that the Ebola crisis in west Africa could affect cocoa supplies.

Both Ivory Coast and Ghana have, however, so far been spared by the outbreak.

There is also the potential threat to the industry from plant diseases, which in west Africa can mean up to 30 percent of the annual harvest is lost.

“The basic objective of the project is to allow safe movement of cocoa plants from one part of the world to another,” Daymond said.

All of this could help to make a box of chocolates that little bit more affordable.

Nature's medicine cabinet



Floral nectar contains a bouquet of natural chemicals that may help fight **parasite** infection in bumble bees, a study has found.

The findings throw up clues for helping honey bee colonies battling mysterious but catastrophic decline.

Biologists in New England tested eight nectar compounds on North American bumble bees -- Latin name *Bombus impatiens* -- that had been infected in the lab with an intestinal parasite called *Crithidia bombi*.

Four of the eight were effective against *Crithidia*, which is spread by bee faeces and lowers winter survival rates and reproductive success.

"The results suggest that growing plants high in these compounds around farm fields could create a natural 'medicine cabinet' that improves survival of diseased bees and pollination of crops," Dartmouth College in New Hampshire said in a statement.

The chemicals, called secondary metabolites, are also found in plant leaves as a defence against herbivores.

But, in the nectar, they help to attract bees, which in turn pollinate the plant.

One of the anti-*Crithidia* compounds that was found to be highly effective in bumble bees -- thymol -- is currently used as an organic control on mites among honey bees.

'Use Vitamin C in feeds'

Poultry farmers in the district were asked to add stress alleviating medicines such as Vitamin C in poultry feed to improve bird's adaption to changing weather conditions. An advisory from Agromet Field Unit of

Veterinary College and Research Institute and Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai, said that the temperature during day time rises and falls during night hours. Since wide range of temperatures may induce heat stress in birds during day time and increase feed intake during night, farmers are asked to use Vitamin C in feeds.



Express Recipes: How to make Raw Mango Pickle without oil



Soon, market will be flooded with raw mangoes, and you will be tempted to make this tasty raw mango pickle. The best thing about this recipe is that it needs very less oil and has a long shelf life.

Ingredients

1 kg raw mangoes (5-6)
Less than 1/2 cup salt (100 grams)
2 tbsp fennel seeds
1 tbsp fenugreek seeds
1/2 cup vinegar
2 tbsp turmeric powder
2 tbsp red chilly powder
1/2 tsp asafetida

Method

* Wash the mangoes thoroughly. When mangoes dry, remove the stalk of mangoes and cut the pulp in small chunks without peeling.
* Preheat a pan. Now add fenugreek seeds and fennel seeds into it and saute for a while so that there is no moisture in the spices. When spices are roasted, turn off the flame and take them out in a plate. Allow the spices to cool.

- * When spices get cooled, grind them coarsely. Now mix coarsely ground spices, salt, asafoetida, turmeric powder, red chilly powder and vinegar in the mango chunks and mix everything really well. Mango pickle is ready.
- * After 1 week, this mango pickle will be ready to be consumed. Stir the pickle regularly with help of a spoon, really well

Suggestion:

- * While making pickle, make sure the container to be used for making pickle should be washed with boiling water, dry it under sunlight or in microwave or oven. Make sure there is no moisture in it.
- * Use a clean and dry spoon for taking out the pickle.
- * There should not be any kind of moisture or dirt in the pickle, only then it will have a longer shelf life.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Water conservation work begins at 277 places

NASHIK: The divisional commissioner, CEO of zilla parishad and other senior officials from agriculture and other government departments on Monday visited various parts of the taluka to review the work of Jalyukta Shivar, a water conservation campaign that began last month.

As many as 229 villages were identified where water conservation activities would be implemented. According to the officials, works at 277 places in these villages is under progress.

Sukhdeo Bankar, CEO of zilla parishad, said parts of Nashik taluka such as Pangri, Marhal and Nirhale were covered during the review along with the officials of PWD and agriculture department. "Three barrages and a farm pond were checked. Repair works of percolation tanks and other water conservation initiatives such as KT weir, desilting of water bodies and wells belonging to the farmers was also carried out to understand the condition of water availability in the areas," he said.

The works are being carried out by involving groundwater survey development agency and forest department along with the local population and government officials.

Bankar said there are provisions to include private companies and get some work done under corporate social responsibilities (CSR). "Talks are underway through the district collectorate. The officials would identify potential companies that are interested in contributing for water conservation works, which would be carried out thereafter," he added.

As per the statistics of the zilla parishad, as many as 9,514 works would be done by the agriculture department, 496 by the forest department, 1,331 by GSDA, 73 by gram panchayats and 285 by the irrigation department. Altogether 12,638 works have been planned under Jalyukta Shivar for the year, which would ensure irrigation of 37,905.84 hectares of land.

