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# THE HINDU

## **Funds crunch hits agriculture mission**

*NMSA dovetailed with five existing programmes*

A funds crunch has led to some goals of the ambitious National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) being embedded into five existing programmes of the agriculture and cooperation department. The NMSA was one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan for Climate Change launched in 2008 which was aimed “at transforming Indian agriculture into a climate resilient production system through suitable adaptation and mitigation measures in the domain of crops and animal husbandry.”

According to the Mission document in 2010, implementation of the NMSA from 2011-2012 to the end of the 12 five year plan would require an additional budgetary support of Rs. 1,08,000 crore. However, official sources said there was a resource constraint and the Mission was dovetailed with five major existing programmes, including the National Mission on Food Security and the National Horticulture Mission, which have been restructured to meet with climate change requirements.

At least 60 per cent of funds was to be used for mitigating risks related to climate change, which is expected to impact crop yields and water resources. The major challenge is ensuring food security and livelihood. India and other countries urgently need to scale up adaptation and mitigation actions to deal with a warming planet and experts feel that much more needs to be done.

The restructured programmes have been operational since April 2014 and it will take at least two years to see some visible change, official sources said. There is more focus on organic farming, bio-fertilizers, soil-analysis-based nutrient application, micro irrigation — which has been extended to horticulture — and methods like the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) which uses less water. The government is asking States to encourage all these programmes as pilot projects or demonstration plots which can be scaled up. Every year, official sources said an additional 6 lakh hectares will be added under water saving

schemes. Another aspect is crop diversification, especially in Punjab and Haryana, so farmers switch to less water-intensive crops.

There are 16 deliverables in the ongoing programmes. Of this, funds under the 12 five-year plan to the tune of Rs. 13,054 crore are available for four — water efficiency, soil management, natural resources management in rain-fed areas and improving farming systems. This year the focus is on micro irrigation, for which the government has allotted Rs. 1,684 crore.

There is also a decision to revisit the mission document and Ministries will be asked to fine-tune some of the missions to aim for some visual impacts. A major aspect of adaptation is also tackling livestock, since a large amount of emissions are from that sector. Apart from breed improvement, diet of the animals and waste disposal are the other big challenges. Crop varieties are also a focus area, with Indian Council of Agricultural Research developing 813 climate resilient crop varieties last year.

### **Bt cotton not to blame for farm distress: scientists**

*Monday's ISC session on GM crops didn't have a single critical paper*

Farmer suicides in Maharashtra's Vidarbha area and other parts of the country have nothing to do with Bt cotton, scientists said at the Indian Science Congress here on Monday.

“There is a lot of negative public perception about Bt crops... Even a paper in *Nature* says linking these two [Bt. Cotton and farmer suicides] is our imagination,” said Dr. Anupam Verma, INSA [Indian National Science Academy] Senior Scientist at the Indian Agriculture Research Institute, speaking on ‘GM crops — use of modern technology in agriculture.’

Some scientists said there were interesting research prospects in the field of biotechnology. “We could be extracting oil from leaves, instead of seeds. Imagine what it would mean for us, when our government is spending over Rs. 60,000 crore on oil import,” Dr. Deepak Pental, former Vice-Chancellor of the Delhi University, said. “We can produce oil indigenously if we use Bt. But unfortunately, it is caught up in a debate taken up by the Left and now supported by the neo-right.” Dr. Pental is an award-winning genetic scientist who has been credited with major breakthroughs in hybrid seed science.

In the recent past, there had been a sharp increase in the acreage of GM crops in the country, and over 90 per cent of the cotton cultivated was GM crop, scientists said. They refuted arguments about monopolisation and said there were over 1000 Bt Cotton hybrids available in the country. Dr. Verma referred to Project Sunshine in Gujarat and explained how Bt Cotton had powered the growth in agriculture in Gujarat. He said GM Maize had taken nutrition to Adivasi farmers.

The session, attended by over 100 delegates, including students, farmers and scientists, didn't have a single critical or dissenting paper on GM crops.

The scientists called for a clear policy decision by the Central government on genetically modified crops. Some scientists questioned the need for stringent regulations. The need of the hour was more of confined field trials. "How will there be trust among the people if there is not enough data for analysis?" asked renowned scientist and Padma Bhushan awardee R. Paroda.

Scientists said the ambiguous policy relating to GM crops had caused disillusionment, and it was keeping young researchers from venturing into the field.

### **Heated debate**

A debate ensued after a journalist questioned the basis for selection of scientists to present the papers. He wondered why there was not a single critical voice. He claimed scientists were fudging data and not giving out clear information about the adverse impact of GM crops. He accused them of fear-mongering about food insecurity.

But while one scientist answered some of the questions, a few others called the journalist 'neo-leftist' and claimed there was no scientific basis for his arguments. "We have created a gene bank with over four lakh samples. It has been acknowledged as one of the best biodiversity programmes in the world. We have understood the need of our farmers and have helped them flourish. We have doubled cotton production and have reduced the load of pesticides. We are now exporting cotton worth \$3 billion. But it is people like you who have created policy paralysis," Mr. Paroda told the journalist.

He later acknowledged that there was a need for post-release monitoring system.

## **Alternative route**

Dr. Pental said a country had to make choices and take an alternative course of action if it did not want genetically modified crops. “We should go ahead and say we don’t want to research in the field of GM technology. In that case, we have to invest in alternatives.

“For example, Europe is investing hugely in new generation pesticides. But we are still using old pesticides,” he said.

## **Radio channel for agriculture to be launched on Jan. 26**

Telangana Minister for Agriculture P. Srinivas Reddy announced the launch of a radio channel for agriculture titled ‘Telangana Chenu Kaburlu’, to be run by farmers and students of Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University, on January 26.

Taking part in the inaugural ceremony of ‘Telangana Young Farmers Cultivation’ programme in the university, Mr. Reddy said the training programme would strengthen agriculture and the farming community by imparting technical and scientific information.

Beginning with 330 farmers, the programme will be extended to all young cultivators in the villages, he said, and urged scientists to prepare them for the organic way of farming.

A resolution will be passed by the State Assembly towards changes in the crop insurance policy, so that the farmer hit by natural calamities is taken as the unit for disbursement of compensation, Mr. Reddy said.

Principal Secretary, Agriculture, Poonam Malakondaiah, said the young farmers undergoing training would be taken to other States and even abroad for field trips.

Marketing, power, fisheries, dairy, horticulture, mechanisation of agriculture, post-harvest operations, and availing loans, apart from farming techniques, will be part of the training. Training will also be imparted towards personality development and improving communication skills.

Certificates will be awarded to farmers who complete training, and January 5 will be observed as Young Farmers’ Day, she said.

## Enough spices, but no road at this Arunachal village

It has enough spices to ensure a better living for its residents but no road to take them forward.

Enter Sissen village in East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The tiny village, perched atop a hillock on the right bank of Siang river, has earned laurels for record production of organic spices but still lacks a motorable road connecting it with the rest of the world.

### **A bamboo bridge**

The only means of communication for the few hundred villagers is a bamboo hanging bridge over the river. Adults as well as children cross the river risking their lives everyday.

The village, under the administrative control of Kebang circle, has only 21 households and 140 voters (as per 2011 Census). The residents had boycotted the April 9 Assembly and Lok Sabha elections to draw the attention of politicians to their plight. But nothing has been done to reduce their problems so far.

