

DATE:08.01.2015

THE HINDU

Testing for pesticide residues in vegetables

Vegetables cultivated in Kerala have been found safe for consumption according to the latest test reports from Pesticide residue testing laboratory at Vellayani under Kerala agricultural University (KAU).

The reports based on tests conducted on samples collected from farmers' fields in various districts during the first half of 2014 says 99 per cent of the vegetables cultivated by Kerala farmers are safe to eat as they do not contain any hazardous chemicals.

Exceptions

The only exception was some of the vegetables produced in some areas of Thiruvananthapuram District as some samples of amaranthus, chilli, bittergourd, snakegourd and cowpea contained pesticide residues above permitted levels.

Notably, the vegetable samples collected from Kasargod and Idukki, the districts once under the scanner for alleged indiscreet use of chemicals, have been found to contain no pesticide residues at all.

Dr.Thomas Biju Mathew, under whose supervision the testing procedure took place, says "the main pesticides found in these vegetable samples were chloreperifos and cunalfos."

After the testing process and analysis of results farmers were advised to avoid indiscreet use of pesticides and insecticides and stick to scientific practices for effective pest and disease management.

Positive development

The latest results vindicate the after effect of farmers adhering to the advice.

Vice-Chancellor, Kerala Agricultural University, Dr.P.Rajendran attributed the positive development to increased public awareness on the need to produce, buy and eat safe food.

“The persistent efforts of our pesticide residue lab and publication of test results have made the producers and buyers more and more conscious about the importance of safe food and need to adhere to scientific practices,” he says.

KAU’s lab also offers free testing of vegetables produced by farmers.

They only have to bring one kg each of the vegetables packed in materials other than plastic along with a certificate from the agricultural officer of the krishibhavan..

Farmers can contact Dr.Thomas Biju Mathew, email: biju.mathew@kau.in, phone: 04712588167.

Potatoes becomes part of Chinese staple diet

The potato will soon be China’s latest staple diet after rice, wheat and corn and 50 per cent of annual production of potatoes will be consumed as a staple food by 2020 to improve the food security in the world’s most populous nation, officials said on Wednesday.

China will turn potatoes into noodles, steamed bread and other staple food products, converting potatoes to a series of manufactured food items, leading to a healthier diet, the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) said. The addition of potatoes as another staple food was consistent with the government’s policy of adjusting the agriculture structure to achieve sustainable development, Yu Xinrong, a deputy director of the MOA, said. “It was an attempt to ensure food security, ease the pressure on the environment and increase the income of farmers,” Yu said.PTI

It was an attempt to ensure food security, ease the pressure on the environment and increase the income of farmers

Medak milk grid to procure two lakh litres

Move to supplement income of dairy farmers

The Medak district administration is aiming at increasing the milk production in order to cater to the needs of twin cities by procuring about two lakh litres of milk. On the lines of water grid, the milk grid was proposed and initiated at Gajwel and Siddipet with National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) taking the lead role. In addition, Agriculture

department and Lead Bank are coordinating in identifying the beneficiaries and extending required support to them.

According to officials, Gajwel Milk Grid is an area based scheme and aimed at providing supplementary income and self employment opportunities to dairy farmers in the constituency limits. While the total milk production in constituency was 58,000 litres per day, the marketable surplus stands at 23,000 litres. Total milk procurement by Telangana State Dairy Development Cooperative Federation (TSDDCF) stands at 16,000 litres per day.

It was also identified that the availability of fodder is not optimum in the area and needs augmentation.

The project envisages development of fodder plots by individual farmers/beneficiaries. Hence, the concentrated feed will be supplied by the federation to milk pourers on credit basis and the amount would be deducted from the milk bills. Improved variety of fodder seeds like maize, lucerne, stylo will be supplied to farmers on 75 per cent subsidy.

Essential infrastructure like milk testing equipments, cans, lids and chemicals will be supplied in accordance with the proposed expansion of plant.

We are planning to increase the milk procurement of 1 lakh litres per day. Murrah breeding bulls are being supplied to the villages where artificial insemination facilities are not available. In a similar way we have proposed to increase procurement at Siddipet also to 1 lakh litres, G. Ramesh Kumar, AGM, NABARD, told *The Hindu*. A tripartite agreement would be signed among officials of bank, dairy development and farmer/ producer for supplying/ marketing of milk to the federation.

e-governance launched at Manapparai taluk

The e-governance was launched at Manapparai taluk on Wednesday

Residents of the taluk could get essential certificates of the Revenue Department from seven designated Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACBs) in the district. Applicants can get community, income, nativity, first-generation graduate, and widow certificates from the PACBs at Manapparai, Muthupudaiyanpatti, Azhipatti, Maravanur, Vellaipoolanpatti, Malaiyadipatti, Anampatti, Mondipatti, Puthanatham, Kavalkaranpatti, Pudupatti, Alathur,

Vaiyampatti, Kumaravadi, Purathakudi, Karungulam, Nadupatti, Anaikaranpatti, Kolathuranpatti and Kondupatti.

Applications along with necessary supporting documents can be submitted on all working days and till 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

The certificates will be issued at the centres where the applications had been registered. Collector K.S.Palanisami inaugurated the project in the presence of R.Chandrasekar, MLA.

Agri extension scheme launched in Dindigul district

It will double crop production and triple farmers' income



FOR BETTER YIELD:Collector T.N. Hariharan inspecting an agricultural field after launching Integrated Agricultural Extension System at Periyakottai village near Dindigul on Wednesday.— PHOTO: G. KARTHIKEYAN

Farmers-oriented Integrated Agricultural Extension System will help farmers double their crop production and triple their income and also bring the latest technologies regularly to their doorstep, according to Collector T.N. Hariharan.

Launching the system at Periyakottai village near here on Wednesday, he said 70 Assistant Agriculture Officers (AAO) would have closer interaction with farmers in all the 308 village panchayats in the district.

Service area of each Agriculture Officer (AO) was divided into eight circles. The AOs would spend the whole day in each circle in his area once in a fortnight. With the fixed schedule, farmers could expect the AOs on the specific

day. The officials' visit would repeat in the same cycle in the third and the fourth weeks of the month.

An interaction centre was established in all the eight circles.

The AOs would form crop-based clusters, each comprising 20 to 25 farmers, at each village. The main objective of the scheme was to improve extension and delivery systems, he added.

The new system would serve two purposes: encourage the farmers to adopt improved agricultural technologies which were relevant to their resources and skills; and enable extension staff and, through them, researchers to get acquainted with farm conditions and problems on a regular basis so that they could improve research relevant to the farmers' actual needs and recommend solutions, he added.

Joint Director of Agriculture D. Sampath Kumar said designated AAOs would provide inputs during morning field visits. They would stay at the interaction centres in the evening to meet the requirements of the farming community.

