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Special attention on technology transfer to farmers



C. Rajendran (left), Joint Secretary, Department of Agriculture, visiting a stall after inaugurating the Southern Regional Agricultural Fair as part of ‘Farmers’ Day’ at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in Coimbatore on Tuesday. Vice-Chancellor of TNAU K. Ramasamy (right) is in the picture.— Photo: M.Periasamy

The Ministry of Agriculture has been paying special attention on transfer of technology to farmers for increase in yield and their income, said O.P. Dhahiya, Director, Farm Information, Ministry of Agriculture, here on Tuesday at the Southern Regional Agricultural Fair and State-level Farmers’ Day 2015.

At the inauguration at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, he said that the Government was keen on strengthening extension services to provide maximum benefit to farmers.

To transfer technology and strengthen extension services, the Ministry encouraged conduct of training programmes, regional fairs, publications, exhibitions and production of films.

C. Rajendran, Joint Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Government of Tamil Nadu, said that the Government’s motto was to double production and triple farmers’ income.

The Government laid emphasis on value addition and establishment of storage facilities, he added.

He congratulated the Vice-Chancellor of the University for being adjudged the best Vice-Chancellor among the heads of the 32 State Agriculture Universities in the country.

K. Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor, TNAU, said that the University organised regional fairs with the objective of helping farmers know the latest in technology and the scientists and extension workers understand the farmers' need.

In Tamil Nadu, though 11 districts in the last year and 31 in the year before were declared drought hit, food grain production in the State stood at 113 lakh metric tonne.

The State introduced the high-yielding 'Co 8' green gram variety with 55-day duration to combat the drought and that propelled the State to the number one position in pulses production, the Vice-Chancellor said.

Integrated agri extension system launched

Aimed at holistic development of agriculture in the State, the Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram district administrations launched a farmers-oriented integrated agricultural extension system, a revamp of training and visit system.

Collector T. Munusamy launched the system at Tirupachethi village panchayat in Tirupuvanam block on Monday. The system has been designed for closer interaction with farmers after farming grower clusters at all village panchayats in the district.

The system, announced by former Chief Minister Jayalalitha in the Assembly, was also aimed at helping the farmers to double crop production and triple their farm income by maintaining a closer interaction with agricultural officers, the Collector said. The system would be implemented in all the 445 village panchayats in Sivaganga district. Manamadurai MLA M. Gunasekaran, District Panchayat Union Chairman Shivdevkumar, Additional Director of Agriculture (Research) P. Sankaralingam and district agricultural officers participated in the function, an official release said.

Ramanathapuram

The system was launched in all the 11 blocks, an official release said. Deputy Directors of Agriculture R. Arivasan and S. Subramanian launched the system at Kazhugoorani village panchayat on Monday.

Under the system, the Assistant Agricultural Officers (AAOs) would form permanent commodity-based farmers' groups at village levels and

enlighten the farmers on the recent technological development and provide them with valuable inputs during field visits from Monday to Thursday in the first and third weeks of every month.

The AAOs would divide the village panchayats in the district among themselves and form the clusters, comprising 20 to 25 farmers for each crop in the villages. During the field visits, the Agricultural Officers would meet the demands of the farming community and help them double their farm production.

Preserving indigenous knowledge



Cheruvayal Raman

Cheruvayal Raman from Wayanad, Kerala was conferred the prestigious Rice Genome award by the Government of India for his work in traditional seed preservation.

Raman is credited with preserving 40 traditional rice varieties and also sharing it with other farmers in his region.

A strong supporter of natural farming, Raman says that seeds are the sons of nature and should not be let to die. Aromatic rice varieties such as Gandhakasala, Jeerakasala, Kayama etc, medicinal ones such as Navara, Chennellu, Chomala, drought resistant varieties such as Kalladiyaryan,

Karuthan and many more are currently being grown and preserved by him.

“It is a knowledge handed down over to me by my parents and I intend to carry it forward to the future generations,” says Raman.

Raman does not use a tractor for ploughing. According to him, tractors cause damage to the seeds and the soil. He stores the harvested dried seeds in vessels called Thumba, Koottum- Kandeem in Malayalam. He gives the seeds away for free to interested farmers on the condition that they return in double the next year.

Each year, Raman distributes an average of 150 kg of seeds of 30 varieties to 250 farmers and interested persons across the country.

Raman has a message for school children: “ Students should realise that farming is important for the world to survive. Only if they are aware of the significance of farming, will the food security of future generation be ensured. They should interact and know farmers of their area better.”

(M.J. Prabu is The Hindu’s Agriculture correspondent. He writes the popular Farmer’s Notebook. Write to him at prabu.mj@thehindu.co.in)

Food testing for quality set to become mandatory soon

Centre to set up 50 more food testing labs

Testing for the quality of food is set to become mandatory soon as the Union government is setting up 50 more food testing laboratories.

An indication in this regard was given by Indian Council of Agricultural Research Deputy Director-General (Engineering) K. Alagasundaram on Tuesday.

He told presspersons on the sidelines of a workshop on post-harvest technology, organised jointly by the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, and the ICAR here, that the Centre would set up 50 food testing laboratories in the next five years.

Later, he told *The Hindu* that the Centre had funded 80 such laboratories across the country and about 40 of them had commenced operations. As per the funding policy, government institutions would get cent per cent monetary support if they want to set up such food testing laboratories while private companies would get 50 per cent funds, he said.

ICAR Assistant Director-General Kanchan K. Singh told presspersons that the ICAR had sanctioned a Farm Mechanisation Centre to the UAS-B under the All-India Co-ordinated Research Project. The Rs. 62-lakh centre had been sanctioned for developing innovative post-harvest technologies and machineries that would help farmers.

“Early detection of pest attack will save paddy crop”



Experts from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University inspecting pest-affected paddy fields of Uthamapalayam block in Theni district on Tuesday.

Early detection of pest attack in paddy crop will help entomologists control pests and save 10,000 hectares of standing crop in the block. Speedy implementation of control measures will prevent loss, according to Deputy Director of Agriculture D. Chandrasekaran.

Inspecting pest-affected areas along with a team of experts, including entomologist and pathologists from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, at Kokilapuram village on Tuesday, he said army worm attack was detected in the fields.

Entomologists also found early infestation of leaf folder. The larvae folded leaves, ate green tissues and produced white streaks.

Rise in humidity in the fields increased the pest attack, and it would spread from one field to another through irrigation water, he added.

Blast disease had also attacked paddy fields, but the damage was not much as the crop was only 25 days old. The team also collected samples for laboratory tests to check whether there was any viral attack in plants.

The Deputy Director advised agriculture officers to strengthen inspection of paddy fields to discover problems at early stage.

Earlier, paddy farmers complained to the officials that pests and diseases attacked a large extent of paddy fields in Uthamapalayam block and asked the experts to visit the fields.

The experts warned that indiscriminate and unwanted use of pesticide would be harmful to the natural enemies of these pests and also caused environmental pollution.

A team of experts, comprising entomologist K. Suresh, pathologist A. Vijaya Samundeeswari and Assistant Director of Agriculture Raj Manoharan, inspected more than seven paddy fields and suggested control measures to farmers.

A section of farmers in Uthamapalyam had recently informed the officials of pest attack and sought their advice to control it.

A.P. Agros to be revived in a big way

A.P. Agros will be revived in a big way to bring it closer to farming community and extend its services to them in farm mechanisation, seed and fertiliser supply.

Agriculture Minister P. Pulla Rao who reviewed Agriculture and allied departments over two days said here on Tuesday that cattle breeding, sheep rearing, pisciculture would be given further impetus as they were better income generating activities.