The village has farming enthusiasts from each household growing spices such as cardamom, ginger, red chilli, turmeric, medicinal and aromatic plants, and many other agriculture and horticulture products. Natives of the village have turned into organic spice growers to sustain themselves without depending on contract works or government jobs.

The villagers sold more than two tonnes of large cardamom (Golsey) in the nearest market in Kekar Monying (near Sisen hanging bridge), Pasighat and Assam's Dibrugarh district last year at Rs. 800-950 per kg.

“Our villagers carry their produces by head load from their respective farms to the nearest motorable road. They cover around five to six km after crossing the hanging bridge. A person used to carry more than 35 kg of cardamom in locally made basket that is worth around Rs 30,000 (per basket),” said Bakin Siram, a young farmer.

He said due to suitable soil and climatic condition, each household in the village earns minimum Rs 1 lakh annually from cardamom, orange and ginger cultivations.PTI

## Cluster-based cultivation begins

Cluster-based crop cultivation practice was inaugurated in all the blocks in Pudukottai district on Monday, to ensure sustained interaction between the farmers and the agriculture officials.

As per the programme, every Assistant Agriculture Officer would camp in a village panchayat and would discuss various crop health, soil health, disease management, and control of pest attack.

Sixty five Assistant Agriculture Officers, on rotation basis, would visit village panchayats. "It has been planned in such a way that an official will camp at a village 26 times in a year," said K.M. Shajahan, Joint Director of Agriculture.

## Water released from dam

Water was released on Monday from Varattupallam Dam for irrigation of fields in old ayacut area after a gap of two years.

### **Tanks**

Over the next 10 days, 22.107 mcft water will be released into tanks in Anthiyur, Brahmadesam, Vemapathi, and Aapakoodal, according to Public Works Department officials.

The dam has storage of 139.6 mcft water.

At a formal function for water release, Environment Minister N.D. Venkatachalam said the water release will accelerate agricultural activities in the 809 acres covered totally by the four tanks.

District Revenue Officer R. Satheesh, Tirupur Member of Parliament V. Sathyabama, Anthiyur MLA S.S. Ramanitharan and other dignitaries took part.

## Agri festival from January 10

*Film fest based on agriculture will be part of programme*

The National Agrifest-2014, an eight-day agriculture festival organised by the State Agriculture Department in association with various government departments, will be held at the Valliyurkavu temple grounds at Mananthavady from January 10 to 17.

Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan will inaugurate the fest at 5 p.m. on January 10. Social Welfare Minister M.K. Muneer will honour selected farmers. Speaking to presspersons at Mananthavady on Monday, Youth Affairs Minister P.K. Jayalakshmi said all arrangements were in place for the eight-day programme and it was being organised as part of a campaign to make the State completely organic by the end of 2016. It is also envisaged to sensitise the farming community to the significance of organic cultivation and attract more youth to the farming sector, the Minister added.

A State-level film fest based on agriculture and allied sector, scheduled to be held from January 12 to 26, will be a major attraction of the programme. Kerala Film Academy Chairman Aryadan Shoukath will inaugurate the fest at 3 p.m. on January 12. Various programmes, including tourism festival, tribal festival, food festival, mega medical camp, dairy fete, sports fete, anti-alcoholic campaign, tech festival of the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, pet show, and dairy fest, will be held as part of the programme.

Apart from this, cultural programmes, seminars and classes for the farming community, as well as competitions for school students would be held, Ms. Jayalakshmi said. Karnataka State Agriculture Minister Krishna Baira will inaugurate the valedictory function at 4.p.m. on January 17. Industries Minister P. K. Kunhalikutty will be the chief guest and Mr. Mohanan will give away prizes to the winners of various competitions to be held in connection with the fete.

***The fest is being organised as part of campaign to make the State completely organic.***

### **Showing the organic way of farming**





Having achieved a yield of 12 paddy bags, each weighing 66 kilograms, from his 20 cents of land in Kulamangalam, farmer M. Tirupathi is a happy man.

A team of officials from the Department of Agriculture (Madurai West Block) and other farmers in the area converged at his place on Monday to see the organic farmer in action. “My family has been practising organic methods of farming for the past 50 years, and I realised that it was time those traditional practices were put to use on my land,” said Mr Tirupathi. He owns about four acres in the single-crop area.

Speaking about his farming methods, Mr Tirupathi said he planted ‘Kolinji’ which was ploughed back into the soil and used as green manure, together with other bio-fertilizers. “I also sow wild varieties of crops which need less chemical inputs but give a good yield. By using only organic methods, I also protect the soil,” he added.

Stating that he was involved in organic farming for the second year now, he said the yield these days was much more than what he used to get in the conventional method of using chemical inputs.

R. Selvan, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Madurai West Block, said despite farmers like Mr Tirupathi wanting to improve the soil conditions and resorting to organic farming, many others were hesitant to take it up. “There are only about 40 to 50 farmers who practise organic farming in small pockets in this region. Many are hesitant to switch over to this method since the yield for the first couple of years is not that promising,” he said.

“We are trying to motivate more people by telling them that the gradual improvement in the soil will lead to higher yields of good quality,” Mr Selvan added.

### **Modi urged to protect farmers’ interests**

K.S. Puttannaiah, Melkote MLA, on Monday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Minister of State for Housing M.H. Ambareesh for not initiating steps to improve farming sector.

While Mr. Modi had failed to bring in an agricultural policy to prevent farmers from committing suicide, Mr. Ambareesh had failed to protect the interests of sugarcane growers in Mandya, Mr. Puttannaiah, who is also a veteran leader of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS), told presspersons.



The one-point agenda of Mr. Modi and BJP president Amit Shah was to eliminate the Congress. However, the party was not been talking about addressing the crisis in agriculture, he said. He urged Mr. Modi and Mr. Ambareesh to initiate steps to protect the interests of farmers.

### **Blast disease hits paddy in Thottiyam**



Farmers showing damaged crop to Collector K.S. Palanisamy, at Public Grievance day in Collectorate on Monday in Tiruchi.— Photo: B. Velankanni Raj

A group of farmers on Monday thronged the collectorate here with bunches of paddy crop claiming that blast fungus disease has hit several acres of paddy.

Showing the affected paddy crop to Collector K.S.Palanisamy, farmers led by P.Ayyakannu, president, Bharathiya Kisan Sangh, said the disease, first noticed in Thottiyam, has been spreading to neighbouring areas such as Musiri and Manachanallur where hundreds of acres had been brought under paddy cultivation. The disease could affect crop yield on hundreds of acres, and there was no proper mechanism to control the disease, he said.

The State government should conduct a survey to identify the affected fields, and adequate compensation should be paid to the farmers.

Mr.Palanisamy said the agriculture department officials would be asked to visit affected areas.

## Bitter Pongal season for cane ryots



The Hindu

sugarcane story - file pic

*Mills yet to settle dues running into several crores of rupees*

This Pongal is a bitter season for sugarcane cultivators in the region what with agony piling up not only due to the failure of mills to settle their dues running into several crores of rupees, but also because the State Administered Price (SAP) has not yet been announced. Leave alone fixing SAP, farmers are thoroughly disappointed with the government over its silence over private mills refusing to pay even last year's recommended price. There is no question of celebrating Pongal as no reprieve is in sight, farmers say.

Already in severe financial crises, cultivators lament that they will be doomed if there is no course correction in the Central and State policies. While the Central Government could intervene and safeguard sugar industry from collapse by combining an increase in duty on imports with enhancing composition of ethanol in petrol to 25 per cent from existing five per cent, the State government must not fail to consult farmers before arriving at the procurement price on a periodic basis, according to representatives of farmers' associations.