If necessary, the AAOs could also rope in researchers for an immediate investigation of farmers' problems and provide solution to them, he noted.

The scheme was launched in Theni on Monday.

1.20 lakh fish seeds released into tank

Fingerlings will attain maturity in six months

Korampallam tank here has been stocked with 1.20 lakh fish seeds. This waterbody has a vast scope for development of fisheries wealth and generating livelihood opportunities for the members of Water Users' Association, according to Joint Director of Fisheries R. Amal Xavier.

The fingerlings were released into Korampallam tank by Mr. Xavier in the presence of Assistant Director of Fisheries (Marine) P. Isaac Jeyakumar on Monday. The programme was implemented under the Tamil Nadu Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation and Waterbodies Restoration and Management Scheme at a cost of Rs 1.20 lakh. Fingerlings of freshwater fishes such as catla (40,000 in number), rohu (40,000), mrigal (20,000) and common carp (20,000) were introduced into the tank, Mr. Xavier told *The Hindu*. These fingerlings –

now measuring anywhere between five cm and eight cm – would gain one kilogram of weight and become marketable in six months.

Since there was sufficient amount of water in Korampallam sub-basin following consistent Northeast Monsoon rains, the stakeholders would be assured of good productivity of inland fishery. The fingerlings were procured from a private fish seed farm at Kallidaikurichi.

The Joint Director said the Water Users' Association members would be involved in running the inland fishery development scheme.

PWD Assistant Executive Engineer (Srivaikuntam) Ramesh, Association members and local body representatives were present.

Cane farmers take to jaggery production

They have stopped supplying to mills owing to delayed payments



Coloured jaggery being prepared at a unit in Kavasampattu, Vellore district, on Wednesday.- Photo: C. Venkatachalapathy

At a time when sugarcane farmers all over the State are protesting delayed payments by sugar mills — cooperative and private — and demanding increase in the price of sugarcane, those of Kavasambattu village in K.V. Kuppam panchayat union in Vellore district have been engaged in jaggery production for two generations.

S. Sivakumar (42), a sugarcane farmer of Kavasambattu, told this correspondent that while there about 40 sugarcane farmers in the village, none of them supply cane to sugar mills for the last several years owing to the problems such as delayed payments and un-remunerative price. “Our family has been engaged in jaggery production from my father’s period. My grandfather was supplying to the mills, but for the last two generations, we are engaged in production of jaggery which is profitable”, he said.

Mr. Sivakumar said that the farmers of this village produce jaggery not only from the sugarcane from their own fields, but also from those procured from Dharmapuri, Tiruvannamalai and Kallakurichi. “We produce about 200 kg of jaggery per day. The cauldron that I have can produce 50 kg of jaggery at a time. I boil the sugarcane four times a day to obtain 200 kg”, he said. Depending on the availability of sugarcane, he produces about 1.5 tonnes to two tonnes of jaggery per week and sells it to the wholesale jaggery mundy in Vellore.

Quite a few of the farmers, such as Ravi, have joined as workers in the jaggery units of their fellow farmers in the village owing to the decline in agriculture on account of water scarcity. Workers get low wages compared to the toil in the jaggery unit. “I sweat it out from 4 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily in the jaggery unit, mixing the simmering hot sugarcane juice in the cauldron and later making jaggery balls, but I get only Rs.200 per day”, said Venkatesan, a worker. But, he does not complain since he knows that the farmer did not get a steady price. The price of jaggery in the Vellore market declined from Rs.420 per 10 kg last week to Rs.350 today, he said.

R. Velmurugan, a farmer of Kavasambattu, said though he produces jaggery in his unit, he does not sell it in the wholesale market, but sells the excess jaggery to fellow farmers in his village and in the retail outlet run by his wife — a functionary of a women’s self-help group. Mr. Velmurugan, who is also the secretary (development) of the Vellore unit of Tamil Nadu Science Forum, said the government should encourage farmers to tap solar energy or use biogas for burning the cauldron in order to make the process eco-friendly.

Crop insurance schemes for farmers in Kerala

Central scheme offered for this crop season

The weather-based crop insurance scheme (WBCIS) and the modified national agriculture insurance scheme (MNAIS), the two components of the National Crop Insurance Programme of the Union government, are being extended to farmers in the State for the ongoing crop season. Paddy, plantain, cashew, sugarcane, mango, and tapioca are covered under the scheme.

Particulars of the applicability of the scheme for crops in various districts have been specified by the State Level Coordination Committee on Crop Insurances. Agricultural Insurance Company of India Ltd., a Union government enterprise,

will be the implementing agency. While farmers who have taken agriculture loans from banks and approved financial institutions are covered under the scheme, for other ryots it is voluntary.

The scheme is being implemented jointly by the Union and the State governments.

Weather-based

Parameters have been stipulated for the weather-based insurance and data are collected with the help of nearly 130 weather stations across the State, D. Rajesh, head of the State-level regional office of the agricultural insurance company, told *The Hindu*. Four or five panchayats come under each weather station for the implementation of the scheme. While the WBCIS scheme is segregated for crops under kharif and rabi seasons, it is applicable to some crops such as cashew in Kerala on an extended time frame. For instance, the December-May period is taken into account for cashew, he said.

Yield the criterion

Under the MNAIS scheme, the yield of the particular crop, as decided by the authorities, is the criterion and all the farmers insured under the scheme will be eligible for compensation if the yield falls below the stipulated limit. The second paddy crop is brought under the WBCIS scheme in districts other than Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta, and Kottayam, where the MNAIS scheme will be applicable.

Under the WBCIS scheme, Rs.10,000 will be the insured amount for an acre and the insurance premium is Rs.200. The insurance amount for plantain for an acre is Rs.40,000 and the premium is Rs.2,200, and the scheme will be applicable in districts other than Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta, and Kottayam.

For cashew and sugarcane, the insurance coverage for an acre will be Rs.20,000 and Rs.12,000, respectively, while the premium will be Rs.1,100 and Rs.660, respectively. The scheme for cashew will be applicable in Palakkad, Kozhikode, Kannur, Kasaragod, and Malappuram districts.

The scheme for sugarcane is applicable in Idukki and Palakkad. For tapioca, covered under the MNAIS, the insurance amount for an acre is Rs.97,309.

The scheme is applicable in all the districts.

NABARD funds construction of three godowns for paddy, rice



Officials from NABARD and the Tamil Nadu State Civil Supplies inspecting the paddy godown built under the RIDF at Adhavathur near Tiruchi.— PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Each godown will have capacity to store 9,500 tonnes of grains

The Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation has got better facilities for storing rice and paddy in the district following the construction of godowns utilising the funds sanctioned by the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD).