Cage culture for fisheries development in the fields popular in Chhattisgarh would be promoted and the proposal for fish farming in sea edges would also be considered.

‘Include crop loss owing to wild animals’

The Karnataka Agriculture Price Commission (KAPC) has decided to propose including crop losses owing to wild animals under the crop insurance scheme. KAPC Chairman T.N. Prakash Kammaradi told presspersons here on Tuesday that he would hold consultations with the Forest Department in this regard.

Unchecked export to Pakistan leaves vegetables in Delhi pricy

According to Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee member Mahinder Kumar, unregulated export of vegetables to Pakistan has led to prices here shooting up by nearly 50 per cent.— File Photo: V.V. Krishnan

Prices of vegetables in the city seem to have escalated with each passing day last week and the increase can be attributed to unbridled export of vegetables to Pakistan.

Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee member Mahinder Kumar said unregulated export of vegetables to Pakistan has led to prices here shooting up by nearly 50 per cent.

“Wholesale prices were stable last month. However, over the past week, prices have gone up as key vegetables like tomatoes are being exported to Pakistan,” he said.

“What happened this time around was that rains were untimely and the harvest was not much. Despite the produce not being enough, export to Pakistan continues unabated. Truckloads of vegetables like potatoes, peas and tomatoes continue to be exported, resulting in escalation of cost here.”

The government, Mr. Kumar said, has failed to frame a policy to ensure that vegetables are exported only when there is sufficient stock in the city. At least 100 trucks of vegetables are being sent to Pakistan daily. One truck can carry 20 tonnes of a particular vegetable.

The Delhi Government, on the other hand, has claimed that prices of onions, potatoes, tomatoes and other vegetables are 10 per cent to 30 per cent less than last year. It also claimed that prices of many vegetables have shown a decline in the past three months, with supply of key vegetables being much higher in December 2014 compared to that in December 2013.

Meanwhile, tomatoes, which used to cost Rs.5 per kg in the wholesale market, are currently being sold for Rs.25 per kg. Peas, which were available in the wholesale markets across Delhi for Rs.10 per kg, are being sold for nearly Rs.30 per kg. Similarly, prices of capsicum have gone up to Rs.70 per kg from Rs.45 per kg a week ago.

Traders at Azadpur mandi added that the wholesale price of potatoes has increased to Rs.20 per kg from Rs.10-Rs.15 per kg a week ago. However, the price of onions is more or less stable at Rs.15-Rs.20 per kg.

Traders say that cauliflower, which is generally available for Rs.10 per kg, is currently selling for Rs.80 per kg. However, this is due to farmers opting not to grow cauliflower considering less returns last year.

The bad news, they say, is that prices are going to increase further and there is no respite in sight

Industry wants Jaitley to focus on farm sector

‘Centre must push for augmenting investment in agri-infrastructure’

In pre-Budget consultations with Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Tuesday, industry leaders demanded priority for the farm sector to improve agriculture productivity, raise rural incomes and promote inclusive growth. Industry lobbies demanded that tax officers be appraised on performance parameters rather than the tax revenue raised.

“Since a large part of India’s population works in the farm sector, we impressed upon the Finance Minister that rural India needs due focus ... and that farm incomes are very important for raising consumption spending in the economy,” Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) President Ajay Shriram told *The Hindu*.

The Centre’s focus has largely been on the manufacturing sector, improving the ease of doing business and the “Make in India” campaign. Mr. Jaitley said in his opening remarks that ease of doing business was a high priority, an official release said.

The Minister said work was being carried out on a task given by the Prime Minister to improve India’s ranking on the ease of doing business index, the release said.

“We told the Finance Minister that Gujarat’s experience of bringing over nine lakh hectares of land under drip irrigation has to be taken pan-India, and the Centre should push for augmenting investment in agri-infrastructure and may be even use MGNREGS [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme] funds for it,” Mr. Shriram said.

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry President Jyotsna Suri urged Mr. Jaitley to “make earnest efforts to move away from an aggressive revenue approach and provide a genuine non-adversarial and conducive tax environment,” the release said. She demanded that the government set tax revenue targets realistically and exclude tax revenue raised from the performance appraisal parameters of tax officers.

The lobbies wanted the Centre to take up expenditure projects, especially in infrastructure for building new capacities in the economy.

They appreciated the Centre for its efforts to introduce the Constitution Amendment Bill on the Goods and Services Tax, the ‘Make in India’ campaign, fiscal prudence, the direct benefit transfer scheme rollout and subsidy rationalisation. They called for steps for reviving the investment cycle and a slew of tax incentives and concessions.

The Finance Minister must step up efforts to achieve the disinvestment target, expanding it to include strategic sales of loss-making public sector units and also for paring down government stake in public sector banks to 51 per cent with the aim of infusing capital in them, they said.

‘TRS govt. will focus on farming’

Minister for Agriculture Pocharam Srinivas Reddy has assured that farming would be made profitable under TRS government.

Addressing a gathering after formally inaugurating the training programme for Agriculture Officers at Gajwel on Tuesday, Mr. Srinivas Reddy said that the mandal was one of the three selected for soil testing in the State to suggest farmers on the crops.

The scientists from Nagpur, Bangalore and other areas are involved in soil testing.

Agriculture Principal Secretary Poonam Malakondaiah, Commissioner Janardhan Reddy, Lok Sabha member K. Prabhakar Reddy and others were present.

CPCRI issues red alert on invasive pests

The Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) has issued a red alert against the possibility of three invasive pests destroying coconut palms across the country.

The pests, hitherto restricted to Maldives, Myanmar, Indonesia and the Philippines, are *Brontispa longissima*, *Aspidiotus rigidus* and *Wallacea sp.*, among others.

P. Chowdappa, Director, CPCRI, has, in a release, said that the pests could hit bio-security of the country if they entered India as there were no effective control measures, either through chemical treatment, available now. He asked the ports, airports, quarantine officials and departments of agriculture and horticulture to be on the alert and report spotting of any of them to the CPCRI.

“Any invasive pest entering a new habitat (introduced country) would be catastrophic as it breeds prolifically in a shorter period of time in the absence of its natural enemies,” he said in the release.

The release said that there should be strict quarantine procedures in place in all airports and seaports to check any accidental introduction of them through baggage of ornamental palms and other genetic resources. They might spread through the trans-boundary movement of ornamental palms and other planting material.

The release said that *Brontispa longissima* has caused tremendous yield loss in Maldives, Union of Myanmar, Indonesia, affecting the coconut-based tourism industry and livelihood security as well. Hard-scale insect, *Aspidiotus rigidus*, has ravaged the Philippines causing extensive damage.

“Intensive surveys conducted by ICAR-CPCRI at South and Little Andamans have revealed the occurrence of a new chrysomelid beetle, *Wallacea sp.* feeding on coconut seedlings in nursery. Though 80 per cent to 90 per cent of seedlings were infested by the pest damaging 40 per cent leaf area, seedling mortality was not observed. *Wallacea sp.* could not be located from adult palms, but prevalent in abandoned, unattended and old nurseries. Invasive nature of *Wallacea sp.* is under scrutiny, as a close relative, *Wallaceana sp.* was reported from Indonesia,” the release said.

Mr. Chowdappa told *The Hindu* that if *Brontispa longissima* and *Aspidiotus rigidus* hit the palms, their leaves started drying up and the palms never recovered. When *Wallacea sp.* hit, leaves of seedlings turned yellow and never grew. He said as of now no effective treatment to control them was available. If they hit the coconut plantations, there could be severe economic setback.

