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THE HINDU

Red gram cultivators reap high yield

Farmers cultivating red gram in Bhavani, Ammapet and Anthiyur areas, endowed with red soil, are anticipating promising returns.

A bio-metric observation carried out by the Agriculture Department indicates that a minimum of one tonne of red gram could be harvested from one acre.

With procurement price of red gram ruling at around Rs. 50 per kilogram, farmers are in a position to earn Rs. 50,000 per acre in fields where proper spacing method has been followed, Joint Director of Agriculture Selvaraj said.

Red gram cultivated in rain-fed areas grows well in drought conditions, and has been raised in nearly 2,200 hectares in the district.

The department has determined through biometric observation that each plant grown in three feet by one feet spacing yields 400 to 500 pods, each with three grains.

Considering that there are 15,000 plants in an acre encompassing 43,560 square feet, a minimum of one tonne produce per acre could easily be attained, Mr. Selvaraj said.

The productivity gets higher with more spacing.

At the Bhavani Sagar Research Station, red gram plants of BSR I variety raised in spacing of three to two feet have reached five feet height, and generate yield of up to half a kilogram of grains per plant. There are up to 1,000 pods per plant, Mr. Selvaraj said.

Improved agronomic practice raises hopes of farmers

The improved agronomic practice of broad bed furrow system cultivation with drip and fertigation techniques has paved the way for higher yield of horticulture crops.

Following the exposure to broad bed furrow system of cultivation at a farm school in Kuthiraikulam village of Ottapidaram block, farmers have are now confident of an improved yield. This agronomic method is the base for using drip irrigation in horticulture, according to Deputy Director of Horticulture, R. Avudayappan.

At this village, horticulture crops such as tomato, bhendi, brinjal, elephant yam and sirukilangu (Chinese potato) are raised. Farmers practised either flood irrigation or furrow system of irrigation. These old irrigation techniques not only resulted in using generous amount of water, but also increased the weed population and ultimately reduced the yield of horticulture crops, officials said. To sensitise farmers to switch over from non-beneficial farming methods, horticulture officials adopted this village and initiated several measures to educate them in the new technique, through which an increase of 20 to 30 per cent yield was ensured, Mr. Avudayappan told *The Hindu* here on Tuesday.

Assistant Director of Horticulture, Ottapidaram, C. Palanivelayutham said under Agriculture Technology Management System (ATMA), this farm school was being conducted to sensitise farmers to precision farming.

Water released afresh from Amaravathi dam

Public Works Department (Water Resources Organisation) began a fresh cycle of water release from Amaravathi dam on Tuesday mainly to help the farmers who had already started raising paddy in the command area spread over Tirupur and Karur districts.

“On Monday evening, we received the new government order to release the water afresh from the dam to irrigate 47,117 acres in two wetting cycles until February 20 though technically it is an extension of the water release cycles that commenced on September 22, 2014, which recently ended,” a senior PWD (WRO) official told *The Hindu* .

Water level was 65.6 feet against the total 90 feet at the time of opening shutters of the dam on Tuesday. The water was released from the dam at the rate of 440 cusecs through Amaravathi Main Canal and at the rate of 100 cusecs through Amaravathi River.

PWD (WRO) sources said the water released through Amaravathi River would be feeding as many as 10 channels with six of them in Tirupur district

and the remaining four channels situated in Karur district. Apart from paddy, coconuts raised as perennial crop would also be benefited.

The water would be released till February 20.

Panchayats reap rich reward through waste management

The solid waste management scheme rolled out by the State government has started making impact in all the 11 town panchayats in Karur district.

The scheme, which aimed at helping local bodies generate income from garbage, besides ensuring clean environment, was started about 10 months back in town panchayats, including Pallapatti, Puliur, Marudhur, Punjai Pugalur, Aravakurichi, and Krishnarayapuram. The initial emphasis was on setting up infrastructure for processing and segregating solid waste into degradable and non-degradable waste. Considerable time was spent in creating awareness on the scheme among the residents.