There was no reason for private mills to disregard SAP when cooperative and public sector mills were abiding by the recommendation, Subi Thalpathi, representative of Thadapalli-Arakankottai Ayacut Farmers' Association said. At present, none of the private mills paid the farmers beyond Rs. 2,400 per tonne, against the recommended rate of Rs. 2,600, he said.

Farmers were in a critical situation and would be doomed if the Central Government continues to control price of sugar without considering ground realities, Mr. Thalpathi said. Controlling price of sugar on the premise that it was an essential commodity was flawed since the main consumers were not households, but makers of beverages and confectioners, farmers wonder.

The government has to accept the fact that increasing the price of sugar by a few rupees will not affect consumers, since, at the level of households the requirement is only a few kilograms on a monthly basis. Only then can the mills clear the accumulating stocks of sugar and clear the dues to farmers, he explained.

### **Mysuru hospital goes organic**



The Hindu

Organic ragi cultivated on the premises of the Bharat Cancer Hospital in Mysuru. Photo: M.A. Sriram

*Ragi, paddy and vegetables raised with vermi-compost*

In a bid to safeguard patients from consuming carcinogenic elements in chemical-laden foods, a city-based private hospital has opted to cultivate its own organic foods.

Bharath Hospital and Institute of Oncology will cater to its inpatients' nutritional requirements out of an organic farm set up on its Hebbal campus premises.

The farming methods had been meticulously devised with focus on use of vermicompost, which involves the production of organic manure by using earth worms to decompose a mixture of natural manure and dry leaves, said K.P. Shivaprasad, general manager (patient relations).

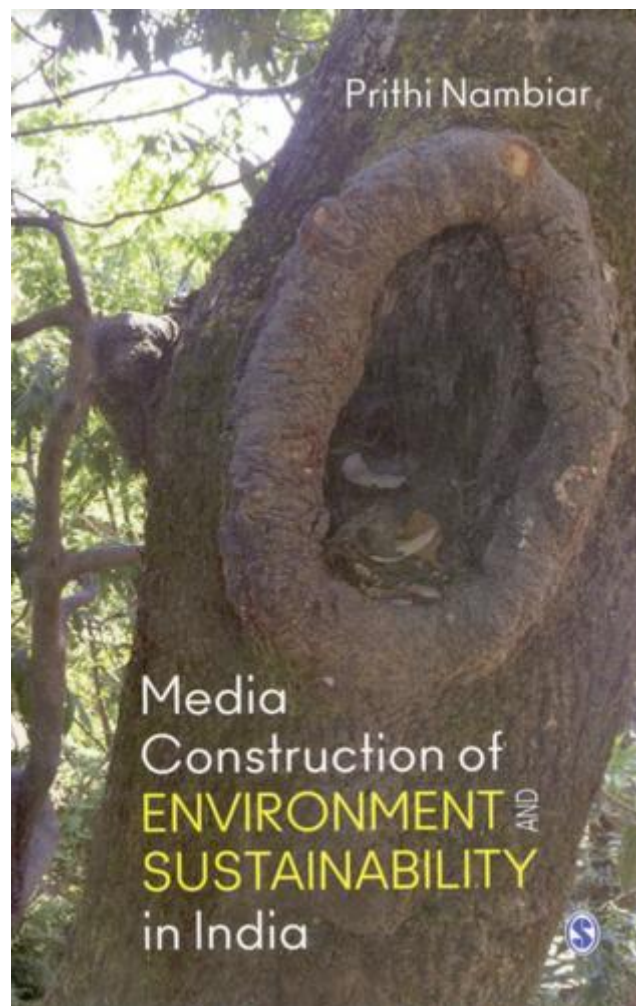
“We have 10 acres of land out of which we use 5 to 6 acres for cultivation at Hebbal campus and it is supplemented by food grown on our land near the Krishna Raja Sagara dam,” he said.

The hospital grows a variety of chillies, brinjals, lady's fingers, pigeon peas, beetroot, carrot, radish, field beans, capsicums, snake gourds, ridge gourds, bitter gourds, bottle gourds and coconut among other produce.

Besides, the hospital campus has mango, jack fruit, papaya, gooseberry and chikoo trees while its teak, cherry and neem trees attract birds to shore up the campus ambience. But the key organic produce is staple foods such as ragi and paddy, according to Mr. Shivaprasad.

Lunch, breakfast and dinner are prepared for the hospital patients under the directions of certified dieticians. The produce is enough to meet the meal requirements of about 120 to 150 people, including 60 to 80 patients and their attendants. Attention to diet helped patients to control diabetes and prevent heart ailments, hospital authorities said.

## Framing news on environment



**MEDIA CONSTRUCTION OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY IN INDIA:** Prithi Nambiar; Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., B 1/I, Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi-110044. Rs. 995.

In June 2014, the Narmada Control Authority (NCA) of the Government of India approved the Gujarat Government's application to increase the height of the Sardar Sarovar dam by 17.6 metres to 138.6 metres. The news was reported in the media, and there were a few scattered stories. There was also scattered reporting on the Jabalpur High Court's stay on the NCA's decision, and later the Supreme Court refusing to accept NCA's appeal to transfer the case to the apex court.

Flash back to the winter of 1990-1991. Tribals from the Narmada valley and environmental activists protesting against the Sardar Sarovar project marched from Madhya Pradesh to the dam site in Gujarat. They were stopped at Ferkuva, the border village between Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat by pro-dam supporters.

The stalemate at Ferkuva continued for weeks, and the media covered it extensively. Much of the national media was sympathetic to the cause of displaced tribals, which was framed as the argument for environment and sustainability.

Even while the environmental and rehabilitation issues related to the Sardar Sarovar project remain the same, the media framing of the Narmada discourse changed over the two decades. Possibly reflecting the current national development discourse framed by the urban middle class, the media gives a lesser priority to environment and sustainability today. After all, journalists themselves are mostly drawn from the socio-economic class that they report about.

*Media Construction of Environment and Sustainability in India* by Prithi Nambiar tries to understand how the media, and through it the opinion of the public and policy makers frame the discourse on environment and sustainability in a “fast-developing and environmentally — and economically-stressed country like India.”

Nambiar, currently working with the Centre for Environment Education in Sydney, Australia, is a veteran of an environment campaign related to the Narayan Sarovar wildlife sanctuary in the Kutch region of Gujarat, while she was working in India in the 1990s.

Framing is the way in which a story is organised and told as well as the manner in which it is received, literally structuring what the public perceives as reality. Framing defines what is selected, emphasised and presented and in turn creates tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters.

### **Superficiality**

According to Nambiar’s research findings, framing is not being used in any conscious or deliberate manner by mainstream media in India to specifically strengthen public understanding of environment and sustainability. “There appears to be a degree of superficiality in the mainstream media framing of sustainability within public discourse in India which could be responsible for keeping public engagement at the low level perceived by the experts and by media,” writes Nambiar. “The assumption of low public interest in sustainability issues leads media to narrowly interpret these issues through

dramatising their controversial aspects rather than presenting them in a comprehensive and considered fashion.”

There are exceptions though, states Nambiar. She singles out The Hindu group of publications, and especially *Frontline* for praise in their coverage on environment and sustainability.