Meeting next month

The CPCRI, functioning under the Indian Council for Agricultural Research, Delhi, will conduct a meeting of airport, seaport, farmers and scientists at its headquarters in Kasaragod, Kerala, in the first week of next month to create awareness among all on the possible threats by invasive pests to coconut palms.

CPCRI Director P. Chowdappa told *The Hindu* that the meeting would be conducted as a precautionary measure to alert all stakeholders in the country.

Krishi mela on Saturday

Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kasaragod, will organise a krishi mela in its regional station at Vitla on January 10, according to its director P. Chowdappa.

The event will aim to create awareness among farmers on technological advances in arecanut and cocoa farming to enhance profits.

Some of the major events proposed in the mela include interface between farmers and scientists, interactive seminars on arecanut-based crop system for enhancing profits and advances in cocoa production, quizzes for farmers and students, exhibition of new technology and farm innovations by research institutes, krishi vignana kendras, private entrepreneurs and innovative farmers. D.V. Sadananda Gowda, Union Minister for Law and Justice, will inaugurate the mela and N. K.

Krishnakumar, Deputy Director General (Horticulture), Indian Council for Agricultural Research, will deliver the key note address.

Exhibits on plantation crop and allied sectors and the produce of innovative farmers will also be displayed. About 40 exhibition stalls are expected to be put up during the mela

Some of the subjects for discussion include the integrated pest and disease management in arecanut and cocoa, post-harvest processing, the marketing and the value addition for arecanut and cocoa, containing the monkey menace in farms and crop production in arecanut and cocoa.

The production and the productivity of arecanut in India increased over the last four decades.

The area under arecanut in India increased from 0.167 million hectares in 1971 to 0.451 million hectares in 2014. During the same period the production has increased from 0.141 million tonnes to 0.626 million tonnes and the productivity of arecanut showed a tremendous increase from 843 kg per hectare to 1,385 kg per hectare.

Arecanut high yielding varieties released by CPCRI include Mangala, Sumangala, Sreemangala, Mohitnagar, Swarnamangala, Kahikuchi tall, Madhuramanagala and Nalbari.

Union Minister for Law and Justice D.V. Sadananda Gowda will inaugurate it

Advanced farm equipment showcased


Agriculture Department officials showcased advanced farm equipment that would be given to farmers on hire in Bidar on Tuesday. Machines like bailer, mulcher, stubble-shaver, mini-tractor, sugarcane trash-cutter and thrasher, sugarcane cultivator, combined harvester and other equipment were introduced to farmers who had gathered in the field of Nagesh Patil in Kolar-K village. Some machines can be operated by attaching them to bullock carts or tractors.

Others run on diesel or electricity. Ravi Deshmukh, senior scientist from the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, urged farmers not to burn the sugarcane stubbles and leaves after harvesting the crops.

“They should be trashed and used as manure or feed supplements for animals,” he said. He said that farmers would save a lot of money if they recycled sugarcane crop waste rather than burning it.

Neelamma Shivanand Wadde, president, Zilla panchayat, G.T. Putra, joint director of agriculture, and others were present.

Good rain, but groundwater table down

THE WATER SCENARIO	
TAMIL NADU RECEIVED 43 CM RAINFALL DURING OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2014	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Tamil Nadu's major reservoirs have better storage now than last year	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Water managers feel confident of maintaining the supply without any difficulty	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Northeast monsoon deficient in eight districts● Groundwater table down in dozen districts, as per December readings, compared to the previous year	

Despite the State receiving considerable amount of rainfall during the northeast monsoon (October-December), the groundwater position in several districts has declined, triggering doubts about the smooth supply of water in the coming summer.

According to the readings taken in December 2014, a dozen districts registered fall in the water table compared to what it was a year ago. Seven of them — Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Dharmapuri, Thanjavur and Perambalur — saw the table going down by about one metre. Less rainfall has been cited as the major reason for the fall in the table.

Though the readings for January are expected to be available in a week or so, there may not be much change in the situation as the rainfall in December occurred mostly in southern districts, where the groundwater position was generally better now than that of 2014, says an official.

For the entire State, the rainfall in the last three months was 43 cm, barely short of the anticipated 44 cm. Five out of 32 districts — Erode, The Nilgiris, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and Tuticorin — received rainfall

in excess. While 13 districts fell under the category of “normal rainfall,” eight districts registered deficient rainfall. Among the eight districts were Kancheepuram, Vellore, Tiruchi and Madurai, which received rainfall, varying from 18 cm in Vellore to 26 cm in Tiruchi to 32 cm in Madurai to 44 cm in Kancheepuram. The surplus districts included Tirunelveli (85 cm rainfall); Ramanathapuram (61 cm) and The Nilgiris (59 cm). Chennai (72 cm rainfall) and Coimbatore (31 cm) form part of those districts which got normal rainfall during the season.

An official in-charge of urban water supply maintains that there will not be any difficulty in meeting the water requirements this summer as a substantial number of urban water supply schemes are dependent on the Cauvery river. Once the samba crop is harvested in a month, there will be enough water in the Mettur dam, whose water level was much higher on Tuesday compared to the situation a year ago, the official points out. The Vellore, Melur and Hogenakkal water supply schemes, all using the Cauvery as the source, are expected to address the water needs of people in the urban local bodies sufficiently this year. Coimbatore is not likely to meet any problem as its reservoirs have comfortable storage. In the case of Chennai, the Krishna water supply scheme and the Veernam scheme, supplemented by two desalination plants, will ensure adequate water, the official hopes.

White arecanut shoots to Rs. 200 a kg

As white arecanut (chali) harvested during the past 45 days began arriving in the market, its prices have touched Rs. 200 a kg — an all-time high for the fresh crop season, according to arecanut stakeholders.

Ramesh Kaintaje, an arecanut grower and close observer of the arecanut market, told *The Hindu* that never in the past had the prices of new arrivals of white arecanut fetched such high prices in the arrival season. It was always below Rs. 165 a kg. Last January the prices hovered between Rs. 150-158 a kg.

Manchi Srinivasa Achar, president, All India Areca Growers' Association, Puttur, said the prices had slowly shot up from Rs. 165 a kg a fortnight ago to Rs. 200 a kg since the past week.

Konkodi Padmanabha, president, the Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Ltd. (Campco) said there was a shortage of old stock of white arecanut in the market, especially in Gujarat. Many growers did not have old stock.

In addition, as the price of the red variety of arecanut was high (between Rs. 300 to Rs. 360 a kg) there was a demand for white arecanut, which was resulting in higher prices of new arrivals of white arecanut.

A Campco official said that if prices of old stock of white arecanut maintained an upward trend or remained stable, prices of new arrivals of white arecanut also would not come down. He said the demand from Gujarat would continue till March. The official said that if the growers released the produce to the market in small quantity at regular intervals the prices might sustain. If growers released the produce at one go, the prices might fall.

Heavy demand from Gujarat for white arecanut, high price of red arecanut cited as reasons

‘Ricing’ star



• Bisman Deu. (Below) Ashes of burnt rice husks being dumped near a rice mill. File Photo



New Delhi student finds green alternative to burning tons of rice husks – Green wood

When Bisman Deu saw her family burning mounds of rice waste at their farm in southern India, she was convinced the material could be put to better use.

The Delhi student, 16, came up with the idea of recycling the unwanted rice husks and straw into an alternative building material. “I’d go to my family’s farm, where my dad grew up, for the holidays, and see them burning piles and piles of it. The harvesting months are the worst and the black smoke gets quite harmful, causing people to have problems breathing, as well as polluting the environment,” Deu said.