After the first few months, the town panchayats have begun segregating waste, and now, almost all the 11 panchayats have been generating income by selling the products sourced from waste. Though a few town panchayats are lagging behind, a healthy competition has emerged among the panchayats to emerge as the best performer.

“A system has been established in town panchayats and it has come to stay. We see a considerable improvement in garbage collection and disposal,” S.Jayandhi, Collector, told *The Hindu* after inspecting some of the town panchayats recently.

Production of manure and vermicompost and production of biogas from food waste are among some of the projects being implemented by the town panchayats.

While most of them have got into the business of manure and vermicompost production and sales, the Puliur town panchayat has gone a step ahead by producing biogas from waste.

It has set up a unit to produce biogas by making use of the availability of high volume of poultry, aquatic and mutton waste. It is marketing the gas to the households. Similarly, it has also set up a duck rearing farm by using the food waste available in the area.

“Production of biogas is an important initiative. It shows that we can fully utilise the food waste to produce fuel. The Puliur town panchayat has been asked to expand the project,” Ms. Jayandhi said.

She added that 26.38 tonnes of garbage has been collected and segregated since the implementation of the scheme in the 11 town panchayats. About 66,600 kilograms of manure had been produced. Of this, about 3,300 kg was sold to farmers at a cost of Rs.3 a kg.

Bharathiya Kisan Sangam demands higher price for sugarcane

They want Rs. 4,000 a tonne and steps to link all rivers with the Cauvery



Sugarcane farmers staging a sit-in protest in Thanjavur on Tuesday.—
Photo: R.M. Rajarathinam

The Bharathiya Kisan Sangam has threatened to stage a protest demonstration in Srirangam if the sugar mills did not heed the counsel of the former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa and present Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam to grant Rs. 2,650 per tonne for the cane purchased by them.

To stress their demands, volunteers of the organisation staged a sit in protest for more than three hours at the collectorate here before presenting their memorandum to the district administration.

Speaking to “The Hindu” here on Tuesday after presenting a memorandum to the State government through the district administration, BKS State vice-president P. Ayyakkannu alleged that the sugar lobby in the State was flouting all norms and promises that the mills had given to regimes headed by Ms. Jayalalithaa and Mr. Panneerselvam.

The leaders had advised the sugar mills to consider the plight of the cane growers and oblige their genuine request.

But the mills had paid scant regard to their counsel and had pending arrears due to the farmers.

Mr. Ayyakkannu called upon the Central and State governments to grant Rs. 4,000 per tonne for sugarcane purchased by the sugar mills, up from the present Fair and Remunerative Price of Rs. 2,650.

The association also demanded that rivers be linked to Cauvery for ensuring continued water supply for irrigation.

In the memorandum, the association demanded immediate efforts be taken to link all rivers with Cauvery, waive all loans and credit availed by the farmers till they got a remunerative price for their produce, grant Rs. 2,500 per quintal for paddy, link Nethravati in Karnataka to Cauvery, prevent construction of reservoirs at Mekedatu and drop the methane extraction project in the delta districts.

Apart from Mr. Ayyakkannu, the association's Sugar Cane Growers Wing president Karaipakkam Govindaraj, Thanjavur District president S. Murugan and others participated.

· *The association demands linking of rivers with Cauvery*

· *Farmers urge dropping of methane extraction projects in delta districts*

“Amend Food Safety Act”

The Tamil Nadu Vanigar Sangangalin Peramaippu has appealed to the Union government to either amend the Food Safety and Standards Act 2006 or bring in a new Act in consultation with traders. A resolution to this effect was adopted at the State and district-level officer bearers' meet of the peramaippu here on Tuesday.

A.M.Vikkiramaraja, State president of the peramaippu, said the State government should not implement the Act till the Centre takes a decision. Mr.Vikkiramaraja said the State and Central governments have not held discussion with traders with respect to Goods and Services Tax. The forum

appealed the government to ensure that small and marginal farmers were not affected by the Act.

He said that 32nd State Traders' Day conference would be held in Chennai on January 20 to discuss "anti-traders acts". The forum alleged that officials, especially from health, commercial taxes and labour welfare departments, were harassing traders in the guise of implementing various laws. The State government should take action against officials who indulge in such excesses.