A vacant site belonging to Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation has facilitated construction of three godowns with a capacity of 9,500 tonnes. The godowns in all have seven units with a handling capacity of 1,500 or 1,000 tonnes for smooth handling of rice or paddy.

“The infrastructure provided under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund of the NABARD has made us to shift a couple of godowns housed in rented private buildings,” says G. Chitrarasu, Senior Regional Manager, Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation.

This apart, another godown with a capacity of 1,500 tonnes, had been built at Manapparai at an estimated cost of Rs. 65 lakh.

Huge facility

S.B.R. Kannan, Executive Engineer of the Corporation, said that major works were being executed in Thanajvur district where one lakh tonnes would be stored through six godowns at an estimate of Rs. 114 crore.

Work on the construction of storage godowns was on in Punalkulam (with a capacity of 38,000 tonnes), Chennampatti (39,000 tonnes), Pillaiyarpatti (10,000 tonnes), Irumbuthalai (5,000 tonnes), and R. Suththipatti and Kavalipatti (4,000 tonnes each).

A team of NABARD officials, S. Kannan, S. Suresh, and K. Arthanareeswaran visited the godown at Adhavathur recently and ascertained the benefits recently.

□ *A facility to store one lakh tonnes of grains being created in Thanjavur district*

□ *One more godown with a capacity of 1,500 tonnes coming up in Manapparai*

‘India lagging in using fly ash in agriculture’

C.V. Patil, former director of education, University of Agriculture Sciences, Raichur, has said India produced the highest quantity of fly ash every year through thermal plants but there was no focus on using it for other purposes.

Addressing presspersons here on Wednesday, he said that annually India produces over 256 million tonnes of fly ash. “ But, unlike other countries, India uses only around 55 per cent of the byproduct in various fields and less than 2 per cent is being used in agriculture,” Dr. Patil said.

He said that the reason for the high production was the low-quality of coal available in India which generates more fly ash.

“Yet, this limitation could be transformed into an advantage if the government lays emphasis on using the byproduct in various sectors,” he said.

Dr. Patil said that though close to 50 per cent fly ash is used by cement companies and 15 per cent for filling used mines and only 2 per cent in agriculture despite its advantages.

He said in Raichur district, fly ash is being used in some 500 acres of land for agriculture but due to the heavy transport cost more farmers are reluctant to use it.

He urged the government to offer subsidy so that more farmers will be able to use fly ash on their fields.

Preference for yellow

How does the dark brown/black jaggery which is produced from sugarcane become yellow? “We use a chemical called sodium hydro sulphite to give the yellow colour which is preferred by customers,” admitted a farmer engaged in manufacturing jaggery in his agricultural field in Kavasambattu village.

Though the yellow jaggery cost more, jaggery merchants in the wholesale market in Vellore place more orders only for the chemical-added jaggery since customers preferred the coloured ones over the dark black organic jaggery which is safer.

The farmer said that he got an order for the first time from a dealer in Singapore this year for supply of two tonnes of the dark black organic jaggery for distribution to south Indian customers there. “Our people there are more health-conscious”, he said.

Meet takes stock of climate change

The second international conference on ‘Bio-resource and Stress Management’ kicked off at the Prof. Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University (JTSAU) here expressing concern over the subjects in the context of climate change.

In his keynote address on bio-resource and stress management for food and nutritional security in a changing climate scenario, Director-General, India Meteorological Department, New Delhi, Laxman Singh Rathore, said climate change was a matter of confusion and a myth for many people and virtually unknown to many farmers.

Climate change has become a global concern with a direct, large-scale impact on land and marine biosphere, he said.

Unexpected developments like increase in temperature, melting of glaciers, rising sea level and increase in magnitude and frequency of droughts and floods,

cyclones/tsunamis, desertification, heat and cold waves and snow fall were the most threatening challenges now, he pointed out.

Preparations apace for farm expo



P. Rajendran, Vice Chancellor, Kerala Agricultural University, reviewing arrangements for a farm expo at the Regional Agriculture Research Station, Ambalavayal, in Wayanad on Wednesday.

Preparations are on the final stage at the Regional Agriculture Research Station (RARS) at Ambalavayal here to host the third edition of the National Agriculture Fiesta and the second edition of ‘Poopoly’, a State-level flower show.

The programme, organised jointly by the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) in association with the University of Agriculture Sciences, Bangalore; Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore; Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Pookode; Kerala Fisheries and Ocean Sciences University, Kochi, and various Union government organisations, will be held at the RARS from January 20 to February 2.

“The 12-day programme is aimed at sensitising farmers, especially farmers in the high ranges, to the vast commercial potential of horticulture and floriculture in the region as well as to acquaint them with modern agriculture technologies,” P. Rajendran, Vice Chancellor, KAU, told *The Hindu* after reviewing the arrangements for the programme on Wednesday.

The KAU had earmarked nearly Rs.1 crore for the programme and close to 300 stalls for various government agencies were being put up on the RARS compound spread over 260 acres, he said.

An exhibition of flowers in an area over 10 acres would complement the national agri expo, P. Rajendran , Associate Director, RARS, said . There would be a rose garden with over 2,000 varieties of rose plants, including those from Holland and France, set up on 2.5 acres of land; a gladiolus garden with 100 varieties on two acres; dahlia garden on 3.5 acres with more than 5,000 varieties, and a gerbera garden with 150 varieties on 1.5 acres.

More people opting for organic vegetables: MP

K.N. Balagopal, MP, has said that a mood to consume organically grown vegetables has gripped the people of the State.

“The people have started realising that vegetables imported from other States are a health hazard as they are from crops grown under the care of harmful pesticides and fertilizers,” he said.

Mr. Balagopal said this while addressing a gathering on Wednesday after inaugurating the harvest of terrace garden vegetables grown in the district jail complex. It was also the first terrace vegetable garden experiment in a jail complex of the State. The terrace garden was raised with the support of the district panchayat and the Agriculture Department.

He said that when Kerala was formed on November 1, 1956, the State had a population of 1.25 crore. Presently the population is over 3 crore. But the extent of farmlands in the State in 1956 had considerably dwindled now.

This is one of the reasons why the State has to depend upon vegetable crops grown in other States.

Addressing the gathering, the district panchayat president S. Jaymohan said that the schemes of the district panchayat to promote organic farming had started to yield results since there has been an increase in the production of organically grown vegetables and paddy in the district. He said that the district panchayat has also evolved a scheme to convert the terraces of all government buildings in the district to vegetable farms.

The terrace garden vegetable farm at the jail was tended to by jail inmate Sasi. The function was presided over by the jail superintendent A.A. Hamid.