More than half of the world’s people eat rice as a staple food and, for every five tons of rice harvested, one ton of husk is produced. The cereal residue has little commercial value for farmers, but Deu hopes to change that. “I want to provide cheap and affordable housing material to people, because many live in homes made of mud, which can’t always withstand

the weather. This would mean farmers also have a new source of income,” she said.

After asking farmers how they would like to use the recycled product, Deu took to her mother’s kitchen to create a prototype, with support from the Social Innovation Relay initiative. Mixing the waste with a resin and pressing the mixture into particleboards, she came up with what she calls “green wood”.

She says the product is fungi-and mould-proof, making it a viable option for building houses. Deu also plans to use the material to build low-cost school furniture. “I think it could be a local, sustainable solution to some of the problems we see here,” she said.

Deu is still perfecting her prototype but has received interest from Indian businesses. Deu’s innovation was featured in Unicef’s 2015 state of the world’s children report alongside offerings by other young inventors.—

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Good news for cultivators of forest land

Speaker Kagodu Thimmappa, who has consistently opposed the large-scale eviction of farmers and tribals from forest lands, told presspersons here on Tuesday that the Law Department had now opined that such farmers need not be evicted.

The Speaker said that following the legal opinion, if a Government Order was issued in this regard, it would facilitate regularisation of farming on forest lands.

“Once the GO is issued, the government can confer occupation rights on these farmers over the land they are cultivating. There are more than three lakh applications seeking regularisation in this category,” he said.

Stating that the work of renovating the Legislative Assembly hall would be completed by January 25, the Speaker said the next session of the legislature would be in February

Farmers oppose waste management plant

Farmers have opposed the move by the city municipal council to establish a solid waste management plant on 26.5 acres of land at Yadahalli in Kolar taluk. A delegation of farmers from Yadahalli and neighbouring villages of Beeramanhalli, Veerapur, Thoradevadahalli, Arahalli and Mooradahalli, led by the district unit of the KPRS, have petitioned the district administration against setting up of the plant. In a memorandum submitted to the Deputy Commissioner, the farmers said life in the rural

belt would be affected urged the authorities to roll back the decision to set up the plant.

0 DPCs opened for procuring paddy

Five lakh tonnes fixed as procurement target for Nagapattinam district



District Collector S. Palanisamy inaugurating the direct purchase centre for paddy at Pattamangalam village in Nagapattinam district on Monday.— Photo: DIPR

The Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation has opened 50 direct purchase centres (DPCs) for procuring paddy from farmers during the samba and thaladi harvest season.

Disclosing this after inaugurating the procurement for the Kharif season at a DPC at Pattamangalam village in Keezhvelur taluk, Collector S.Palanisamy said that initially 15 DPCs have been opened in Nagapattinam division and 35 in Mayiladuthurai division.

Seminar on farmers tomorrow

A seminar on 'Indian Administration and farmers' will be held at Karnatak Vidyavardhak Sangha here on Thursday.

Akhila Bharat Veerashiva Mahasabha national vice-president Gururaj Hunashimarad told presspersons here on Tuesday that the seminar had been organised as part of 70th birthday celebrations of the former Union Minister Babagouda Patil.

The former Speaker K.R. Rameshkumar would inaugurate it.

More DPCs would be opened depending on the requirement. If there were more than 300 bags at a single place, a mobile DPC would visit the spot to procure the paddy from the farmers, he said.

Paddy has been raised on 1.02 lakh hectares during the samba season in the district. A procurement target of five lakh tonnes has been fixed for the district.

Farmers would get Rs.1,410 a quintal for common variety and Rs.1,470 a quintal for fine variety at the DPCs. TNCSC employees have been instructed to ensure that farmers did not face any problem in selling their produce at the DPCs. Adequate cash and stock of gunny bags have been kept ready.

Mr.Palanisamy instructed officials to ensure that farmers were not made to wait for long to sell their produce at the DPCs.

Nagai Mali, MLA, M.Radhakrishnan, Senior Regional Manager, TNCSC, and other officials were present.

Call to use technology to increase profit in dairy sector



B. Ashok, Vice Chancellor, Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU), has said that technology interventions are the need of the hour to maximise profit in dairy farming sector.

Speaking after inaugurating a two-day training programme on 'Sustainable Dairy Production,' as part of the Global Innovation initiative of the KVASU, at its headquarters at Pookode here on Monday, Dr. Ashok said the KVASU would collaborate with Malabar Regional Co-operative Milk Producers Union (MRCMPU) to provide veterinary and entrepreneurship services to dairy farmers in the region.

The KVASU would provide quality mineral mixtures to dairy co-operative societies. In order to maximise profit, dairy farmers should seriously think of value addition in dairying, he said.

Dr. Ashok said sustainable livestock farming aimed at producing livestock taking into account economic, social and environmental issues

as well as global food safety and food security concerns. A global farm platform constituted for the purpose would address these major issues, Dr. Ashok said adding that KVASU, University of Bristol in the U.K., Wisconsin and Kansas Universities in the U.S., and Zhejiang University in China were the other partners of the platform.

The two-day programme is organised jointly by the KVASU, MRCMPU and the British Council.

Lakshadweep coconut farmers fail to cash in on organic tag

Coconut farmers unable to fetch premium price for produce

The land of Lakshadweep islands has received organic certification but the farmers are unable to realise a premium for the farm produce there. Coconut farming is the mainstay on the islands, but neither nuts nor copra fetch a premium, falsifying the belief that organic farming will bring fortune to the farmers.

The land belonging to the nine islands of Lakshadweep had been certified organic by the Aluva-based international organic certifying agency Indocert. “Chemical imports have been banned by the government there and the coconut palms are grown under natural surroundings,” Sudip C. Nair, Inspection Coordinator, Indocert, told *The Hindu*. The organic certification, accorded last year, is valid for one year and will have to be renewed later this year, he said. Organic produce gets a higher price in markets across the world, but the Lakshadweep farmer is far from realising it, exposing the chinks in the armour of the marketing system.

Production facility

Lakshadweep can benefit much from marketing organic products such as desiccated coconut and coconut milk, but that would require separate organic certification. Though the Lakshadweep Development Corporation has a production facility on the islands for making such products on a small scale, there is no separate organic certification for them. Farming in the Union Territory is eligible for aid under several government schemes, but there is clear lack of proper follow-up as the officials are transferred from island to island even before schemes get implemented, he pointed out.

No special price structure has been quoted for the organic copra by the market administrators, says Ahmed Koya, Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Lakshadweep, who is currently on deputation as Secretary of the Federation, in Kozhikode. It is for the government to float a base price for a new category called organic copra, he says. The

federation aims to sell 3,500 tonnes of organic copra in Kerala for the six-month period ending May this year. The copra will be distributed from Beypore and Mangaluru.

Coconut is the only major crop on the islands, with a production of 553 lakh nuts a year. The area under cultivation exceeds 2,600 hectares, according to the data available from the government. There is high productivity of over 20,000 nuts a hectare on the island, with an average yield from a palm per year put at 80 plus.

Farmers unable to realise a premium for their produce.

Broader plan to fight water hyacinth menace proposed



The Ernakulam District Panchayat and the district administration have responded positively to a proposal from Maradu municipal authority for a district-level plan to get rid of water hyacinth from water bodies.

Both the district administration and the district panchayat are likely to work out a comprehensive action plan against water hyacinth in water bodies in the district, said Maradu Municipal Chairman T.K. Devarajan here on Monday.

He said that a broader plan was needed to fight the menace, which had choked water bodies in the district and other parts of the State. He said that a district level plan was needed and that the authorities concerned had responded positively to a suggestion from the Maradu Municipality.