Farmers to get horticulture fillip

Steps to initiate peri-metro vegetable cluster programme

In a bid to give a fillip to the cultivation of vegetables at the hilly Meenakshipuram in the district, the district administration is undertaking steps to initiate the peri-metro vegetable cluster programme among the farmers there.

The cluster development programme enables farmers to bring their vegetables to common collection centres and auction their produce at good rates.

During a recent inspection to Meenakshipuram, which is situated near Sirumalai, Collector L. Subramanian evinced interest in implementing the scheme there through the horticulture department for the benefit of the farmers.

"With the help of the subsidies offered under the scheme for manure, seeds and green houses, fresh produce can be taken to Madurai city and sold at the outlets there by the farmers at competitive rates," said Mr. Subramanian.

Vegetables such as chow chow, beans, 'avarai', spinach and other greens are grown by the farmers in the village, which is situated more than 1,600 metres above sea level.

E. Ravichandran, a farmer from the village, said that years ago, their produce used to be taken till markets in Tiruchi.


“We are now, however, only selling them to persons at the Oddanchatram market. During the last five years, we have had very poor rainfall here and only this year, there has been adequate rainfall,” he said.

The poor road connectivity and increasing added cost of transportation have also been affecting the farmers.

“Most of them depend on middlemen who take their produce from the village and auction it off in markets in Dindigul. They have to pay them a hefty commission as well as pay transport,” said Alagesan, secretary, Centre for Rural and Education Development.

“Through the peri-metro scheme, if the farmers are provided with a common vehicle for transportation, it would greatly bring down their added costs and ensure that their produce reached the markets on a daily basis,” he added.

Coconut mission clears 13 projects



PROJECTS FOR STATE

- A tender coconut water processing unit with a capacity to process **3,000 tender coconuts a day**
- Three copra /ball copra units having capacity to process **61,60,000 nuts a year**

The 44th meeting of the Project Approval Committee (PAC) on Technology Mission on Coconut (TMOC) here has cleared 13 projects with an outlay of Rs.40.79 crore and subsidy of Rs.3.45 crore. Out of 13 projects, there were three research projects and 10 projects on processing and product diversification in the approved projects.

Under the sub-component Processing and Product Diversification, the projects include one for desiccated coconut powder unit for processing 60,000 nuts per day, one virgin coconut oil unit for processing 10,000 nuts per day, two tender coconut water preservation and packaging units with a capacity to process 8,000 tender coconuts per day, three coconut shell-based activated carbon units for processing 44 tonnes of shell per day, three copra/ball copra units with processing capacity of 61,60,000 nuts per year.

In Kerala, one tender coconut water processing unit with a capacity to process 3,000 tender coconuts per day, and three copra /ball copra, units having the capacity to process 61,60,000 nuts per year were sanctioned.

In Karnataka, one coconut shell-based activated carbon unit having a capacity for processing 22 tonnes per day.

For Tamil Nadu

In Tamil Nadu, one virgin coconut oil unit for processing 10,000 nuts per day, one desiccated coconut powder unit for processing 60,000 coconut per day, one tender coconut Water processing unit for processing 5,000 tender coconuts per day, two coconut shell- based activated carbon units for processing 22 tonne of shell per day were sanctioned.

Coconut Development Board Chairman T.K Jose presided over the meet. A.G. Gopalakrishna, scientist, CFTRI (CSIR), Mysore; Vinayaka Hegde, Head, Crop Protection, CPCRI, Kasaragod; and Usha K., AGM, NABARD, Regional Office, Thriuvananthapuram, were among those present.

KVK develops new pressure treadle pump

Device to be helpful to farmers in irrigation of their farmlands



The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) - Wayanad under Kerala Agricultural University has come up with an innovative pressure treadle pump for farmers in the State.

The device would be of great help to family farmers as it could pump water from a depth of 7 m and deliver it to a height of 6 m at the rate of 1.5 litre per second, P.K. Abdul Jabbar, Assistant Professor (Agriculture extension), KVK, told *The Hindu*.