In general, with the media’s disconnect with the environment and sustainability discourse, it looks for controversies, and “tend to swiftly polarise issues along the well-worn battle lines between environment and development, thus preventing dialogue and negotiation and public involvement.” In turn, the subsequent inability among the public to clearly process polarised views and mediated information “leads to distance and detachment.”

The crisis frame is the one that is most used by journalists. They look at environment and sustainability when a crisis happens. This is usually clustered with conflict and controversy frames.

The other frames used by the media, though less often, include the drama frame by which environmental issues are sensationalised; the developed world ploy especially when dealing with international negotiations; the activist frame; the scientific frame; attribution of responsibility frame; morality frame to deal with intra-generational equity between nations and peoples; the local evidence frame to locate global issues within local contexts; the blame frame; and the human interest frame.

The weakness of Nambiar’s analysis is that she draws one part of her conclusions from 30 interviewed respondents — six each from academia, the corporate world, the government, media and non-governmental organisations. Even though from their responses it is easy to presume that this group has been selected with care, 30 is too thin a slice as a representative sample.

The other part of her findings is drawn from media content analysis. Here too, she has analysed the contents of one publication — *Frontline* — and for a rather short period from December 2007 to January 2009.

Despite the small sample size, Nambiar’s conclusions are very significant. That is where the author has drawn on her years of experience gained while working with an Ahmedabad-based environmental communication organisation. Her book succeeds in adding to the understanding on how media perceives environment and sustainability.



There is a problem, however, when a thesis is published as a book. Much space is wasted on literature survey, which is not of interest to anyone else other than the subject researchers. In the book under review only the last three chapters out of the eight deal with the author's research. It is like paying up for a boxing match and having to watch the contestants warm up for an hour before the fight.

This reviewer would have preferred if Nambiar conceptualised and wrote from scratch a book combining her research and field experience. That would have caught the attention of the general reader more effectively.

### **Mythology and science**

The 102nd Indian Science Congress being held in Mumbai will be remembered for a very long time to come, but for all the wrong reasons. For the first time, the science congress had a session on "Ancient Sciences through Sanskrit". If the Indian Science Congress had long lost its eminence as a forum where results of serious science being done in the country are presented and discussed in most sessions, the inclusion of Ancient Sciences through Sanskrit has only lowered its standing further. Even as a public session, there is no real reason whatsoever for it to have been included in the proceedings. At best, a session could have been devoted to the history of Indian science which has real and substantial achievements to celebrate, with serious scholars working on the subject presenting papers. With Prime Minister Narendra Modi setting the tone for this antiquity frenzy with his implausible claims that cosmetic surgery was practised thousands of years ago and in-vitro fertilisation-like procedure was resorted to long back, and different political leaders following it up with several other incredulous claims well before the start of the national event, the reason for the inclusion of the session becomes supremely clear. Instead of fostering scientific temper, the congress has provided a forum to seed the minds of young people with pseudoscience. Some of the papers presented were about Indians' "knowledge of making aeroplanes" that could undertake interplanetary travel, between 7000 and 6000 BC, and "radars" that worked on the principle of detecting energy given out by animate and inanimate objects and finding out if a body was dead or alive.

Science is grounded on the principle of reproducibility of results. The claims of advanced science and technology in the ancient world are based on some references in ancient scripts that may be wholly imaginary. Flying, for instance, has caught humankind's imagination across cultures right from ancient times.

Such references should be taken for the myths they are, not as scientific facts. Scientists have been able to create animal chimeras that have cells/organs of different species, much as what Greek mythology describes. Should the Greeks then be taken as pioneers in the science of chimera production? Thanks to our understanding of genetics and the ability to fertilise eggs outside the body, producing designer babies is no longer in the realm of science fiction. Should the creators of the science fiction then be credited with devising the procedures? Compare this with how Sir Arthur C. Clarke documented his idea of communications satellites in a concept paper published in 1945. Dozens of geosynchronous satellites launched each year do precisely what Sir Arthur had visualised there.



### Great inflation decline: a whodunit



There is a general impression that international food prices have declined substantially, and that this has contributed in large part to the decline in headline CPI inflation.

A sustained inflation decline is in the air. In November 2013, year-on-year CPI inflation was 11.2 per cent. In November 2014, the level declined to 4.3 per cent. The decline in inflation rate for the WPI has been even larger for the same period: 7.6 percentage points (ppt) to a level of zero per cent. This is one of the largest one-year declines ever observed for India and, excluding hyperinflation economies, for most countries. This article attempts to explain the factors behind India's great inflation decline, or GID.

Over the past one year, many explanations have been offered. One consistent and common explanation has been "base effects". Some call it a voodoo explanation, and some might be correct in doing so. But no sooner was the base effect discredited (at best it can account for 1 to 2 ppt of decline and that too temporarily, for a few months) that the experts had a new explanation for GID — it is the decline in international food, oil and commodity prices. The oil decline, steep as it has been, has only been there since the intra-year peak of \$105 per barrel in June 2014. Today, the price is close to \$50, but the discussion and data for inflation are till November 2014, when the oil price averaged \$76. Let us look at possible causes for the observed inflation decline between November 2013 and November 2014. International and domestic inflation will be compared; fortunately, for this comparison, the rupee/ dollar exchange rate was near unchanged — Rs 62.5 to the dollar in November 2013, and Rs 61.5 in November 2014.

Oil is the big story and a very likely contributor, according to many experts, for India's GID. In November 2013, the international crude oil price was at \$94. In November 2014 (hereafter today) it was \$76, a 19 per cent decline. The wholesale price of petrol, in rupees, has declined by a smaller amount, 10 per cent, over the same period. Petrol has only a 1 per cent weight, but petrol-related products have a 15 per cent weight in the WPI. So fuel should have brought the aggregate WPI down by 1.5 ppt or from 7.6 per cent in November 2013 to 6.1 per cent in November 2014.

Metals and mineral products have close to a 11 per cent weight in the WPI. International metal prices (Goldman Sachs index, S&P GSCI Industrial Metals) actually increased over the last year by 4.3 per cent. Domestic metal prices over the last year have been flat (only a 0.3 per cent increase), again suggesting a loose correlation with trends in international prices.

There is a general impression that international food prices have declined substantially, and that this has contributed in large part to the decline in headline CPI inflation. (Food accounts for nearly a 50 per cent weight in the CPI). But this story is flawed on at least two counts. First, that domestic food prices have not followed international food prices (in rupees) for several years. For example, between November 2011 and November 2014, international (FAO) food prices, in rupees, have increased by 7 per cent; since November 2013, FAO food prices have declined by 8 per cent. However, domestic food prices increased by 3 per cent according to the CPI, and 0.6 per cent, WPI, in the last 12 months. The RBI, and several economists put a lot of store in the concept of “household inflation expectations” as measured by the RBI — that is, such expectations should decline before one can feel safe that inflation is under control. In September 2013, 12-month-ahead inflation expectations were 11.8 per cent, according to the RBI survey; in September 2014, such expectations were higher, at 12.7 per cent. So if this is any guide, inflation should have persisted in double digits, and increased. But we know the opposite happened. However, Zynfin, a financial information company (I am on their advisory board), has been conducting a consumer confidence survey for the last several years. According to this survey, 16 per cent of the respondents felt in November 2013 that inflation would decline over the next year. This fraction increased to almost a quarter of the population (24.3 per cent) in November 2014. So none of the popularly mentioned factors for India’s GID add up to any sort of explanation. It is not the oil price decline, nor decline in metals prices, nor decline in food prices. So what explains the GID? There are conjectures. First, that world and monetary policy operates in strange and mysterious ways so we are not observing, as yet, the full effects of the international food, oil and commodity price decline. But then one has to conclude that inflation in 2015 in India will trend lower still! Second, there is a novel and radical explanation for the GID by Jahangir Aziz. In ‘UPA by another name?’, (IE, January 5), Aziz states that “with some help from the better supply management of the new government, the shift to inflation targeting finally ended four years of rabid inflation”. Other inflation experts (nee hawks) have also chimed in over the last few weeks about what a wonderful thing the new inflation-targeting framework would be for low and stable inflation. However, and this is important to note, the new targeting framework has yet to be formulated and decided upon. If Aziz is right that just the mere mention of inflation targeting can bring inflation down by 700 basis points, think of the wonders that are in store for India’s