The municipality has succeeded to a large extent in getting rid of water hyacinths from water bodies in the municipal area. A month-long campaign, involving an expenditure of Rs. 44 lakh, was undertaken by

the municipal authority using funds also from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Mr. Devarajan said that though the water bodies within the municipal area are now more or less free of water hyacinths, there is a continuous flow of the water weeds from the eastern belts. The flow of water from Chithrapuzha threatens to fill the Chambakkara canal, Nettoor, Kunadannoor and other areas linked to the Vembanad with water hyacinths, he said.

Water hyacinths are widely used as an organic input in farms. There is also scope for using the water weeds for making value-added products.



New approach to treat fatty liver disease

For years, researchers focused on the role of altered insulin action in the liver in the production of triglycerides. (Source: Thinkstock Images)

A team of researchers from Yale University has found that triglycerides, a type of fat in the blood and liver, are produced in the liver independent of insulin action in the liver.

The results provide new insights into the pathogenesis of non-alcoholic liver disease and provides new approaches to treat fatty liver disease which is now the most common liver disease in the world.

In Type 2 diabetics, insulin fails to suppress blood sugar production by the liver while paradoxically allowing the production of hepatic triglycerides.

This combination results in multiple health risks including high blood sugar and fatty liver disease.

For years, researchers focused on the role of altered insulin action in the liver in the production of triglycerides.

However, Yale researchers tested a theory that triglycerides formed in the liver were more dependent on the delivery of fatty acids to the liver than on insulin action.

In their study, the team led by Gerald I Shulman developed a novel method to measure the rate of triglyceride production from fatty acids in three types of animals: normal rats, insulin-resistant rats fed a high-fat diet, and rats with genetically modified insulin receptors.

They found that in all of the animals tested, increased triglyceride production was primarily dependent on fatty acid delivery and not on insulin action in the liver.

The team now plan to apply similar methodology to translate their findings to insulin-resistant patients with type 2 diabetes, hyperlipidemia, and fatty liver disease.

Express recipe: How to make mouth-watering Golgappe

Light on stomach, high on flavour, Golgappa is every chaat lover's favourite snack. A good plate of Golgappa is enough to refresh your senses and make you feel happy about life. You can always go and have this mouth-watering delicacy anytime from your favourite chaat corner, but what happens when the craving sets in, but it's not feasible for you to go outside? This recipe will come to your rescue and it is very simple one.

Pani Puri can be made completely out of wheat flour or wheat flour and Suji (semolina) mixed in equal proportions or just Suji. We will be preparing Golgappas with wheat flour and Suji mixed together.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup Wheat flour/Maida

1 cup Suji (semolina)

Oil

METHOD

Take wheat flour, Suji, oil and baking powder in a bowl and mix the contents properly. With the help of water, knead a dough for hard Puri (press dough well while kneading).

Cover the dough and leave it aside for 20 minutes to ferment. Pani Puri can be made using two methods:

METHOD 1

Break off small pieces off the dough. Cover these pieces with a cloth. Roll all of the pieces, one at a time into a circle (at least 2 inches in diameter). Cover these rolled Puris with a cloth and keep them aside.

METHOD 2

Break a big round (guava sized) piece off the dough, roll this round piece into a circle (2 millimeters thick and 10-12 inches in diameter). With the help of a cover, cut as many round Golgappas as possible, take the small circles and keep them on a plate. Mix the dough that is leftover to the main dough and repeat the same process till you have made Golgappas of the entire dough.



Cut as many round Golgappas as possible, take the small circles and keep them on a plate. (Source: nishamadhulika.com)

Now take one Golgappa at a time and roll it a little making it more thin. You can roll them length wise to make long Golgappas or circular to make round golgappas.

Knead a hard dough for Golgappas

Press with a frying ladle while frying to make them puffy.

As Golgappas become puffy, lower the flame of the gas.



As Golgappas become puffy, lower the flame of the gas. (Source: nishamadhulika.com)

Until they cool off leave the Golgappas without covering else they'll turn soft.

Pour oil in a pan (kadhai) and heat. Take 4-5 Puris and put them in oil, keep them submerged by pressing them with a ladle for some time. This will make them puffy.

After Golappa is puffed, turn sides and fry on a low flame. When they turn brown take them out and put them on a plate. Now fry another 4-5 Puris. Similarly fry all the Pani Puris and take them out on a plate.



height="328" /> Fry all the Pani Puris and take them out on a plate.
(Source: nishamadhulika.com)[/caption]

HOW TO PREPARE GOLGAPPA WATER

METHOD

1

Take Jal Jeera masala and mix it in water. Add lemon and salt to this water for a good taste. Water for Pani Puri is ready. Now peel boiled potatoes and mix roasted Jeera and salt to it.

Prepare sweet Chutney and try the Golgappas to see how good they have become.

METHOD

2

You can also make your own mix for Pani Puri

Ingredients

Green coriander(Dhaniya) – 1/2 cup

Mint – 1/2 cup

Tamarind/Amchur powder – 2 tsp(or juice of 2 lemons)

Green chilly – 2

Ginger – 1 inch long piece

Roasted Jeera – 2 tsp

Black pepper powder – 1/4 tsp(if you prefer spicy)

Salt – add to taste (1 tsp)

black salt – 1 tsp

Break off the stems off the coriander and mint leaves, wash them with clean water.

Grind all the spices along with coriander and mint in a mixer to make a fine paste.

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Rain: 0

Humidity: 66

Wind: normal

Tomorrow's Forecast

Wednesday, Jan 7

Max 29° | Min 24°
Partly Cloudy

Sunrise: 06:32

Sunset: 05:55

Barometer: 1013

Thursday, Jan 8

Max 29° | Min 24°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday
Jan 9



30° | 22°

Partly Cloudy

Saturday
Jan 10



30° | 22°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday
Jan 11



22° | 22°

Partly Cloudy

Monday
Jan 12



25° | 20°

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday
Jan 13

24° | 22°

Partly Cloudy



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Tasty carrot soup for winters

Winters are a great time for having piping hot soup. What's even better is if your soup is loaded with vitamins and delivers a lip-smacking dose of health. And a bowl of hot carrot soup is just what your body needs, since it contains high amounts of Vitamin A, fiber, vitamin K, potassium, folate, manganese, phosphorous, magnesium, vitamin E and zinc. While a raw carrot might not rank high on your palette, you can opt for some easy soup instead.

Ingredients

About 250 grams carrots, washed, peeled and chopped

1 medium sized onion

1 tea spoon olive oil

1 small piece ginger

2 garlic cloves

Vegetable stalk

salt and pepper to taste

Method

Peel and chop the garlic, onions and ginger.

In a pressure cooker, heat 1 tea spoon of olive oil and add garlic, onions and ginger to it. Cook the onions until they turn light brown and add chopped carrots to it and let it sautee for under a minute on medium flame.

Now, add one cup of vegetable stalk or water, and cook until the carrots are tender. You can also close the cooker lid and wait for two whistles.

Take out the soup, cool it and put it in a blender to mince the softened carrots. Strain it and add half a cup water and re heat.

Add salt and pepper to taste and serve it hot.

Recipe: Masala omelette

Masala omelette is an all time favourite. The easiest dish to make on the go, you can fluff it up and add a variety of toppings like mushrooms, capsicum, cheese and boiled potatoes.