Calicut Flower Show is a huge draw

Stalls selling seeds, roots, and saplings are also part of the event

full of cheer: The Calicut Flower Show in Kozhikode has been winning many a heart with its sheer variety of flowers on display. —Photo: S. Ramesh Kurup

The Calicut Agri-Horticultural Society has outdone itself this year with the Calicut Flower Show 2015 that began at the Marine Ground on Kozhikode Beach on Wednesday.

The show features a wide variety of exotic flowering and foliage plants besides vegetable and fruit plants. What welcomes a visitor to the show is an array of orchids in different colours, sizes, and shapes displayed alongside a profusion of bougainvilleas.

Then comes an exhilarating range of shoe flowers, anthuriums, and roses. But the stars of the show are the colourful little flowers of kalanchoe, the pink leaves of poinsettia, adenia, dahlias, orange and blue lilies, oleanders, gladiolus, and the bonsai trees. A rare type of cactus named Christmas Cactus is also on sale.

Various farms in the district have put up stalls selling seeds, roots, and saplings of some of these exotic plants. Gerberas and chrysanthemums that are often used for decorations are also on display. The district farm of the Department of Agriculture has put up a stall featuring different varieties of coconuts and arecanuts while the Indian Institute of Spices Research has displayed different varieties of turmeric, ginger, and arrowroot, explaining the differences among them. Different types of fertilisers are also on display.

The Organic Farming Training Centre has put on sale edible roots such as tapioca, colocasia, and yam. There are the stalls of the coconut sapling development centre, Kerala State Coir Cooperative, Farm Information Bureau, State Agmark Grading Laboratory, Directorate of Arecanut and Spices Research, and the Ashakiran School for Differently Abled.

The agri-horticultural society is organising various competitions as part of the flower show. Cultural programmes are held in the evenings. The show will conclude on January 13.

Workshop on soil quality on January 17 in Adilabad district



THE HINDU

S.K. Ray (centre), Principal Scientist, National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning, Nagpur, collecting soil sample from a field in Keslapur village of Indervelli mandal on Wednesday. Photo: S. Harpal Singh

A workshop cum awareness programme on the importance of soil nature in relation to cropping pattern will be held on January 17 at Indervelli mandal head quarter village. The programme will be organised by the State government with the active participation of the National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning (NBSS and LUP), Nagpur.

Four teams of surveyors are currently busy collecting soil samples across Indervelli mandal as the Memorandum of Understanding between the Telangana government and the NBSS and LUP. According to NBSS and LUP Principal Scientist S.K. Ray, soil quality and other aspects will be determined as part of the survey which will help farmers select the kind of crop for which their soil is conducive.

GM crops

This refers to the report, “Bt cotton not to blame for farm distress: scientists” (Jan.6). India has already allowed genetic manipulation technology to produce certain crops including cotton. However, there has been a hue and cry in India against its expansion to other crops such as rice and eggplant and in open field trials. The real agenda of those who advocate Genetically Modified crops has been exposed by F. William Engdahl in his book, *Seeds of Destruction: The Hidden Agenda of Genetic Manipulation*. This skilfully researched book has focussed on how a small socio-political American elite seeks to establish control over the very basis of human survival: the provision of our daily bread; “Control the food and you control the people”. Even the ‘Make in India’

campaign bats for GM crops. Allowing the patenting of life forms in the hands of a select few is asking for trouble.

Direct procurement of pulses from farmers



A worker chaffing green and black grams in Tuticorin district on Monday.—
Photo: N. Rajesh

Efforts are under way to procure pulses, including black gram and green gram, directly from farmers in the district.

These pulses would be procured with the help of the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Marketing Federation at fair price from farmers to avoid middlemen, Collector M. Ravikumar said here on Monday.

The procured pulses would be marketed through farm fresh vegetable outlet and also despatched to markets in Chennai. The bountiful rainfall during the previous year triggered a considerable growth of pulses. Harvesting is under way and the farmers are cheerful.

The district received an excessive rainfall of 101 mm, adding to the total of 763.35 mm, the Collector told the media. Pulses cultivation increased to 73,545 hectares against its cultivation of 56,337 hectares during 2013.

While black gram cultivation area increased to an extent of 4,900 ha, green gram raised additionally on 12,146 ha. Totally, black gram was cultivated on 30,810 ha and green gram on 42, 310 ha, Mr. Ravikumar said.

The area of other crops, including paddy, cholam and cumbu, also increased. However, farmers reduced maize cultivation drastically since they opted for short-term crops and millets. District Revenue Officer R. Muthu, Joint Registrar of Cooperatives Janakiraman and other officials were present.

Tie-up to boost veterinary service

Veterinary university, MRCMPU sign pact

The Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU) will join hands with the Malabar Regional Cooperative Milk Producers Union (MRCMPU) to strengthen veterinary services in the State.

At a meeting held at the university headquarters at Pookode here on Tuesday, the KVASU and the MRCMPU entered in to an agreement to collaborate in the areas of veterinary services, entrepreneurship development, technology transfer, and knowledge dissemination in the six northern districts of the State.

“The university will establish a Dairy Business School on the Pookode campus to train entrepreneurs,” KAVASU Vice Chancellor B. Ashok told *The Hindu* . He said the ‘e-Vet connect,’ KVASU's round-the-clock veterinary services, would be linked to the Veterinary and Entrepreneurship Centres.

Recruitment

Fifty veterinary graduates and 25 diploma holders in laboratory animal techniques will be recruited for establishing the centres. The selection will be made through campus recruitment, Dr. Ashok said.

Besides this, the KVASU would provide area-specific mineral mixtures to dairy cooperative societies through MRCMPU, he added.

As part of strengthening extension programme, the Directorate of Entrepreneurship of the KVASU would organise farmer-scientists interactions, farmer outreach programmes, and capacity building programmes for livestock-based women self-Help groups in collaboration with the MRCMPU and Kudumbasree Mission, T.P. Sethumadhavan, Director of Entrepreneurship, KVASU, said.

Entrepreneurship

Moreover, the university will organise entrepreneur- to- banker and buyer- to- buyer meetings to promote livestock-based entrepreneurship in the State.

Student entrepreneurship will pave the way for consumer-friendly technology initiatives. Technology Business Centres will facilitate new product development and evolution of new delivery models, Dr. Sethumadhavan, said.

- *Dairy Business School planned on varsity campus*
- *Area-specific mineral mixtures for dairy societies*

Neera licence for more coconut federations

Coconut farmers in the State have received a New Year gift form the State Excise Department in the form of neera-tapping licences for 173 farmers' federations.

The order can translate into jobs for between 26,000 and 30,000 neera technicians, said T.K. Jose, chairman of the Coconut Development Board, on Wednesday. He was addressing a meeting of leaders of the 173 coconut farmers' federations here. The federations have been issued licences through an order on December 7. The first order for neera tapping was issued on May 13, 2014. However, the order wrongly said that the licences were being issued to "societies" instead of "federations."