Boon to farmers

Dr. Jabbar, who introduced the technology in the district, says that the farmers are often forced to keep their land fallow for want of irrigation facilities. Using the pressure treadle pump, they can irrigate their farms with water from nearby sources.

Micro irrigation also is possible with the device by attaching sprinklers or drip irrigation kit to the device.

“A prototype of the device has been developed by Ecoflo Irrigation Systems, an NGO based in Nasik, and we are planning to promote the technology in the district in association with the Agricultural Technology Management Agency,” he says.

The pump set, costing Rs.5,700, is helpful for urban terrace farms and semi-urban homesteads, Dr. Jabbar says.

The eco-friendly and easy-to-carry device could be a good option for combining physical exercise with farming activities, he adds.

· *Device can be*

used for micro

irrigation too

· *Prototype developed by Nasik-based NGO*

Trapper to catch red palm weevil showcased at krishi exhibition

Vegetables, tissue cultured banana plants go on show



Asha Thimmappa Gowda, Dakshina Kannada Zilla Panchayat President, browsing through agricultural products at the krishi mela in Moodbidri on Tuesday.— Photo: H.S. Manjunath

A trapper to catch red palm weevil (locally called kuruvai), which damages coconut palms and other crop, attracted visitors at the one-day district krishi utsav and jalanayana mela that was organised by the Department of Agriculture here on Tuesday.

A representative of the company, which exhibited the trapper, said that a tablet of a pheromone should be put at the top of the trapper and the bottom should be filled with water.

Attracted by the pheromone, the red palm weevils will fall in the water and die after a day.

One such tablet in a trapper is capable of attracting the weevils affecting as many as 100 palms.

A tablet lasted six months, he said and added that it could be kept anywhere in coconut gardens.

The exhibition had seeds of vegetables, tissue cultured banana plants, machines used in paddy cultivation, display of pest and disease control measures in paddy, books and the like.

Minister for Forests, Environment and Ecology B. Ramanath Rai and Minister of State for Youth Empowerment and Sports and Fisheries K. Abhayachandra Jain, who were supposed to attend the inaugural session, did not attend.

President of the Dakshina Kannada Zilla Panchayat Asha Thimmappa Gowda inaugurated the mela. There were sessions on organic farming, modern paddy cultivation methods and use of machineries in paddy farming.

A participant told *The Hindu* that the mela would have attracted many people had there been enough publicity.

‘India, Germany losing out on traditional farming methods’

Saving themselves from market techniques and keeping their own seeds for the next crop is not a small thing for farmers. The problem was not confined only to Telangana and India, even farmers in Germany have been facing similar problems. Not only that, even using the old seed for the next crop

without paying royalty for the seed producing company is a crime in Germany.

Andreas Riekeberg, co-ordinator, Campaign for Seed Sovereignty, Germany, was recently at Hosalli village in Nyalakal mandal of Medak district. As told to **R. AVADHANI**.

What are the similarities in problems being faced by farmers in India and Germany?

Both are facing the problem of keeping and saving the traditional farming systems. In Germany, industrial agriculture is taking place by leaving no place for traditional farming.

Are the farmers not allowed to keep their own seed?

Farmers will not be allowed to keep their own seed. They have to pay royalty for companies selling seed if they sow seed being used from their produce. If they do not take permission for the concerned authorities it was a crime. We are fighting on this issue with the government.

What is the influence of the seed production companies on the policy making of the government?

They are mounting pressure on the government to make policies that are suitable for their market, thereby harming the interests of farmers. Last time our Parliament objected to changes in law that allows farmers to have own seeds. We need to fight this issue till the end. A study points out that farmers can have more yield by sowing 10 to 12 varieties in a field rather than opting for mono crop. Not only that, farmers would be forced to opt for increased use of fertilizers and pesticides, when they go in for new seeds being introduced by companies.

What is your impression of the biodiversity festival being organised by Deccan Development Society (DDS)?