Ingredients:

4 eggs
4 onions, finely chopped
2 green chilies, finely chopped
2 tbsp milk
4 tbsp capsicum, finely chopped
4 tbsp tomatoes, finely chopped
Salt to taste
1/4 tsp fresh black pepper powder
1/4 tsp turmeric powder
A few coriander leaves, finely chopped
2 tbsp olive oil (or butter)

Method:

-Beat the eggs till frothy (the more you beat the egg the fluffier it will come out to be). Add the rest of the ingredients except the oil and whisk well.

-Drizzle oil in a pan, allow it to heat up. Once hot, reduce flame, add half of the egg mixture and swirl it around the pan. Cook on low to medium flame till the sides are cooked and the underside is slightly browned.

-Slowly flip over and cook the other side.

-Slide the omelette onto a plate and serve with bread or buns.

Lip-smacking Bengali dishes

We spent 24 hours with pure-bred Bengali chefs to learn everything there is to about river water fish.

Bengalis have many loves. Among them, food and intellect sit neck and neck. In chef Puranjoy Das' kitchen at Worli's Cafe Nemo, they collide when we bring up the subject of galda (pronounced golda) chingri. The large fresh water prawns are usually cooked with the shell and head on to protect the delicate and delicious, brain that Bengali aunties vouch is responsible for its exceptional taste. It's also what differentiates 'their' prawns, from 'ours'. Purnendu Bose, of Vashi's popular Bengali restaurant, Iti, smirks, "Salt water prawns are stupid. The galda chingris yellow brain is edible, unlike sea water prawns."

Disdain aside, fresh water fish, which the Bengalis are masters in cooking, is a universe unto itself. The pomfret-surmai eaters find it intimidating to negotiate.

Das simplifies it by starting with three staple varieties - Katla, Bhetki and Pabda - and a dramatic pause later, includes Ilish (Hilsa).

What's so special about Ilish? It's the tastiest fish ever. Bengali bhodrolak are always game for a healthy debate, but not when it concerns the Ilish. It's so special, often feasts are cancelled due to its unavailability. Every year, newspapers in West Bengal and Bangladesh make it a point to carry a piece on Ilish's peak season price. It's also part of every significant Bengali feast — Durga puja, Kali puja, weddings (a raw Hilsa is dressed in a sari and gold nose ring to signify the bride). Available throughout the year in Kolkata, it floods markets between September and early November, and costs Rs 700 onwards per kilo. In Mumbai, it's not surprising to see it hawking at Rs 1,500 a kilo.

A member of the herring family, Ilish schools in coastal waters and ascends up the rivers and against the tide to lay eggs. "A good Ilish is recognised by its shine which comes from swimming against the tide.

The more it swims upwards into the river, the better it tastes," says Bose, who gets a supplier from Kolkata to transport 40 kilos of it in ice boxes twice a week.

In the case of Ilish, the rules are well defined: the larger the fish, the lesser the bones and better the taste. Any Ilish that weighs less than 800 grams is not considered worthy of a reputed Bengali feast. "Be careful when buying Ilish from fish markets in Mumbai," warns Bose. Lighter and dull skinned Ilish are unlikely to hail from the Ganga. "Those could be coming in from the coast of Gujarat. They taste nothing like the real thing," he adds, predictably.

Ilish roe is to the Bengali what caviar is to Russians, but an Ilish with little or no eggs is your best bet. "It's a delicate fish. Its taste comes from the water in which it swims, and changes quickly. When it lays eggs, its flavour is transferred to the roe," explains Bose.

Which is why seasoned Bengali cooks won't wash Ilish after it has been cut. Also, unlike other varieties, the Ilish isn't fried before being slipped into gravy. "Rinsing the fish after cutting it rids it of flavour. Frying it means you are transferring flavour to the oil," says Bose.

How then do Bengalis savour the famous fried Ilish? "Each time we fry Ilish, the oil in the pan gets spiked with juices from the meat. The fried fish is served with a bowl of the oil on the side, which is drizzled over plain rice," he explains.

The handling

Ilish or Hilsa

How to cut: Once washed and scaled, Ilish is kept flat on a cutting board and chopped into three — the head, chunky tail and torso. The tail has the largest number of bones. Most restaurants pick these out before serving you boneless Ilish. The torso can make three or four robust pieces, spine intact. Holding the torso vertically and cutting it into two fillets disturbs

the spine. This can result in slices that are unable to hold their form post cooking, making it difficult for eaters to negotiate the bones and reach the flesh.

Bhetki

Bhetki (Barramundi or Asian sea bass) is the best fresh water produce for beginners, and lies at the heart of Bengali appetisers, says Das. A large fish found in abundance in Bengal, Bhetki has a long spine and no pin bones, which makes it easy to fillet and use for chops, fish fingers and kobiraji cutlets (the 'poet's cutlet' is made of mince, but sometimes, fish and is a fat patty laced in frothy beaten eggs. "It's flaky, white flesh is ideal for paturi (mustard marinated fish steamed in banana leaf) and European or Asian preparations like the steamed Bhetki with tamarind, ginger, shitake and cellophane noodles." How to cut: Take a knife, and starting at the tail, gently cut the fish along its belly, stopping just below the head. Cut outward, perpendicular to the belly. The cut will be towards the head. Continue the cut so the head can be removed. Pull out the entrails and rinse the exposed meat. Insert the knife behind the ribs along the base of the backbone and move towards the tail. Repeat on the other side. Remove the spine along with the head to get two fillets.

Katla

Katla or the major Indian carp and Rui (Rohu) are to Bengali homes what eggs and potatoes are to others — less celebrated, cheap and eaten every day. Available at fish markets in Mumbai for Rs 180 a kilo, they are what you will find in standard macher jhol and macher kaliya (snigger). How to cut: The fish is placed flat and hacked into three pieces —head, tail and torso. The torso is held perpendicular to the board and cut into two pieces, separating the back (gada) and peti (belly). Peti pieces are prized since they are tastier.

Prawn with a brain

Sweeter in taste, with firm texture and size similar to that of a baby lobster, galda chingri are cooked in almost all Bengali homes and

restaurants as the velvety chingri malai curry. However, Das, uses it in ingenious recipes such as Casino (see box), where he layers it with herbed garlic, shallot and bacon butter, topped with panko bread crumbs, oven baked on a bed of rock salt. "The only prep the galda chingri requires is a good wash. It is cooked with the shell intact to protect its delicious brain," Das says.

Bhetki Macher Paturi

Ingredients: 6 pieces of Bhetki fish fillet

For the marinade 1 tbsp turmeric, 1 tbsp red chilli powder, Salt to taste, 3 tbsp mustard oil

For Paturi 4 tbsp poppy seeds (khus khus/posto). Soak the poppy seeds in hot water for an hour, 5 tbsp mustard paste (use Bengali kasundi), 10-12 whole green chilli, 6-7 tbsp mustard oil, 1 tbsp kalonji (nigella seeds), ½ tbsp turmeric powder, Salt to taste, ½ tbsp sugar Banana leaves - cut into squares of 10 inches each (6 pieces), String to tie the banana leaves

Method:

Wash the fish and marinate it in turmeric, red chilli powder, salt and mustard oil. Keep it aside for at least 30 minutes.

Make a thick fine paste of poppy seeds, mustard powder, six whole green chillies, turmeric and salt. To it, add kalonji, sugar, 3 tbsp mustard oil and mix well.

Take a banana leaf and pour 1 tbsp mixture onto the middle. Place a fillet on it. Add 3 tbsp more of the mixture on top. Place a slit green chilli on the fish and drizzle with ½ tbsp mustard oil.

Fold the banana leaf from four sides, make a parcel and tie it with a string. Repeat with other pieces. Place the leaf parcels in a steamer for 15 minutes.