A total of 308 federations have been registered with the Coconut Development Board under 14 coconut producer companies across the State. Over 65 federations have already been given licences to tap neera and the board had made a plea to Excise Minister K. Babu to consider the applications for licences by the other federations too.

The Minister had, at the recent launch of neera and neera derivatives of the Thirukochi Coconut Producer Company, assured the farmers that a decision on the issue of fresh licences would be taken at the earliest.

Mr. Jose said that with the issue of licences to 173 federations, sufficient neera would reach the market. He also suggested that neera and neera derivatives would stand in good stead to compensate coconut farmers who may face a price-fall.

He said that the six federations in Idukki, Pathanamthitta, and Wayanad could form a mini coconut producer company and these federations could activate neera business in cooperation with their neighbouring districts.

Between 26,000 and 30,000 neera technicians to benefit.

Untapped potential in ornamental fisheries



The Hindu

If there has been one area in agriculture-related activity that has seen continuous growth in the last two decades, it is the ornamental fish rearing business.

What was once considered to be a realm of the knowledgeable and a costly hobby has today permeated practically several small villages across the country.

“It is a vocation that can generate income not only for rural women but also for young unemployed people. The sector offers big employment scope for youth as service providers, as busy urban families today would like their aquariums to be managed by professionals,” says Dr. Rao, Chief Executive, National Fisheries Development Board, NFDB, Hyderabad.

Several programmes

Realising the immense prospects in this area, NFDB, in collaboration with premier institutions like the Central Institute of Fishery Education, has started

skill development programmes, particularly for women so as to upgrade their technical knowledge and expose them to best practices in the sector.

The board also arranged training in marine ornamental fisheries for about 250 members of women self help groups from Kancheepuram district, Tamil Nadu, through Satyabhama University.

Ornamental fish training and research institute, Udaipur, has been roped in by the board for organising training programmes in a big way. Sixteen batches have completed training so far in this institute benefitting 320 entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurs

About 600 women entrepreneurs from West Bengal were taken for exposure visits to learn from the rich experience of Kollathur counterparts in Tamil Nadu.

“Today a visit to Howrah and South 24 Parganas districts in the state will prove that there are thousands of families practising ornamental fish rearing. Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Mysore, organised training for youth from the region with assistance from the board. Similarly, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Karda, in Maharashtra, availed funding from us and conducted skill development programmes for 100 entrepreneurs in breeding and rearing of ornamental fishes, aquarium fabrication and maintenance. We also recently assisted ten entrepreneurs from Andhra Pradesh to visit the Ornamental Kerala Aqua show in Kochi,” explains Dr. Rao, Chief Executive, NFDB.

Till date, the board has sanctioned Rs.2.13 crore to establish ten ornamental fisheries hubs in ten districts of Tamil Nadu alone.

The facilities include establishment of 250 backyard ornamental units exclusively for women SHGs along with training and exposure visits for the members.

Plans are on to set up five ornamental fish retail outlets for better marketing. In addition, 10 transport vehicles are to be provided for each of the ten hubs. The board receives a number of applications regularly from Karnataka and Kerala.

Project funding

“We have also funded a project in Annamalai University for a demonstration hatchery and brood stock bank for marine ornamental fish brooders. Over a period, the board has supported about 2,477 units in different states at a project

cost of Rs. 15 crore. Presently we are targeting schools and colleges for promotion of aquariums as healthy recreation and hobby”, Dr. Rao added.

As in the case of other sectors, fisheries too has its limitations which have for a long time not been considered seriously.

Some of the main problems to be overcome are non-availability of skilled manpower, inadequate training facilities for breeding, farming of high valued species and labs for health management.

Major problems

In addition, inadequate infrastructure like few hatcheries, lack of quality brood stock, dependence on wild collection, lack of skilled manpower and limited exposure to quality standards in international markets, problems due to non-availability of export oriented market database, stringent export regulations, non-availability of containers to export live fish, non-availability of flights connecting to importing countries and trade permissions, insufficient aquatic quarantine facilities to ensure export of disease-free fishes are some of the major problems the sector has been facing in the past.

“We are currently focussing on these constraints and have started addressing them. Skill development has been taken up in a big way to widen the knowledge base. Infrastructure facilities are being created and improved so that quality and standards are maintained. We are promoting efforts to standardise captive breeding of indigenous ornamental fishes,” says Dr. Rao.

Those interested to start this venture as a full time vocation can directly contact Dr. M.V. Rao, IAS, Chief Executive, National Fisheries Development Board, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad- 500 052, email: mvr Rao for india@gmail.co

UPPCF to directly import fertilisers



A farmer casts fertilizer in a rice plantation in the central state of Cojedes, Venezuela October 14, 2010.

Following alleged lack of supply from the Centre, Uttar Pradesh Pradeshik Cooperative Federation (UPPCF) — for the first time — has decided to directly import one lakh Metric Tonne (MT) of phosphate fertilisers worth Rs 200 crore.

UPPCF comes under state Cooperative Minister Shivpal Yadav and is headed by his son Aditya. In October, Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for ensuring timely supply of fertilisers for farmers in UP.

“Short supply from central government has resulted in a fertiliser crisis. Even our share has not been given to us while IFFCO’s fertiliser unit in Allahabad has been closed. We are thus importing fertiliser directly,” Shivpal Yadav told The Indian Express.

UPPCF General Manager Ravindra Singh said that fertiliser are being imported after completing all formalities from Centre’s side.

“This is the first time any cooperative body will be directly import fertiliser. We have published a global tender and expect good response from fertiliser companies in China and other countries,” Yadav said. He added that a letter seeking permission from the Centre for the import of urea too has been sent.

According to official records, UP requires nearly 50 lakh MT of phosphatic fertilisers, in which 25 lakh MT is distributed through cooperative bodies. The supply comes from IFFCO and Kribhco. Every year, there is a shortfall of 3 to 4 lakh MT.

Last year, phosphatic fertilisers did not reach nearly 40 districts. Though UPPCF has decided to import one lakh MT, it is set to be extended to 4 lakh MT. Phosphatic fertilisers are required in both Rabi and Kharif crops.

Similarly, for Rabi crops, 38 lakh MT of urea was required but UP received only 35 lakh MT. IFFCO has closed down its urea plant at Phoolpur in Allahabad, bringing down the urea supply to the state to 0.10 lakh MT while the minimum supply should be 0.60 lakh MT.

The shortfall for October and November has reportedly reached 2.36 lakh MT. In December, there was a shortfall of another 1.25 lakh MT.

Thus, a 50-kg bag of urea is selling for Rs 334 — double its price. Similar situation is arising for phosphatic fertilisers which are now worth Rs 1,140 per bag.