Bankar said weekly review of the works done under the programme has to be reported to the higher authorities. "Directions have also been given to block development officers and heads of the department of zilla parishad to ensure monitoring of the works and pay personal visits to check their progress," he added.

[Seed bank to revive medicinal plant](#)

COIMBATORE: Medicinal plants on the verge of extinction may get a shot in the arm with the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB) in Coimbatore setting up a repository of seeds. The institute plans to grow the plants within its campus, create a seed bank and sell the seeds.

"We are trying to save medicinal plants using the tissue culture method. If we are successful, we will give seeds to farmers and medicinal plant lovers," said a senior scientist at the institute. "They will be stored in a seed bank, which is a room with sections for chryopreservation, germination and x-ray facilities to check if the germ is alive," said A Karthikeyan, senior scientist of IFGTB.

This is part of their plan to keep tabs on disappearing medicinal plants and preserve the ecology of the region. Three of the plants the institute is looking at are vishnukranti, veldt grape and morning mallow or kurunthotti.

The roots of the kurunthotti plant, found in the state's western region and Kerala, can be crushed to make oil which is used to cure fever, asthma, joint pain and cough. Vishnukranti, which is found on the red-soiled plains in the western region, is used with cumin and milk to cure fever, nervous breakdowns and memory issues. Veldt grape is used to in Ayurveda and Siddha to heal fractures and ligament tears.

The plants grow on waste land and road sides. "These plants grow in Mettupalayam, Madhampatti on the way to Siruvani, Thudiyalur and

Anaikatti. They thrive in red soil," said C Kunikannan, senior scientist at the institute. "But now their numbers are dwindling," he said.

Clearing of weeds to widen roads, large-scale plucking by Ayurveda practitioners and spread of invasive species has led to the decline of the species.

"Many medicinal plants are rhizomes so the roots and stems which grow underground are valuable. People pluck out 10,000 to 20,000 plants with the roots for Ayurveda and Siddha, which have become industries," said T Rajamani, professor, department of medicinal plants, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

"Invasive species also block sunlight from reaching these plants. "There is a fear that these plants will slowly become seasonal and later when a drought comes become unavailable," adds Rajamani.

Dr Joseph T Varghese of Indian Ayurvedic Hospital and Research Centre said suppliers has said there is a decline in the number of medicinal plants. "We use kurunthotti extensively in our hospital, but suppliers have been saying that fewer plants are being found," he said.

Business Standard

Gender Friendly Agricultural Equipments

Agricultural machines and implements including gender friendly agricultural equipments are manufactured in the private sector. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) provides funds for research and technological innovations in the field of gender friendly equipments and from 2011-12 to 2014-15, Rs.1026.71 lakhs have been provided to All [India](#) Coordinated Research Project on Ergonomics & Safety in Agriculture for this purpose.

The use of gender friendly equipments is promoted through training, demonstration and financial assistance under Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization. Women beneficiaries are provided 10% additional financial assistance for purchase of various agricultural machines and equipments. State Governments have also been directed to ensure flow of benefits to women farmers by way of earmarking at least 30% of allocation of this Sub-Mission.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Agriculture Sh.Mohanbhai Kundaria in Lok Sabha today.

Badal announces incentives for allied farm sectors



Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Tuesday announced a slew of incentives such as advancing low interest rate loans to the beneficiaries of goatry and piggery, making milk rate stable and uniform across the state and bringing the electricity rates in dairy, fishery, poultry, goatry and piggery farming on par with agriculture sector. He also introduced a single-window system for promotion of allied farm sector.

Presiding over a series of meetings with progressive dairy farmers, piggery, goatry and fishery beneficiaries here, Badal said the Punjab State Power Corporation Limited would, henceforth, charge agriculture pump sets tariff from dairy farms, against the commercial rate being charged at present. He said eligible beneficiaries of allied farming sector will have to pay power rate of Rs 4.57 a unit from the coming cycle, against the existing Rs 7.75 a unit.

Acceding to the major demand of dairy farmers, Badal said the Punjab State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation (Milkfed) will pay uniform procurement price of milk to the producers. He said the loss incurred, if any by Milkfed, in the implementation of the decision would be compensated by the government. Badal also said the state government would provide 50 per cent subsidy on all the components of two to six desi (local) cow breeds dairy units for the promotion of indigenous breeds.

The chief minister also told farmers he had been actively pursuing the matter of lowering the fat content in cow milk from four per cent to 3.5 per cent and, thereby, to establish parity with other states and the Centre. He said the Union government had given in-principle approval to rectify the infirmity in the existing guidelines of fat content and formal orders to this effect will be issued soon.