(Courtesy: Chef Puranjoy Das, Cafe Nemo)

Galda Chingri (tiger prawn) Casino

Ingredients: 1 tbsp chopped chives, 1.5 tbsp chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, 1 tbsp chopped scallion, 5 drops Tabasco sauce, 1 tbsp lemon

juice, half garlic clove, roughly chopped, pinch of kosher salt, Cayenne pepper to taste, 4 tbsp unsalted butter, softened, 50 gm bacon (2 slices), 1 tbsp shallots, 50 ml white wine, ½ cup panko crumbs, rock salt for the baking sheet (optional), 8 galda chingri (fresh water tiger prawns); butterfly them with shell on, 2.5 cup rock salt

Method:

In a mortar and pestle, pound the herbs, garlic, Tabasco, salt, lemon juice and Cayenne pepper. Add the paste to butter and whip.

Cook the bacon, shallots and white wine until just cooked through. Ensure the bacon is still soft. Remove from heat and keep aside. Once cool, combine the bacon mixture with butter mix.

Preheat the oven to 200oC. Cover a baking tray with a 1/2-inch-thick layer of rock salt. Heat the tray in the oven for 5 minutes. Place the prawns, shell side down on top of the salt. Layer equal portions of the bacon and butter mixture on butterfly prawns. Sprinkle panko bread crumbs on top of the butter. Place the try back in the oven and bake for 6-8 minutes. Serve with a lemon wedge.

Where to buy

- Partho's Fresh Fish in Thakur Village, Kandivali stocks every fresh water variety you can think up, including the tough to find Ilish and Koi. Call: 9619561717
- Pushpa, a fish seller from Khar market has been popular among fresh water fish lovers in the western suburbs. Here, customers come from as far as Borivali to buy fresh Ilish and Katla. Call: 9819611625
- The fish market in Sector 9, Vashi also has a few fresh water fish stalls.

Black seed has several healing properties

The super-saturated state of a seed holds life's immense power. In the case of black seed aka flowering plant nigella sativa, that future is free of disease and ailments.

Popular as: Black seed has been referred to as Roman coriander, black sesame, black cumin, black caraway and onion seed.

Cultural connect: Arabs call it Habbatul Barakah, meaning the 'seed of blessing.'

How to use it

- Eat black seeds plain.
- Have a teaspoon of it mixed with honey.
- Boil with water, strain and drink.
- Bring to a boil with milk. Cool, then drink the mixture.
- Grind and swallow with water or milk.
- Sprinkle on bread, cheese and pastries.

What research says

Type 2 Diabetes: 2 gm of black seed a day results in reduced fasting glucose, decreased insulin resistance, increased beta-cell function, and reduced glycosylated haemoglobin.

Epilepsy: A 2007 study with epileptic children found that a water extract significantly reduced seizure activity.

High blood pressure: The daily use of 100 mg or 200 mg of black seed extract, twice daily, for two months, had a blood pressure-lowering effect in patients with mild hypertension.

Asthma: Boiled water extracts of black seed have relatively potent anti-asthmatic effect on asthmatic airways.

Injury from a chemical weapon: A placebo-controlled human study of patients injured by chemical weapons found that boiled water extracts of black seed reduced respiratory symptoms, chest wheezing, and

pulmonary function test values, as well as reduced the need for drug treatment.

The health benefits that peanuts offer

A popular snack, especially on the beach and at hill stations, peanuts are more than just those small nuts that we munch on.

Peanuts are packed with a number of health benefits...

- Since they have minerals, vitamins and nutrients, peanuts are known to give you a quick energy boost.
- Some studies say that they work in such a way that they increase the 'good' cholesterol in the body and lower the 'bad' cholesterol.
- The mono-unsaturated fatty acids found in peanuts is said to prevent health diseases.
 - Packed with antioxidants, boiled peanuts are said to protect the body against the deterioration caused by free radicals.
 - Proteins in peanuts are said to be beneficial especially to teenagers, who are in a fast developmental phase.
 - - Reduce the risk of gallstones by consuming peanuts at least thrice a week.
 - Peanuts are also good for those who are trying to lose weight.
 - Certain studies also point out that eating peanuts regularly decreases the risk of colon cancer.
 - Improve your blood sugar levels with peanuts. The manganese present in them helps in calcium absorption and regulates blood sugar.

- The tryptophan present in peanuts, increases the level of serotonin in your body, which keeps depression at bay.
- The fibre present in peanuts helps flush out toxins from the skin, which can cause acne and pimples.

Power up with pistachios

Termed as one of the best sources of antioxidants among plant-based foods, pistachios are also low-cal. Here are some more benefits of pistas...

The Skinny-Nut: Dubbed the "skinny nut" by nutrition experts, pistachios are one of the lowest calorie, lowest fat nuts and yield the most nuts per serving; 49 kernels per ounce, compared to 23 almonds, 14 walnut halves and 18 cashews. Just a handful of pistachios - about 30 kernels - offers a deliciously satisfying 100-calorie snack.

A "Mindful" Snack: New research recently presented at the American Dietetic Association's national conference found that because they're in-shell, pistachios take longer to eat, slowing consumption and reducing overall calorie intake by 41%.

Nutrient-Rich: Pistachios are an excellent source of vitamin B6, copper and manganese and a good source of protein, fiber, thiamin, and phosphorus.

Rich in antioxidants: A recently published study by Italian researchers reveals that pistachios pack in a variety of beneficial antioxidants and phytonutrients commonly found in tea (catechins), fruits, vegetables, red wine (anthocyanins) and soyfoods (isoflavones). The researchers concluded that pistachios are one of the best sources of antioxidants among plant-based foods.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Pakistan growers want GI tag to Apeda for Basmati reviewed

Farmers' body files appeal in Intellectual Property Appellate Board at Chennai



Farm workers winnowing Basmati paddy. India and Pakistan are at loggerheads to protect the Geographical Indication for the fragrant rice.

Chennai, January 6:

Pakistan Basmati growers have sought a review of a ruling allowing the Agriculture and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda) to get Geographical Indication (GI) tag for Basmati rice.

Basmati Growers Association, a Pakistan-based entity representing the growers there, has moved the Intellectual Property Appellate Board here against a December 2013 order of the Assistant Registrar of Geographical Indications, striking down its objection to GI registration of Basmati given to Apeda.

Apeda is a statutory body for registration and protection of trademark rights, including GI, in India.

India and Pakistan are at loggerheads to protect the Geographical Indication for Basmati. Apeda has also challenged the registration of Basmati under the Trade Marks Registry at Pakistan's Intellectual Property Organisation in the Sindh High Court.

In 2013, the Pakistan body had raised objection to Apeda being given GI registration for Basmati. Following APEDA's reply to issues raised by the growers' association, the Assistant Registrar struck down the objection of Pakistan growers in December that year.

In the appeal filed with the Intellectual Property Appellate Board here, the Association expressed concern that if its objections are not heard, interests of traditional growers in Pakistan's Punjab province will be affected.

The Indian authority could exploit its registration of Basmati here to stop Pakistani growers from using the name in international markets, it argued when its appeal came up for hearing on Monday.

A clutch of other petitions too came up for hearing on the issue and it included a plea from Madhya Pradesh growers, who are also seeking GI for the Basmati they are growing.

Apeda has included Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Western Uttar Pradesh and two districts of Jammu and Kathua as the traditional GI areas for Basmati rice cultivation in its application. These are recognised under the National Agricultural Research System of the Union Agriculture Ministry.

In the December 2013 order, the GI Registry also directed Apeda to file an amended GI application, covering all regions where Basmati is cultivated, including MP, Rajasthan, Bihar and other areas in the country. But, Apeda chose to appeal against the order. The appellate board has now impleaded the Madhya Pradesh growers' petition.