macroeconomy when inflation targeting is finally accepted. If the mere talk of inflation targeting can have a larger effect than metal, oil, food, expectations, etc, then who knows, with actual inflation targeting and a little bit of ill-luck, we will soon face the European Central Bank's problem of desperately trying to get the inflation rate to increase! So what does explain the great Indian inflation decline? Buried in the table is a line that states "weighted MSP change, lagged one year". As discussed so many times in these columns, I have argued that with domestic control barriers, the dominant determinant of Indian inflation is the procurement price (minimum support prices) for food. The government does not set the price of meat or eggs or fruits or vegetables. However, the prices of these food items are affected by the same factors that affect the prices of cereals, pulses, cotton, oilseeds and sugar. The MSP indirectly affects the price of land and labour, the two principal factors in agricultural production. Hence, MSP inflation affects inflation in milk, and fruits, and vegetables. A long historical analysis (since the late 1970s) suggests that each 10 per cent increase in the MSP increases headline inflation by 3 ppt. The decline in MSP inflation between 2013 and 2014 was 10.2 ppt. Thirty per cent of this decline is 3.1 ppt, that is, on the basis of the MSP alone, headline inflation should have declined to 10.1-3.1, or 7.0 per cent. Actual observed year-on-year inflation from January to November 2013 was 7.4 per cent. It is time that the RBI declared victory on inflation. To be sure, there will be blips along the way, but most expectations are that CPI inflation for 2015 will be well below the RBI target of 6 per cent. Perhaps it is the talk of inflation targeting that is doing the trick. (It can't be the fiscal deficit that is causing inflation to decline, because that is up.) Whatever the favoured explanation may be, it is time for the RBI to follow through on the reality of India's GDP. The writer is chairman of Oxus Investments, an emerging market advisory firm, and a senior advisor to Zyfin, a leading financial information company .

Kochi

Chennai - INDIA

### Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

**Tuesday, Jan 6**

Max 29° | Min 24°

Rain: 0  
Humidity: 66  
Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:32  
Sunset: 05:55  
Barometer: 1013

### Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

**Wednesday, Jan 7**

Max 29° | Min 24°

### Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday  
**Jan 8**



29° | 23°  
Sunny

Friday  
**Jan 9**



30° | 22°  
Partly Cloudy

Saturday  
**Jan 10**



30° | 23°  
Partly Cloudy

Sunday  
**Jan 11**



23° | 21°  
Partly Cloudy

Monday  
**Jan 12**



23° | 21°  
Partly Cloudy



# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Recipe: Palak curry

*This one's for the health conscious*

### **Ingredients:**

One bunch of spinach (washed and chopped), two chopped onions, one chopped tomato, garlic, half tsp cumin seeds, half tsp turmeric powder, two tsp chilli powder, one tsp coriander powder, half tsp garam masala powder, two tbsp yogurt, salt, oil.

### **Method:**

Make a paste by grinding the onions, tomatoes and garlic. Whip the spinach in the blender and keep aside. Heat oil in a pan, fry the cumin seeds and add the paste prepared earlier. Cover and cook till the gravy is thick, then mix the spice powders and salt and stir well. Now add the spinach puree, reduce the heat and cook for 10 minutes. Finally, after switching off the flame, add yogurt and mix well.

## 4 simple salads for a quick, healthy meal!

*You've been planning to start that long-awaited healthy eating regimen, however your busy schedule has kept you from starting it.*

Salads are the healthiest option for a meal, they are light on calories but quite filling at the same time. These four simple salads will do just what is needed, keep you full and healthy.

### **Ideal for breakfast**

**Boiled egg salad:** Mix mayo, a tinge of mustard sauce, salt and pepper. Stir in coarsely chopped hard-boiled eggs and some baby corn. This tasty salad makes for a good and filling breakfast.



## **For the afternoon craving**

**Grilled chicken caesar salad:** Marinate the chicken from Italian herbs and olive oil and grill it and cut it into pieces. Mix 1/4 a teaspoon pepper, vinegar, olive oil, minced garlic and mustard in a large bowl; and toss it well to coat. Add lettuce and a tablespoon cheese to top it.

## **Cooler for the evening**

**Greek cucumber salad:** Mix some vinegar soaked onion slices, chopped cucumber, olives and cottage cheese. Dress the salad with olive oil and lemon juice; season with salt and pepper. Add two green chillies slit into halves, and you are all set for a tangy, spicy and fresh salad snack for evening.

## **For supper**

**Zesty pasta salad:** Boil macaroni and broccoli together; drain them and rinse with cold water. Stir pasta with broccoli, boiled chicken pieces and grape tomatoes into a dressing of olive oil, vinegar and mint leaves paste. Refrigerate it for a while and a delightfully healthy dinner is ready

## **Recipe: Grilled chicken with peach sauce**

### **Grilled Chicken (Serves 8)**

#### **Ingredients**

8 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves

1 pinch salt

Ground black pepper to taste

2 cups peach preserves

3 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic

1 tablespoon mustard

4 ripe peaches, halved and pitted

## **Method**

-Preheat grill for medium heat and lightly oil the grate. Season chicken breast halves with salt and black pepper. Stir peach preserves, olive oil, soy sauce, garlic, and mustard in a bowl.

-Season with salt and black pepper. Reserve about 1/2 cup peach sauce.

-Place the chicken on the preheated grill. Cook until golden brown, for six to seven minutes, then flip the chicken. Continue cooking for five to six minutes. Brush both sides of the chicken with peach sauce.

-Cook until no longer pink in the center and the juices run clear, for four to five minutes. An instant-read thermometer inserted into the center should read at least 165 degrees F (74 degrees C). Arrange peach halves cut side down on the grill. Grill for 2 minutes, flip, and brush with reserved 1/2 cup peach sauce. Continue to grill until peaches are tender, for three to four minutes.

## **Recipe: Strawberry cupcakes**

*With strawberries being considered the eternal fruit of love, baker Anju Jain says that a Valentine meal is incomplete without this fruit. Here is her recipe for strawberry cupcakes.*

## **Ingredients**

200 gms plain flour

100 gms milk powder

2 tsp baking powder

1 tsp baking soda

A pinch of salt

1 tbsp of milk

50 gms butter  
100 gms powdered sugar  
1 tsp vanilla essence  
2 tbsp strawberry crush  
Couple of chopped strawberries

### **For the frosting**

100 gms butter  
300 gms powdered sugar  
Few drops of vanilla essence  
50 gms whipped cream  
2 tbsp strawberry crush  
Few strawberries for decoration

### **Method**

-Sieve flour, milk powder, baking powder, baking soda, salt and keep aside. -  
Add butter, powdered sugar, vanilla essence, strawberry crush and cream them  
till it's smooth, fluffy and air bubbles free. Add the sieved mix little by little and  
gently fold it in. Do not mix. Add milk and chopped strawberries till it becomes  
flowing consistency.