“When we import phosphatic fertilisers, it will stop black marketing and its prices in open market will be checked,” Yadav said. The import will also result in a profit of nearly Rs 20 crore to the UPPCF as handling charge.

Chef's Choice: Afgani Murgh Ki Seekh recipe by Satyabir Singh Tyagi

Ingredients

Chicken Thigh Boneless (50gms)

Fat (40gms)

Salt (5gms)

Garam Masala (3gms)

Onion (20gms)

Tomato (20gms)

Ginger (8gms)

Garlic (8gms)

Coriander (10gms)
Cardamom Powder (2gms)
Mace Powder (1gm)
Ginger (3gms)
Green Chilli (2gms)
Saffron (0.1gm)
Kewra (2ml)
Mustard Oil (10ml)

For Garnish

Pepper Julliens

Saffron

Coriander Sprigs

Method

- * Take out the mince of chicken and fat twice
- * Add garam masala, chopped onion, tomatoes, chopped coriander, red chilli powder, salt, egg, ginger garlic paste, chopped coriander, cardamom powder, mace powder, chopped ginger, chopped green chilli, saffron, kewra and mustard oil.
- * Mix in all the ingredients and skewer the mince and cook it over the sigri.
- * Serve hot with mint chutney.

weather

INDIAN CITIES

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Jan 8

Max Min

29° | 24°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 06:32

Humidity: 66

Sunset: 05:55

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1013

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Jan 9

Max Min

29° | 24°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday
Jan 10



30° | 22°

Partly
Cloudy

Sunday
Jan 11



29° | 23°

Partly
Cloudy

Monday
Jan 12



30° | 22°

Partly
Cloudy

Tuesday
Jan 13



22° | 22°

Partly
Cloudy

Wednesday
Jan 14



25° | 20°

Partly
Cloudy

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Recipe: Carrot soup



Recipe: Carrot Soup (Thinkstock photos/Getty Images)

It is great for health

Ingredients:

Two cups grated carrot, one cup coconut milk, lemon juice, three de-seeded green chillies, salt, pepper powder.

Method:

Boil the green chillies and grated carrot in water, then puree in a mixer and add coconut milk, salt, pepper. Bring to boil once and add lemon juice. Serve decorated with coriander leaves.

Recipe: Spiced beetroot

This tasty dish is a blend of spice and sour. It's delicious, healthy and perfect as a side dish.

Ingredients: - 200g beetroot - 1 large onion, finely chopped - 2-3 dried red chillies - 1tsp urad daal (Black Gram) - 1tsp coriander seeds - 2tbsp grated coconut - 15g tamarind - 2tsp jaggery - 1tsp ghee - Salt to taste

Method: Dry-roast the red chili's, coriander seeds and Black Gram

Blend it with the coconut, tamarind and jaggery.

In a pan heat the ghee and fry the onions until golden brown. Mix in the spices mixture and saute till all the spices are mixed well. Then add the beetroot and mix well.

Season with coriander leaves and lemon.

Uses of sesame in the Indian kitchen



Uses of sesame in the Indian kitchen (Thinkstock photos/Getty Images)

Use of sesame seeds is quintessential to Indian cuisine. Sesame seeds known for their nutritional value and health benefits are not only used in snacks but also are used to vegetable preparations also.

Especially in Andhra cuisine, the use of sesame while cooking veggies is prevalent. One such recipe is pumpkin, another fibre rich vegetable, cooked in roasted and ground sesame.

Ingredients:

One small pumpkin or cut pumpkin : 250 gms

Sesame seeds: 25-40 gms

Whole red chilies : 2-5 depending on how spicy you want

Salt to taste

Turmeric: 1/2 tsp

Tadka- comprises 1/2 tsp mustard seeds, 1/2 tsp cumin seeds, 1/2 tsp urad dal, 1/2 tsp chana dal and curry leaves.

Method:

In a pan take 1 or 2 spoons of oil and prepare the tadka. Once the mustard seeds start to crackle add diced pumpkin. Add salt to taste and 1/2 tsp of turmeric. Stir

the ingredients well and allow the pumpkin to cook in its own steam.

While the pumpkin gets cooked, roast sesame seeds along with red chillies. Grind the sesame and red chilli mixture. When the pumpkin is almost cooked, add the ground sesame. Mix the ingredients well and cook the entire mixture for another two to five minutes.

You can serve the vegetable either with rotis or steamed rice.

Recipe: Cold cucumber soup



Recipe: Cold cucumber soup

A cucumber is a very healthy option, as far as vegetables are concerned.

Besides keeping you hydrated, it supplies skin friendly minerals like potassium, magnesium and silicon. It's also healthy for the eyes and flushes out toxin. A tasty way to go about consuming cucumbers, if you don't want them in a salad, is to have them as soup. And here's how you can make an easy cold cucumber soup.

Ingredients 1 cup plain yogurt 1 cup sour cream 1 minced clove of garlic 1/2 cup chopped mint leaves 1/2 cup chopped dill or shepu 2 cumpers, large. Peeled, seeded and diced.

Method Mix cucumber, yogurt, sour cream, garlic and vegetable broth in a large bowl. Blend them all using a blender until the mix is smooth. After that, put in the mint and shepu and blend. Keep it in a refrigerator for an hour. Serve chilled.

Popular winter foods

Here are a few food items that are popular during this season...

A well balanced diet with right proportions of carbohydrates (fibrous complex), protein (low fat milk & milk products and lean meats like chicken, egg whites) nuts, pulses and fats with right kind of fatty acids (omega 3 & GLA) with a good hydration status and antioxidants (vitamin A, C E, beta carotene) is a must. Says nutritionist Karishma Chawla, "One can indulge in warm foods like proteins and fibrous vegetables and fruits to keep the body warm . Also keeping in mind, easy prey to cold and cough one can step up the immune booster foods by consuming vitamins rich in antioxidants.

Vit C foods (antioxidant): green leafy veggies, broccoli, parsley, bell peppers, papaya, asparagus, cauliflower

Vit A foods (immune booster): pumpkin, carrots, tomatoes, eggs, dairy food

Vit E (antioxidants): nuts, whole grains, green leafy vegetables, avocados, tomatoes, apples, carrots

B- carotene (antioxidants): green leafy vegetables, papaya, pumpkin, carrots

Zinc (immune booster): sesame seeds, pumpkin, poultry, beans, chickpeas, almonds, peas, mushrooms.

Omega 3 rich foods like avocado, olive oil, salmon, tuna, walnuts, flaxseeds are also beneficial.

Cocoa-rich diets could improve your memory!



Cocoa-rich diets could improve your memory! (Getty Images)

Diets rich in cocoa flavanols - bioactives found naturally in cocoa - can help arrest age-related memory decline in healthy adults, a study shows.