Women taking the lead role in keeping traditional farming intact are very impressive. We want to propagate this in Germany and create awareness among our farmers.

Bird survey points to rise in temperature in Pathanamthitta



Asian openbill, bluethroat, and glossy ibis sighted in wetlands in Pathanamthitta during the Asian Waterbird Survey.

Maximum waterbird count in Karingalipuncha

The sighting of a bluethroat, a flock of glossy ibis, and a dozen Asian openbill in Pathanamthitta during the Asian Waterbird Survey of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) is indicative of the increasing atmospheric temperature in the region. These birds are normally found in dry wetlands with high atmospheric temperature.

The survey was conducted jointly by the WWF-India, Kerala chapter and the Social Forestry wing of the Forests and Wildlife Department at five locations — Thonnallur, near Pandalam; Karingalipuncha; Aranmula-Nalkalikkal wetlands; Pampa river at Aranmula; and Othara-Thiruvamanapuram wetlands — on Saturday, A.K. Sivakumar, project coordinator, said.

The survey found the Aranmula wetlands, which come under the disputed private airport project site, a very good waterbird habitat with more than 1,000 birds belongs to 22 species.

The maximum count was from Karingalipuncha with around 1,200 birds belongs to 33 species. The birders counted nearly 800 birds belonging to 39 species in the Thonnallur fields.

Mr. Sivakumar said around 600 birds were counted in the Othara-Thiruvamanapuram wetlands. Migratory birds such as common sandpiper, little-ringed plover, Pacific golden plover, green sandpiper, whiskered tern, glossy ibis, and black-winged stilts were reported from these areas.

River degradation

The sighting of an increased number of black kites in the Pampa at Aranmula indicated increased pollution owing to dumping of poultry waste. The sighting of whiskered terns, generally found in stagnant waters such as paddy fields, was also reported from the river, indicating the degradation of its ecosystem.

The census revealed a steady total bird count in the district. It highlighted the need to protect the wetlands for the existence of these birds and thereby, the agricultural sector and sustainable socio-economic status, he Mr. Sivakumar said.

Students come up with ideas to save energy

The 6th Indian Youth Congress saw some innovative presentations from young researchers in the field of agriculture, biotechnology and food sciences. Students came up with fresh ideas to save energy and preserve eco systems vital for survival of mankind.

Chand Basha, a research student of Acharya Nagarjuna University, spoke about the need to preserve mangroves in coastal areas which act as a shield against damage caused due to high tidal waves and tsunami.

Expressing concern over the widespread destruction of habitat in coastal regions, he said that conservation of mangroves forests should be taken on a war-footing. Mangroves with coiled and dense root systems act as a natural barrier against coastal erosion and preserve natural eco systems.

Aruna Kumari, PG student, spoke about the challenges to food security.

Lakshminarayanan, a professor, warned of the excessive use of cellphones and the harmful effects of radiation. Stating that continuous use of a mobile phone over 20 minutes could raise temperatures of earlobes by one degree Celsius, he said and added that if left untreated, the harmful effect of radiation could also lead to ear tumour.

He said that those residing within 50-300 metres away from mobile towers were prone to electromagnetic radiation effects and added that those within 50 metres are at high risk.

As many as 384 students from 17 States took part in the Congress.

The 6th Indian Youth Congress would conclude on Wednesday. Speaker Kodela Siva Prasada Rao will be the chief guest at the valedictory ceremony.

The sixth Indian Youth Congress will conclude today



EU lifts ban on Indian mangoes

The EU Tuesday decided to lift a seven-month-long ban on the import of mangoes from India after the world's biggest producer made significant improvements in plant health controls and certification system, clearing the way for them to return to the 28-member bloc by March.

However, the ban on the import of vegetables from India will be reviewed at later stage after collecting more evidence, the EU statement said .

A European Commission committee meeting in Brussels voted to lift the ban on mangoes on Tuesday.

“A proposal by the Commission to lift the import ban of mango fruits from India was today endorsed by Member State experts meeting at the relevant Regulatory Committee concerned with Plant Health,” the statement said.