-Pre- heat the oven at 220 degrees and line the moulds with cupcake cups. -Pour  
the batter and bake for 12 minutes at 180 degrees. Once done, cool them on a  
rack for at least two hours before frosting them. Gently mix in all the  
ingredients listed under the frosting till it gets a creamy consistency.

-Spoon them on your cupcakes and add a strawberry on each, before serving.

### **The best tips to make easy, gourmet cupcakes**

Cupcakes, the mini-sized treat are a favourite with everyone. Here are ways to  
make the best ones:

#### **Tips:**

**Line them right:** You might buy pretty cupcake liners from a store, but also  
make sure they are greaseproof.

**Whip well:** The secret to a good cupcake is its consistency. Always whip the  
butter or even cream cheese into the mix to make sure it's fluffy. Only after this,  
add flavouring and powdered sugar.

**Use the right topping:** The task isn't over after frosting the batch of cupcakes. You must use toppings like chocolate crisps, sprinkles, chocolate even fruit like strawberry which lends both taste and design to it.

### **Avoid these mistakes**

**Do not use cold ingredients:** Always use ingredients — eggs, milk and butter — at room temperature. Cold ingredients don't combine well when mixed with dry ones.

**Don't over mix batter:** An over-mixed batter will remove the air bubbles which go to help make cakes airy, light and fluffy.

**Never overfill the cupcake liners:** If you do so, the batter will spill out onto the muffin pan as it bakes, making a mess.

**Always pre-heat the oven:** You can't mix the batter, then let it wait for the right heat.

**Let them cool before frosting:** When you remove the cupcakes from the oven, let them cool or else the heat will melt the icing.

### **Go for cereals, apple juice to throw away hangover**

*It's party season, but over-indulgence in alcohol can lead to headaches and other after-effects. Expert suggests that one should eat cereals and drink apple juice to get rid of the hangover.*

Fiona Hunter, a nutritionist and member of the Simple Advisory Board, feels that the best way to avoid a hangover is to avoid overindulging, reports *femalefirst.co.uk*.

"Not only will your head be banging but your skin will suffer too. Hung-over skin can be very dry as Alcohol dehydrates and nobody wants flaky, sore skin during party season! Alcohol also interrupts your sleep patterns which can make dark circles under the eyes appear worse," said Hunter.

However, if you still can't help drinking that extra glass of alcohol, here is the cure to avoid hangovers.

- If there is heavy night ahead of you and you're not planning to have a meal, at least have a low Glycemic Index (GI) snack such as a bowl of cereal with a banana, a couple of oatcakes with hummus or peanut butter on wholemeal toast before you go out.
- Try to remember to match each alcoholic drink with a glass of water or a soft drink. Also have a large glass of water before you go to bed.
- If you do wake up with a hangover, try a large glass of apple juice, sweetened with a little honey, topped up with a little sparkling water. It's gentler on the stomach than orange juice and provides an instant hit of glucose which will help restore blood sugar levels, Vitamin C and fluid to rehydrate the body.

### **Recipes: Smoked Melon Martini, Burn Bourbon**

*Cocktail culture has adapted to many variations in the recent past thanks to the advancement in culinary techniques.*

Smoked cocktails for instance, are quite a hit at parties and social gatherings. When mixologists create these delectable drinks from whether, let's say, tobacco-laced syrup to smoke-infused ice, the aroma and taste of these smoky concoctions leave you delightfully intoxicated.

Vasul Chauhan, head mixologist at Smoke House Cocktail Club shares with us three signature smoke-infused cocktail recipes that you can yourself try at home and also surprise your guests with this season.

#### **Recipe: Smoked Melon Martini**

##### **Ingredients**

Grey Goose - 60ml

Smoked Cantaloupe Melon Roundels - 8 no(s)

Fresh mint - few sprigs

**Method & glass:** Blend with crushed ice, double strain in a chilled martini glass

### **Trivia: A few firsts**

- First blended martini - the best procedure to blend the delicate flavours of melon + smoke with a hint of the dominant mint flavour
- First smoked cocktail to be felicitated with national and international awards
- First cocktail to be compared to having the flavour of a fine cigar by the South East Asia Brand Ambassador for Belvedere

### **Recipe: Burst - 52**

#### **Ingredients**

Kahlua - 20ml

Baileys - 20ml

Cointreau - 20ml

**Method:** Make membrane enclosed spheres of Kahlua & Baileys using reverse spherification - suspend in Cointreau

**Trivia:** This cocktail is a visual treat due to the suspended spheres, makes for a bitter sweet symphony of the potency of Cointreau enveloping your palate and the sweet spheres of Baileys and Kahlua bursting in your mouth.

### **Recipe: Burn Bourbon Burn**

#### **Ingredients**

Bourbon - 60ml

Maple syrup - 10ml

Angostura bitters - dash

Cinnamon powder - 2 pinches

**Method:** Shake the bourbon and maple syrup with ice and serve in a martini glass coated with cinnamon & bourbon flames.

#### **How to infuse the glass with cinnamon and bourbon flames**

- Ignite bourbon
- Sprinkle cinnamon powder
- Enjoy the fireworks
- Extinguish the flame with an inverted martini glass
- Let the smoke coat the inside of the glass and use to serve the drink.

## Trivia

The making of this cocktail is not less than an event due to the sparks that the cinnamon powder generates when thrown on a flame. It is a wonderful sight to witness! The only way the cinnamon flavour is imparted is through smoke - cinnamon is never added to the drink itself but still the flavour is unmistakable.

## Pack health in a lunchbox

*What to pack for lunch?' is a question that stresses out every homemaker, every single day. Menu planning for your husband's dabba and kids' lunchbox is a herculean task.*

And packing food for your child is all the more challenging due to the growing influence of junk food through media and peers. Children, today, are unaware of the importance of good nutrition, and indulge too much in junk food, which may be tastier but very harmful in the long run. Keeping the above in mind, I'd suggest you prepare a 10-day cyclic menu for your child's tiffin. This menu will serve you for a good two weeks. The key to planning a good dabba is to focus well on the presentation (yes, it does take some time, but you'll notice it's worth it) by making food look different and appealing yet making sure it has all the essential nutrients hidden within. Here are a few examples:

**1. Stuffed pizza!** Well, this doesn't have to be the pancrusted cheese pizza kids ogle at in advertisements, but mama's innovative way of adding nutrition to a regular lunchbox. Grab pita bread pockets and lightly stuff them with veggies (lightly blanched, semi-mashed style) your child creates a fuss eating. On the top, spread the homemade pizza sauce (it is healthy as it is full of vegetables like tomato, onion, capsicum and pumpkin) and add some chicken or paneer as topping.



Grate some cheese (or for a variation spread a mixture of grated cheese and paneer or even grated, boiled egg whites) and bake. The cheese will mix with paneer / egg whites and the pizza will seem like it's loaded with cheese - and who doesn't love that!

**2. Sandwiches in fancy shapes and sizes.** Make a brown bread vegetable sandwich out of usual ingredients but cut it in fun shapes. Your child will not just take pleasure in flaunting the artistic sandwich, but also gobble it as quickly as possible, which serves both purposes - no leftover and a full nutrition tank!