Tobacco farmers should stick to crop limit: board chief

Guntur, January 6:

There is a glut in the world tobacco market as the cigarette companies are carrying huge stocks and, therefore, farmers in AP and Karnataka should strictly remain within the authorised crop limits, according to Tobacco Board Chairman K Gopal.

He was speaking here in the board office on Monday morning after releasing the calendar for the year.

Soaring supply

He said the major tobacco producing countries such as the US, Brazil and Zimbabwe had produced a lot of tobacco during the past two years and the supply right now was far in excess of the demand.

Therefore, he said, the farmers in the country should exercise great caution.

The board has authorised 276 million kg of virginia tobacco (172 m kg in AP and 104 m kg in Karnataka) for the crop year 2014-15. He said auctions were currently in progress in Karnataka and plantation has been completed in Andhra Pradesh.

He said that due to the consistent efforts of the board the crop area could be reduced in AP by 12 per cent. Gopal said the export of tobacco leaf and products from April to November, 2014, amounted to 1,54,746 tonnes valued at Rs. 3,476.09 crore against Rs. 6,059 crore during the previous financial year. Th

e exports during the current financial year are expected to exceed the mark, he added.

Chile set to ship more cherries to India

Customs duty cut as trade pact with the South American nation expands



Mumbai, January 6:

The Indian consumer stands to benefit with Chile and India expanding their existing trade agreement and significantly reducing fruit export tariffs to India.

While cherries and kiwifruit are the two categories with strong scope for growth, a huge shipment of cherries is already making its way to India, according to traders.

The global market for cherries is dominated by Chile, which has a Rs. 3,700 crore (\$600 million) cherry industry. Traders said the potential for Chilean cherries in India is huge, as the current market is barely 100 tonnes per year compared with over 50,000 tonnes a year in China. Infrastructural bottlenecks have hindered the growth of the high-end fruit market in India, say exporters.

Some 65 per cent of the supply in the global cherry market is met by Chile. The US, Europe and Turkey account for the rest.

Tariff cuts

Following talks between Chile and India in October, the two countries decided to build upon their 2007 Partial Scope Trade Agreement and extend tariff reductions to 2,800 agricultural products from the earlier 474. Cherries, avocados, grapes, onions, kiwifruit, mandarins, grape, tomato pure and apple juices have been added newly to the products list.

Chile's General Directorate of International Economic Relations (DIRECON) economic director Pablo Urria said in a statement that negotiations for an expansion of the trade agreement began in 2009, to include new products to receive preferential tariffs. Under the new agreement, India's trade preference margin would increase to between 50 and 80 per cent, while for Chile it would be 80-100 per cent.

Urria said that the Indian economy is characterised by high tariff costs.

“In this context, an improvement in preferences granted by India and the inclusion of new Chilean products covered under the agreement are even more relevant, especially when the average tariff price by India reaches more than 30 per cent of agricultural products.”

Tea prices gain at Coonoor auction

Coonoor, January 6:

At least 88 per cent of teas on offer got sold at the first auctions of the coonoor Tea Trade Association last week. Some 13.72 lakh kg were on offer and average prices were up Rs. 3 a kg.

Darmona Tea's Red Dust fetched Rs. 216 a kg – the highest price among all CTC teas. Their Pekoe Dust fetched Rs. 210 a kg.

Homedale Tea factory's tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, created record by being the only other CTC tea which crossed the Rs. 200-a-kg mark – Red Dust fetched Rs. 215 and Pekoe Dust got Rs. 201.

In all, 104 marks got Rs. 125 and more.

Chamraj topped orthodox market at Rs. 261 a kg, followed by Kairbetta Rs. 240, Havukal Rs. 237, Kodanad Rs.222, Highfield Estate Rs. 210, Mailoor Estate Premium and Prammas Rs. 207 each and Corsley Rs. 200. In all, 44 marks got Rs. 125 and more per kg.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 40-44 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 90-160 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs. 42-50 for plain dusts and Rs. 120-190 for brighter liquoring dusts.

“The opening auction posed promising outlook for 2015 with improvement in quality of winter tea and buyers showing keener interest to bid,” Ravichandran Broos, General Manager, Paramount Tea Marketing, said.

Tur growers seek 30% import duty on pulses

Bengaluru, January 6:

A section of growers have urged the government to levy a 30 per cent Customs duty on pulses as cheaper imports are hindering them from getting remunerative prices for their produce.

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Karnataka Pradesh Red Gram Growers Association has asked for a sustainable policy for pulses to protect farmers' interest while also being consumer friendly.

Basavaraj Ingin, President of the Karnataka Pradesh Red Gram Growers Association, suggested that the Government impose a duty of 30 per cent in the forthcoming Budget to curb cheaper imports of pulses. Imposing duty would also curb the foreign exchange outgo, he said. Currently, pulses across categories are imported into the country at zero duty.

Ingin said the price differential between the domestic and imported pulses is about 30 per cent and the duty should be levied to such an extent.

Further, Ingin said, the government should start supplying pulses through the public distribution system across the country, while exploring options to incentivise exports to maintain stability in prices.

Karnataka accounts for about a fifth of the tur produced in the country. Recently, hundreds of farmers staged a protest in Gulbarga, the main tur producing region, demanding Rs. 6,000 a quintal to cover the rising production costs. Tur prices are currently hovering between Rs. 4,800 and Rs. 5,400 a quintal in the region, higher than the minimum support price of Rs. 4,350 announced by the Government for the 2014-15 marketing season.

The Agriculture Ministry has proposed an imposition of a 10 per cent duty on chana to curb cheaper imports and protect farmers from sliding prices. This was in the backdrop of chana prices ruling below the MSP of Rs. 3,100\quintal in some parts of the country. However, duty-free import of chana has been allowed till March.

Business Standard

Cool weather, rain boost bumper wheat crop hopes

Farmers keen on wheat as it provides stable returns; yeild could surpass last year's 95.9 million tonnes

Cool weather and [rainfall](#) over the past few days has triggered hope for a higher yield of [wheat](#) this year.

If the weather holds, the crops this year — being cultivated over an area of a size similar to last year — could surpass last year's 95.9 million tonnes (mt).

The rainfall has been helping natural irrigation and the cool weather is ideal for higher tiller age — the number of branches on a wheat plant. Since the monsoon was below normal, moisture content in the soil is lower. Rain could help recharge the moisture.

WHEAT PRODUCTION

Year	Area (mn ha)	Production (mn tonnes)	Yield (tonne/ha)
2011-12	29.6	93.9	3.22
2012-13	30	94.88	3.16
2013-14	31	95.9	3.09
2014-15	31*	NA	NA

*Estimates

Source: Directorate of Wheat Research, Karnal

“The total area under wheat cultivation was about 31 million hectares in 2013-14. It is likely to remain the same this year but conducive weather may help higher productivity,” said Indu Sharma, project director, Directorate of Wheat Research, Karnal.

She added the area sown till December was three per cent less during the corresponding period in 2013. “We had a crop size of 95.9 mt in crop year 2013-14 and can expect to have a higher produce if the cool temperature persists. As Punjab and Haryana are irrigated states, there is no major variation in area under wheat and a decrease in area under wheat may come from Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.” The weather in the last week of March and the first week of April plays a crucial role for growth of wheat grain. But the rain and low temperature in January could help the plants have dense growth of branches and give an enhanced yield.

Wheat is a major [rabi](#) crop, followed by sugarcane, mustard, gram and pulses.