“An audit carried out by the Commission’s Food and Veterinary Office in India in September 2014 showed significant improvements in the phytosanitary export certification system.

The European Union's "temporary ban" came into force on May 1, 2014, and was to remain effective until December 2015 after the authorities in Brussels found consignments of the premium Alphonso mangoes infested with fruit flies that they feared could damage European salad crops. After Tuesday's vote, the EU said, "India has also provided assurances that appropriate measures are now available to ensure that the exports of mango fruits are free from quarantine pest, like the fruit flies not known to occur in the Union.

"The measures will allow the import of mango fruits before the start of the next import season in March 2015," the statement said.

The legislation now needs to be formally adopted and published by the European Commission.

This will take around a month, but the positive vote by the Committee gives certainty to Indian exporters and UK importers about the position for the forthcoming mango season. The EU accounts for more than 50 per cent of total exports of fruits and vegetables from India. The UK is the main destination, followed by the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium.

The UK imports nearly 160 lakh mangoes from India and the market for this fruit is worth nearly 6 million pounds a year.

Move over Gajar Ka Halwa, make Stuffed Gajar Paratha



Gajar Paratha recipe (Source: nishamadhulika.com)

So you are fond of aloo paratha, gobhi paratha and all stuffed parathas? Try making Stuffed Gajar Paratha this winters. One, it's high on nutrients. Two, you will get another option for breakfast.

Ingredients

2 cup wheat flour
1 cup carrots (grated)
2 tbsp green coriander (finely chopped)
4 tbsp oil or ghee
1-2 green chilly (finely chopped)
1 inch piece ginger (grated)
Salt (as per taste)
1/4 tsp cumin seeds
Less than 1/4 tsp Red chilly powder
1/2 tsp coriander powder
1/4 tsp mango powder

Method

- * Sieve wheat flour in a big bowl. Add 1/2 tsp salt and 2 tsp oil into it.
- * With the help of 1/2 cup water, knead soft dough
- * Cover and keep the dough aside for 20 minutes to set.
- * Meanwhile prepare stuffing for the parathas.
- * Preheat oil in a pan. When oil is sufficiently hot, add cumin seeds and saute for while.
- * After sauteing cumin seeds, add green chilly, ginger, coriander powder and saute the spices for few minutes.
- * Now add salt, red chilly powder in grated carrots and saute the carrots for 2-3 minutes until water evaporates. Carrot filling is now ready.



Make the gajar filling (Source: nishamadhulika.com)

* Dough is also ready. Take little amount of dough (equal to the size of lemon) and roll it in round shape.

* Dust the dough ball in dry flour and roll into 3-4 inch diameter paratha.

* Preheat tawa. Place 1-2 tsp stuffing over rolled paratha and lift the paratha from all sides to close the stuffing.

* Flatten the dough ball with your fingers so that stuffing gets spread evenly inside the paratha. Dust with dry flour and flatten some more with your fingers. Now roll into 6-7 inch diameter paratha.



Flatten the dough ball with your fingers so that stuffing gets spread evenly inside the paratha. (Source: nishamadhulika.com)



(Source: nishamadhulika.com)

- * Grease the tawa with some oil and place the paratha over the tawa.
- * Cook until its roasted from beneath. When its roasted from beneath, spread some oil on the upper side and flip the parantha. Spread some oil on this side as well.

Press the parantha with ladle gently and roast until it gets brown spots evenly on both the sides (Keep the flame medium. Increase the flame whenever required. This way you can prepare nicely roasted parathas).



press the parantha with ladle gently and roast until it gets brown spots evenly on both the sides (Source: nishamadhulika.com)

* Take off the paratha from the flame and place it in a plate. Likewise prepare all parathas.

* Serve carrot stuffed paranthas with chutney, pickle, raita, aloo-tomato curry or any other sabzi you relish eating the most.



Recipe: Roast chicken, beans & mashed potatoes



Though roast chicken is very much a British pub lunch, Neel adds an Italian touch to the dish. If the other-worldly smell of roast chicken hits you while crossing Beniapukur on a sultry Puja afternoon, chances are it's coming from the Dutt residence. Puja might be a celebration of all things traditional, but this is one family that loves to go off the beaten path. So, even during the Bengali festive season, global flavours are in vogue within the four walls of the Dutt residence.