**3. Sabzi-stuffed parathas.** My mother often played this trick on me. If I refused to eat a sabzi — because it looked different or boring — she would stuff it in a paratha or knead the dough with it eg. methi mutter, sai bhaji (a mixed leafy vegetable saag) or gavar (cluster bean) ki sabzi. To do what my mom did, add some masala to the flour and knead the dough with buttermilk instead of water (this way roti/paratha will stay soft for longer). Also, while making the paratha on the tawa, add a little butter for flavour. Pack these parathas with some curd and your kids will love it. This is a very convenient and non-messy food item to pack for a tiffin.

**4. Pav bhaji is a super healthy, nutritious, tasty meal most kids love to have in their tiffin.** Make the bhaji a little drier so that it is less messy and if your child loves a little bit of spice, then pack masala pav instead of the usual ones to enhance the taste.

**5. Combining two different flavours is another great idea.** For eg., pack the dal and rice as the savoury dish and gajar ka halwa as a dessert. As long as it's home made with moderate amounts of sugar and fat, it's healthy. Similarly, you can pack a stuffed vegetable paratha with dal ka halwa. This way you're making sure the lunchbox has vegetables, pulses, milk, etc, and children will love the sweet-savoury combo.

# DECCAN Chronicle

## Genetically modified crops: Corporate fiction



A Greenpeace activist plants a scarecrow in protest against genetically modified crops at a Bayer CropScience trial field. (Photo: AP)

As the New Year begins, I feel compelled to reflect on how fictions and abstract constructions are ruling us; the nature of being and existence is being redefined in such fundamental ways that life itself is threatened. When corporations that were designed as legal constructs claim “personhood”, then real people — who stand in line at polling booths, eke out livelihoods, and raise families — lose their rights.

This has happened recently in Vermont and Maui. Residents of Maui County, Hawaii voted on November 4 to ban the growing of genetically modified crops on the islands of Maui, Lanai, and Molokai until scientific studies are conducted on their safety and benefits. Monsanto and Dow Chemical’s unit Mycogen Seeds have sued the county in federal court to stop the law passed by the people. And Vermont, which passed a GMO labelling law through a legal, democratic process, is being sued by a conglomerate of corporations on the

false premise of corporate personhood, and the influence of money as corporate “free speech”.

This is at the heart of new free trade treaties based on “investor rights”. Denying citizens the right to know violates the fundamental principles of food democracy. Dow and Monsanto sued Maui, thus subverting the democratic process that rests on the will of people, not on the power of corporations. This corporate jurisprudence needs to be reversed if human rights and the rights of Mother Earth are to be protected. Corporate fictions that have already had disastrous impacts on the biodiversity of the planet, nations and on farmers — whose time immemorial rights to save and exchange seeds — are being criminalised under patent law and new seed laws.

When biotechnology corporations claim to have “invented” the seed and courts and governments uphold this fiction, millions of years of evolution and thousands of years of agricultural history gets erased. Seeds are not automobiles or circuit boards; life cannot be manufactured. It is not an invention. It is not engineered, piece-by-piece, by a worker on an assembly line. Living organisms are self-organised complexity. Chilean scientists Maturana and Varela differentiated between two kinds of systems — autopoietic and allopoietic. Autopoietic systems are self-organised and make themselves.

Allopoietic systems are put together externally. A seed is an autopoietic system — constantly self-organising, evolving and adapting to changing contexts. To claim that by adding one gene a corporation creates the seed — and all future generations of that seed — is an ontological flaw, a scientific outrage and an ethical violation. India’s laws have a clear articulation that biological and living systems are not inventions. Article 3(d) of India’s patent laws states clearly that the discovery of a new property or a new use of a known substance is not an invention.

When corporations claim ownership of a seed that contains a gene from a Bt-bacteria, it is, in fact, a new use of a known substance. When they introduce the gene into a plant by “shooting” the gene through a gene gun into the cell of a plant, the reproduction of the cells and the life cycle of the plant is a biological process. The biotech industry is not assembling the organism, nor are they assembling future generations of seeds.

Section 3(j) of Indian Patent Act is a legal interpretation of the scientific principle of the self-organisation of life. That is why the Appellate Board of the

Indian Patent Office ruled in the case of Monsanto's climate resilience patent application: "the claimed method is considered as a series of generic steps modified by the plant cell... In the case like the present which does not involve a simple leap from prior art to the invention but rather entails a journey with many generic method steps that are essentially biological taken in sequence and we have found the invention is not involving inventive step, mere fact of human intervention would not change the position as we have otherwise found it not patentable in view of obviousness and new use of known substance."

While the Indian law recognises that seeds make themselves, including future generations of transgenic seed, which have a gene introduced from an unrelated organism, the American laws treat the transgenic seed as a "machine" invented by corporations. This position of seeds as machines and corporations as inventors was elaborated in the US Supreme Court case of *Bowman vs Monsanto*. Bowman had bought mixed soyabean seeds from a grain elevator and planted them. Monsanto claimed that the seed being planted to get a crop was not the natural reproduction of a seed sprouting into a plant, which then produced the next generation of seed. The US Supreme Court upheld Monsanto's claim that the reproduction of the plants in Bowman's fields was a "replication of a machine" invented and patented by Monsanto.

From the very beginning, Monsanto's push for GMO seeds has been for claiming creation and ownership of seed. India's Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001, has a clause on farmers' rights, which states, "a farmer shall be deemed to be entitled to save, use, sow, re-sow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under this act in the same manner as he was entitled before the coming into force of this act."

The US would like to force India to adopt a false science and laws that dictate that seeds have been created by Monsanto and are therefore Monsanto's property.

US President Barack Obama will be the chief guest at our Republic Day celebrations. It is time to start a planetary dialogue and a civilisational exchange based on us all being part of the Earth family; and based on our inalienable right to Swaraj, including "bija swaraj (seed democracy).

We hope Mr Obama's visit will enhance and deepen the common freedoms of the people of India and the US, and not just the freedoms of corporations, which are undermining the freedoms of citizens in both countries and across the world.

# THE HINDU BusinessLine

## Seed companies seek green pastures overseas

South-East Asia and Africa seen as potential markets for hybrid seed makers



Zhukov Oleg\shutterstock.com

### **Bengaluru, January 5:**

Indian seed companies such as Advanta, Bioseed and Mahyco, besides others are beginning to make inroads into overseas markets such as the South-East Asia and Africa among other geographies.

From exporting hybrids, more players are seen investing in research and development overseas, while the early movers are strengthening their outfits.

Mahyco, the latest Indian entity to go abroad, recently gained access to the South African market through the acquisition of 60 per cent stake in the Zimbabwe-based Quton Seed Company Pvt Ltd, the largest cottonseed vendor in Africa.

Quton has presence in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Tanzania. Through this acquisition, Mahyco is looking at delivering improved genetics and other technologies to the African farmers.

“We would like to expand overseas,” said AR Subbarao, Strategic Business Head at Mahyco, adding that the company was exploring markets in Bangladesh among other geographies.

Interestingly, the Bt brinjal that is currently being commercialised in Bangladesh has been developed by Mahyco at its R&D facility in Jalna.

## **Rice hybrids**

Mahyco is already selling its rice hybrids in Vietnam and has some exposure in Sri Lanka. “As we expand, we would also be considering setting up R&D units to localise the products,” Subbarao added.

Bioseed, the hybrid-seed business of DCM Shriram Ltd, has been operating in South-East Asian countries such as Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia for several years now and sees a big potential in these markets.