"The results of this study are encouraging - they support the idea that diet, and specifically a diet rich in cocoa flavanols, can play an important role in maintaining cognitive health as we age," said lead author Giovambattista Desideri from the University of L'Aquila in Italy.

The study involved men and women aged 61-85 years.

They were assigned to one of three flavanol groups, consuming a drink containing either high (993 mg), intermediate (520 mg) or low (48 mg) amounts of cocoa flavanols every day for eight weeks.

Among those individuals who regularly consumed either the high- or intermediate-flavanol drinks, there were significant improvements in overall cognitive function after eight weeks.

As cognitive function was normal for this aged population, the study showed that even cognitively healthy individuals can quickly benefit from the regular inclusion of cocoa flavanols in their diets.

The researchers earlier found cognitive and cardio-metabolic benefits of habitual cocoa flavanol consumption in older adults who had been diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment (MCI).

The new research trial was carried out with a special cocoa flavanol test product, designed to deliver a standardised amount of flavanols within a nutritionally suitable drink.

This test product is currently not commercially available.

Flavanol content of commercially available chocolate is variable and, given its macronutrient profile, it is not recommended as a health food.

The study was published in the journal *AJCN - The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

6 breakfast cereals healthier than others

Did you know that even a bowlful of 'healthy' breakfast cereals could add to your calorie count?

Doctors, for sometime now, have debated on the permissible level of sugar in breakfast cereals, especially of the coloured and sugar-frosted varieties. While it is advisable to check the nutrition value of the breakfast cereal before buying it, one should also consciously make healthier lifestyle choices by having all cereals with skimmed or semi-skimmed milk, and avoiding to add extra sugar among others, but if you still like a bit of sweetness in your breakfast substitute white sugar with fruits (even dry fruits) like banana, dates, raisins, or any citrus fruit. A wholesome breakfast it would make for, while staving off your urge for midday snacking. Even those maintaining a workout routine can derive maximum benefit from this habit, as it also helps them get past their weight loss plateau.

Medical doctor and wellness expert, Dr Shikha Sharma helps us list breakfast cereals that are healthier than the rest.

Porridge

Porridge is the most healthy breakfast idea. It is rich in minerals and has high fibre content that keeps blood sugar under control. Use a little jaggery if you wish to sweeten it, otherwise you can top it with fresh fruits or sprinkle some raisins and almonds.

Cornflakes

Abundant in carbohydrates, iron and Vitamin B complex, cornflakes work very well for school kids and elders too. It is a particularly good breakfast in the rainy months because the body starts holding water owing to high moisture in the air.

Wheat flakes

It is a modification of wheat porridge and is a nice change from run-of-the-mill breakfast cereals. But unless fortified with extra calcium, it is not much use having just wheat flakes for breakfast.

Oatmeal

A bowl of oats in the morning is great for those suffering high cholesterol and diabetes, provided you don't add extra sugar to it. The high fibre content in oats balances the blood sugar, and relieves people prone to depression.

Muesli

Muesli is a great breakfast choice as it has raisins, almonds and four different grains. The comparatively high sugar content in muesli keeps growing children and those into sports, energetic. It can be served with both milk and yoghurt. You can creatively garnish the muesli and serve it up as a quick evening snack to kids.

Poha/rice crispies

The poha version of rice crispies is popular in Indian households, and makes for a light and healthy breakfast. But make sure your poha is only lightly sauteed.

Aside from the usual cornflakes and oats, there is a whole assortment of chocolate, honey and fruit-flavoured breakfast cereals that find takers among young kids. Just how good or bad an idea is it?

Avers Dr Sharma, "Although it is best to go for natural cereals, it is alright to break free from the mundane breakfast chart once in a while. The purpose is to serve up a good mix that is both appealing to the taste buds and has nutritional value."

Next time you are at the departmental store picking breakfast cereals, don't get carried away by the glossy packaging.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Himalayan rumblings to help forecast monsoon

IMD embarks upon Rs. 350 cr project to study the mountain's impact on rains



The Himalayas act as a towering barrier, blocking cold air in the northern latitudes from blowing into the sub-continent. Thus they subdue the moisture-laden ocean winds that whip up the monsoon. Galyna Andrushko\shutterstock.com

Hyderabad, January 7:

The majestic Himalayan mountain ranges will, in a few years time, tell us more about Indian monsoon. And these Himalayan rumblings will be used by our weathermen to get a better handle on forecasting monsoon, which play a vital role in Indian agriculture.

The India Meteorological Department is embarking upon a Rs. 350-crore project to study the impact of Himalayan mountains on the South West monsoon, its behaviour, journey and schedules, in greater detail.

“Himalayan mountains play a crucial role in monsoon circulation over India, a subject that has been least understood. It is for this that we are taking up this project in two phases that will give us better knowledge about monsoon patterns,” said IMD Director-General Laxman Singh Rathore.

In the first phase, the department will be setting up three Doppler stations with weather, snow and other gauges, in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand at a cost of Rs. 108 crore.

Towering barrier

This will be followed by similar stations across the North-East States at a cost of Rs. 250 crore to study temperature, wind speeds and other meteorological aspects.

“The scheme has been approved and it will be taken up over a period of three years,” he told *BusinessLine* on the sidelines of an international conference on Bio-resource and Stress Management here.

The Himalayas act as a towering barrier, blocking cold air in the northern latitudes from blowing into the sub-continent and subduing the moisture-laden ocean winds that whip up the monsoon. Scientists from Harvard University had argued that the Himalayas’ role as a barrier was the crucial factor for the monsoon.

Understanding and forecasting monsoon are crucial for Indian agriculture, as they account for nearly 70 per cent of the annual rainfall in the country.

Climate change effect

“Projections of monsoon rainfall pattern over India indicate that by 2050, a 10 per cent increase in amount and intensity of rainfall are likely due to climate change, leading to increase in erosive power of rainfall,” Rathore said.

A one per cent increase in rainfall intensity is likely to increase soil loss from crop lands by 1.5 per cent, he said.

Oilmeal exports down 34% in December

Mumbai, January 7:

Oilmeal exports dipped 34 per cent last month to 3.89 lakh tonnes (5.90 tonnes) largely due to disparity in pricing of Indian soyabean meal.

Domestic Soyabean meal prices have been holding steady even as they fell sharply in the international markets. This led to meal exporters quoting higher price.

In the last nine months, export of soyabean meal dipped due to disparities in prices in the international market. On the brighter side, the share of rapeseed meal increased to 8,95,585 tonnes from 6,82,653 tonne, while that of ricebran extractions export doubled, said the Solvent Extractors’ Association of India in

a statement on Wednesday. The average price of soyabean meal dropped to \$483 a tonne in December from \$559 a tonne in the year-ago, it said.