"We generally have a Bengali lunch on Ashtami, but beyond that we try out everything from Italian, English and Chinese to Turkish, north Indian and fusion during Puja," says Neel Dutt. The composer, who's as serious about music as good food, has not just picked up cooking from his parents (Anjan and Chanda Dutt), but also learnt while travelling around the world. "I like fusion food where there's a balance. So, the gondhoraaj lebu mousse doesn't work for me," he tells us. Though roast chicken is very much a British pub lunch, Neel adds an Italian touch to it with loads of mushrooms and a hint of red wine. "The blend is very important. So, I am not game for a paneer tikka pizza. Pizzas have to have cheese, garlic and tomatoes in them. Roast chicken in wine sauce with green beans and mashed potatoes -a huge hit among my friends -is a meal by itself. When people at home are in the mood for a feast, I make spaghetti as well," he says.

Neel says all his near and dear ones are into cooking and that's a huge drive. "My paternal grandfather loved spicy food, while my grandmother would stir up lovely veg delicacies. But I learnt a lot from my maternal grandmom; she taught me that the key to any dish is the perfect salt-sugar balance. My pasta with tomatoes and cheese is authentic Italian, though I have an oriental way of looking at it. And here, the salt-sugar balance plays the most important role," quips Neel.

Every dish, says the musician, is made to perfection by all his family members. "Only recently did all of us try Goalondo chicken curry at home. None of us had tasted the original steamer curry, but we wanted to get as authentic as possible. We all knew it had to have big potato pieces and the jhol was to be made in a certain way, but there was no perfect recipe. So, it was cooked at least nine times at home," he says. With Puja just a handful of days away, the Dutt family is getting more and more busy. New dishes have to be tried, old recipes have to be improvised on, the blend has to be perfected... Puja, after all, comes once a year.

ROAST CHICKEN WITH WINE SAUCE, BEANS & MASHED

POTATOES A whole chicken (with skin) cut into four pieces
Garlic paste: 4 tbsp
Chopped garlic: 2 tbsp
Lemon juice: one squeeze
Onion: 1 medium, grated and juice extracted
Milk: 1/4 cup
Potatoes: 2, boiled
Green beans: 100 gms
Olive oil: 4 tbsp
Button mushrooms: 3, finely chopped
Parsley: 30-40 gms, chopped
Red wine: 1/2 cup
Butter: 1 tbsp
Sugar: 1 tbsp
Salt to taste

PREPARATION FOR THE ROAST CHICKEN Add lemon juice, onion juice, garlic paste, two tbsp olive oil and salt to the chicken. Put it in an oven bowl and cover it with aluminium foil. Preheat the oven to 180-200°C and place the bowl in it. After 45 minutes, remove the foil and let the chicken roast for another 15 minutes. This will give it a brownish tinge.

FOR THE WINE SAUCE

Heat rest of the olive oil in a pan. Add mushrooms, chopped garlic and a pinch of chopped parsley and saute for a while. Add butter and the wine. You can also stir in a spoon of sugar, depending on your taste. Simmer for a while, check consistency and cool the sauce.

FOR MASHED POTATOES AND GREEN BEANS

In a mixer, add boiled potatoes, 1/4 cup milk, a bit of sugar and salt and mash it to a creamy consistency. Blanch the green beans and saute in a little olive oil for 15-20 seconds. Add parsley.

TO SERVE

Serve the roast chicken with the mashed potatoes, green beans and wine sauce on the side. This is a full meal in itself, but you can also serve it with bread rolls.