“It is a long haul business as the climate is quite complex in these countries. We are starting to make inroads in these markets,” said Vikram Shriram, Vice-Chairman & Managing Director, DCM Shriram Ltd.

Global seed majors such as Pioneer, Monsanto and Syngenta, among others, dominate the South-East Asian seed markets.

Bioseed has commercialised the genetically modified corn, developed using Monsanto technology, in Philippines.

The company has also been conducting advanced stage trials in Vietnam and Indonesia. The company has been operating R&D centres in Philippines and Vietnam for developing the products to suit the local climatic conditions.

The overseas seed business accounts for about 20 per cent of Bioseed’s revenues, which stood at Rs. 458 crore in the year-ended March 2014.

Advanta Ltd, part of the United Phosphorous Ltd, has operations across all continents and sells its seeds in about 25 countries including Brazil, Argentina, Thailand and Australia.

## **Vegetable seeds**

Salem-based Rasi Seeds, which has forayed into vegetable seeds segments in recent years, had begun exporting vegetable seeds to about 10 countries.

After test marketing in countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, Indonesia, West Asia and Africa over the past two years, the company is looking at building volumes in these markets, said Arvind Kapur, Managing Director of HyVeg, Rasi’s vegetable seed business.

Kapur said there exists a huge market potential in these geographies and the acceptance of vegetable seeds is pretty high.

## **Cardamom gains on local demand, export enquiries**

Empty pipelines and no carry-over stocks keep demand high

### **Kochi, January 5:**

Small cardamom gained flavour on domestic and export demand even as arrivals showed an upsurge last week at auctions held in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

At the Cardamom Planters' Association auction at Bodi on Monday, the average price moved up to Rs. 839 a kg from Rs. 786.44 a kg last Monday.

Total arrivals stood at 50 tonnes, of which 48 tonnes were sold.

Empty pipelines in the consuming markets coupled with no carry-over stocks in the primary and terminal markets continued to maintain the demand.

At the Sunday auction held by the Kerala Cardamom Processing and Marketing Company, arrivals stood at 120.6 tonnes as against to 29.3 tonnes on the previous Sunday and the entire quantity was sold. The maximum price was at Rs. 1,107 a kg and the minimum was Rs. 653. The auction average increased to Rs.847.99 from Rs. 829.68.

Total arrivals during the season so far stood 10,767 tonnes against 11,722 tonnes in the same period a year ago. Sales were at 10,569 tonnes against 11,347 tonnes respectively.

The individual auction average as on January 4 this year was at around Rs. 830 a kg and on the corresponding date last year was at around Rs. 560.

Prices of graded varieties moved up last week and the prices in the open market in Bodinayakannur in Rs./kg were: 8mm bold: 980 - 1040; 7-8mm: 900-925; 6-7mm: 750-770; below 6 mm: 700-710. The weather conditions remained favourable but without any rains last week.

## **AP sugar farmers demand Rs. 3,500/tonne**

### **Hyderabad, January 5:**

Sugarcane farmers in Andhra Pradesh have demanded a price of Rs. 3,500 per tonne for 8.5 per cent recovery for the current season that began in October.



The Federation of Sugarcane Growers' Association has appealed to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to convince the Union Government to announce the Fair and Remunerative Price (FMP) of Rs. 3,500 for the upcoming procurement season.

The association asked the State Government to convene a tripartite meeting, inviting growers, factory managements and the government officials to discuss various problems the sector is facing.

“We need some financial relief to tide over the severe crisis.

“We request the Government to pass on the purchase tax benefit of Rs. 60/tonne like in the past. It will reduce the financial burden to some extent,” NSV Sharma, Secretary of the Federation, told *BusinessLine* over phone from Hanuman Junction in Krishna district.

“The cost of production has been increasing significantly over the last few years. But the price we are getting is far less than what we are spending. While the farmers have been demanding Rs. 3,500 for the last four years, the factories have almost capped it below Rs. 2,700, causing huge losses to the farmers,” he said.

## **Memorandum**

The Federation submitted a memorandum to the State Government, relating the problems the sugarcane sector was facing. The Federation leader said the factories should bear the cost of harvesting and transport as factories in some States do.

## **Crop research institute issues alert on pests**

### **Mangaluru, January 5:**

Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI), Kasaragod, has issued an alert against invasive pests of coconut.

According to P Chowdappa, Director of CPCRI, the pest *Brontispa longissima* (the invasive pest) has caused tremendous yield loss in coconut plantations in countries such as Maldives, Myanmar and Indonesia.

Any invasive pest entering a new habitat would be catastrophic as it breeds prolific in a shorter period of time in the absence of its natural enemies, he said.

Though *Brontispa longissima* has not been reported from India so far, Chowdappa urged scientists in all the institutes of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and other stakeholders, including Coconut Development Board and the officials in the departments of agriculture and horticulture, to keep strict vigil and bring to the notice of ICAR-CPCRI any incidence of the pest.

Quoting V Krishnakumar, Head of the regional station of CPCRI at Kayamkulam, a press release by CPCRI said here on Monday that strict quarantine should be put into practice in all airports and seaports to check any accidental introduction of *Brontispa longissima*. This pest has already caused severe economic setbacks in Maldives and other adjoining countries.

Chandrika Mohan, Principal Scientist (Agri Entomology) of CPCRI, alerted about another invasive pest, *Aspidiotus rigidus*, which has ravaged the Philippines causing extensive damage to the plantations. “*Aspidiotus destructor*, a close relative of *Aspidiotus rigidus*, is already prevailing in our country, causing gradient outbreaks,” she said.

### **Sugar output rises 27% as UP, Maharashtra mills produce more**

#### **New Delhi, January 5:**

Sugar production is up 27.3 per cent in the first three months of the 2014-15 season that began in October to hit 74.61 lakh tonnes (lt) as on December 31, according to data released by the Indian Sugar Mills Association on Monday.

Mills produced 58.63 lt of sugar in the corresponding period of 2013-14 and the nearly 16 lt rise in production has been attributed to mills in Uttar Pradesh (UP) beginning cane crushing operations a week earlier than last season.

“This year’s production is slightly higher than last year mainly because the UP mills started their crushing operations almost a week before compared with last year.

“Sugar recovery till is higher at 9.25 per cent, which was 8.75 per cent last year,” said an ISMA statement.

The sugar producers’ body said the number of mills operating on December 31, 2014 was 481, four less than at the same period a year ago.

Maharashtra and UP, the two largest sugar-producing States, recorded a 47 per cent and 55 per cent rise, respectively.

Some 171 mills in Maharashtra produced 32.75 lt, about 10.41 lt more than at the same time last season when 155 mills had started operations. In UP, 117 mills began crushing by December 31, and produced 17.21 lt as compared to 11.19 lt produced by 119 mills in 2013-14. Karnataka's output fell marginally to 12 lt from 12.34 lt with 63 mills operating now against 59 last year.

Only 15 mills operated in Tamil Nadu, unlike 35 last season and the State produced 0.65 lt of the sweetener as compared to 1.62 lt previously. All 11 mills in Bihar have begun operations and doubled output to record 1.8 lt so far.

ISMA said that ex-mill prices had been falling across the country with Maharashtra and Karnataka selling the sweetener between Rs. 2,450-2,500/quintal. Prices in UP are ruling between Rs. 2,600-2,650/quintal.

### **Falling prices**

“It has become difficult for the mills to even pay FRP (fair & remunerative price) as ex-mill prices are substantially below the cost of production,” the association said.