The total export of oilmeals in the first nine months of the fiscal was down 42 per cent at 18.41 lakh tonnes (31.90 lakh tonnes).

India is one of the leading soyameal suppliers to the South-East Asian countries and is among the major consumers of vegetable oils.

Importers worried as olive oil prices zoom on shortage

Drop in output in major producers Spain and Italy has affected supply

New Delhi, January 7:

Importers are bracing themselves for a rise in olive oil prices in view of production being estimated at a nine-year low in Spain and Italy.

The country sources about 95 per cent of its total olive oil requirement from the two European Union nations. Greece accounts for another three per cent.

“Production is likely to be 60-65 per cent of a normal year’s output. Forecasting is tricky but our next consignment is already quoted at 18 per cent more than the last one imported two months ago,” said Aseem Soni, Director, Consumer Pack Vertical, Cargill India, which owns the Leonardo brand.

Data published by the International Olive Council (IOC) in November pegged provisional output in the EU at 1.5 million tonnes (mt) for 2014-15, a million less than last year. Globally, production is reckoned to be 2.39 million tonnes in 2014-15, the lowest since 1995-96.

Spain, where drought conditions impacted autumn harvests, is expected to produce 8,25,700 tonnes of olive oil, about half of last year’s output.

Production in Italy is likely to be 30 per cent lower at 302.5 tonnes. Price have reportedly run to a decade’s high with wholesale bulk prices hovering around \$4,300/tonne earlier this week, up from the end-2013 price of \$3,613.

“There will be a time lag since it’s a new crop. Stock pipelines are depleting and replenishment will be at the higher price level,” said Yogesh Bellani, CEO, FieldFresh Foods, which sells olive oil under the Del Monte brand.

Import duty

Importers lamented the Centre's recent decision to raise the import duty on crude and refined edible oils by five per cent to 7.5 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively.

Bellani called it a "double whammy" while Leonardo's Soni said olive oil should have been exempted.

"We are requesting the Centre to exempt olive oil. The rationale for the duty hike was to protect Indian farmers. That's not relevant in the case of olive oil as there's no local production," said Rajneesh Bhasin, President, Indian Olive Association (IOA) and also Managing Director of Borges India.

The olive oil market, comprising edible and cosmetic segments, was estimated at Rs. 400 crore in 2012.

The IOA estimates imports between April 2014 and March 2015 at around 10,500-11,000 tonnes. Prices per litre this fiscal for refined olive oil and olive pomace variants were Rs. 500-600 and Rs. 240-300 respectively.

"India is still a developing olive oil market and price-sensitive. The entire brunt cannot be passed on to consumers. Brands will have to strategise and price innovatively after volatility settles around late February or early March," said Bellani.

Centre removes cap on neem-coated urea production

A farmer spreading urea at his wheat farm in Punjab. Neem-coated urea improves soil fertility through slow-release of nitrogen.

New Delhi, January 7:

Aiming for self-sufficiency in indigenous urea output, the Centre has done away with the 35 per cent cap on production of neem-coated urea.

The move will now allow fertiliser companies to utilise their plant capacity fully to manufacture neem-coated urea which makes up 20-25 per cent of total urea produced in the country.

The removal of the cap on production is also expected to rein in the subsidy bill by Rs. 5,000 crore and help enhance farmers' incomes.

“The Government has done away with the neem-coated urea cap which can now be produced up to 100 per cent. It is a win-win for industry and farmers,” said Ananth Kumar, Fertiliser Minister, at a press meet here on Wednesday.

He said the move will ensure better productivity and curb excessive use of urea. Kumar also said that India would not need to import urea for much longer with the Government working towards the revival of five closed urea plants, while also setting up new ones. Currently, about nine million tonnes (mt) of urea are being imported, while production is some 22 mt. The price of urea is fixed by the Centre at Rs.5,360/tonne currently. “With neem-coated urea, slow nitrogen release improves soil fertility which can increase yields by 15-20 per cent. It will also help Government save almost Rs. 5,000 crore,” said the Minister.

Fertiliser Secretary JK Mohapatra said that the variant would cost about five per cent more than regular urea which works out to about Rs. 270/tonne.

Joint venture plan

Kumar said that a joint-venture is being formed to revive the Ramagundam urea plant and work on a gas pipeline between Jagdishpur and Haldia is underway to help revive closed plants in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Coal gasification

Coal gasification, Kumar believed, had to be embraced for India to become a net urea exporter in a decade.

The Talcher plant in Odisha would be the first to use the technology, he said, thanks to a joint venture pact signed by Coal India, FCIL, RCF and GAIL which will see a coal gasification-cum-ammonium nitrate complex being set up there by 2019.

Weak ringgit heats up palm oil

Kuala Lumpur, January 7:

Malaysian palm oil futures climbed to their highest in over two months on Wednesday as the ringgit continued its tumble against the US dollar, with prices also buoyed by fears that a fresh wave of monsoon flooding would squeeze supplies. The benchmark March contract closed up 2.1 per cent at 2,331 ringgit (\$651) a tonne. In other vegetable oil markets, the US soya oil contract for March reversed losses to rise 0.2 per cent in late trade, while the most active

May soyabean oil contract on the Dalian Commodity Exchange rose 0.1 per cent. Vikram Global Commodities (P) Ltd quoted Rs. 550/10 kg for Malaysian super palm January delivery. Reuters

Business Standard

Agriculture extension service strengthened

The [extension service](#) in the [agriculture](#) sector in India has been strengthened and the ministry was paying special attention to technology transfer to farmers, a top official said here on Tuesday. [Technologies](#) are reaching [farmers](#) through various means, including training, regional melas, publications, exhibitions and production of video films, O P Dhahiya, Director, Farm Information, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, said.

In his address to the Southern Regional Agricultural Fair and state-level farmers' Day at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, he said the service in cooperation with the State extension wing has brought in phenomenal improvement in agricultural development and increased farmers' income. Inaugurating the Fair, C Rajendran, Joint Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Tamil Nadu, said doubling productivity and tripling farmers' income was their motto. Since most farmers involved in food production are poor, the government was aiming at promoting welfare schemes for them, he said, adding value addition and storage facilities would be given more importance in years to come.

K Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor, TNAU said regional fairs were organised with the objective of allowing farmers know the technologies and scientists and extension workers to know what was to be done in future. Despite 11 districts in last year and 31 districts in penultimate year were declared as drought hit, Tamil Nadu produced 11.3 million tonnes of foodgrains, he said.

He asked farmers to regularly visit the fields and properly utilise technologies in an era of changing food habits and climate. With the theme 'Profitable and Sustainable agriculture,' hundreds of farmers from Southern States - Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telengana, Karnataka, Kerala and Puducherry are participating in the four day fair.