[Recipe: Khajoor chutney](#)

Ingredients:

200 gms seedless dates (khajoor)

50 gm raisin

2 slabs of sweet aam papad (cut in cubes)

Paanch phoron 1 1/2 tsp (alternately use 1/4 tsp of rai, kalonji, sauf and whole cumin seeds each)

Turmeric ¼ tsp
Red chillies 2/3
Sugar 3 tsp
Salt to taste
Ghee/vegetable oil 1 tbsp
Bayleaf 2

Method:

Soak the dates and raisin for 5/6 hours. In a pan heat the ghee/oil and add the bayleaf, chillies, panch phoron and let them fry till they crackle together. Now add the dates, aam papad and raisin and fry them gently in the spices mix. Add the turmeric, sugar and salt and the water in which you had soaked the raisin and dates. Let the mixture thicken. Once you have the desired consistency, allow it to cool before serving it. You can also add a dash of elaichi powder to garnish it.

Best had with roti/paratha/poori or after your meal like a small dessert!

[Recipe: Egg drop soup](#)

Hassle free cooking is what makes egg drop soup favourite among lot of people.

A complete meal in itself, the soup tastes nice when boiled noodles/macaroni is added to it. This is what you need to make it...

Ingredients:

3 eggs. No need to beat it as they can be poured directly into the pan
5 cups of chicken broth or stock
2 green onions
Little bit of black pepper
Salt to taste
1 table spoon of olive oil
A small quantity of corn flour (for thickening)
1 cup of boiled noodles or macaroni

How to prepare it:

- Take a saucepan and boil the chicken stock or broth. Keep boiling for some time.
- Now add olive oil, as it will enhance the taste of soup along with salt and pepper.

- When you see it boiling, break eggs into it slowly. Poaching of eggs is a great way to retain the nutritional value.
- Now pit noodles or macaroni along with green onions.
- The soup is ready. Serve it hot.

Avocado oil: Hollywood's secret weapon

We all know the wonders of natural oils. But there is one oil that is slowly and gradually making its way to the top. Sad if it has escaped your radar so far, because it is clearly one of the hidden celebrity health and beauty secrets worth stealing. Step forward, Avocado oil.

The Kardashian sisters swear by the wonder effects of Avocado oil. Khloe Kardashian revealed it's her one stop beauty elixir. Hollywood actress Lupita Nyong'o, the face of beauty brand, Lancome, told media persons recently how she started using it on her body first, just to realize that it works equal magic on her face and hair too.

Not only for beauty, Avocado oil has a magical effect on your health too. Talking to TOI.com, Hollywood fitness trainer Ramona Braganza said, "Indians have so much variety of food. It is all about how they cook it. For me, avocado oil is a good choice of oil for cooking your *dal or parantha*. It has a myriad of health benefits and helps you stay away from piling unwanted calories." She trains the likes of Jessica Alba, Halle Berry, Zac Efron and Jessica Beil.

Here are some of the benefits:

Great for skin and hair: Avocado oil has the maximum quality of Omega 9 and can be applied on your skin, hair and consumed too. It penetrates the skin more deeply than other oils and its high levels of Vitamin E and micro-nutrients add elasticity, fight bacteria, making it one of the world's finest skin and hair care product.

UV protection: Avocado oil is said to have a low level of UV protection (around an SPF 6-8). Combined with the high vitamin and sterolin content, it can help in preventing sun damage.

Maintains cholesterol: Not only does it keep you fit and beautiful, it is the only oil that maintains your cholesterol.

Skin healer: It has the maximum content of Vitamin E, which means it can cure initial stages of skin diseases.

Loaded with nutrients: A spoonful of avocado oil on a regular basis can replenish your body with eleven different types of vitamins and fourteen vital minerals including potassium, iron, phosphorous. "It is a thick oil and can even be mixed in your food. It does not alter the taste of the food," shares diet consultant, Mansi Batra.

Fry and refry: You have often heard how unhealthy it is to use any oil after it has reached its maximum heat up point. Well, with Avocado oil, you can fry *puris* for kids and then use the same oil for your *parantha* too.

Time to have some fun with Avocado oil!

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Farm costs panel wants coconut purchase extended to 6 months

Recommends that a study be conducted in districts with high productivity levels

Kochi, January 20:

The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) has suggested that the coconut procurement period be extended to six months from the current 90 days.

Remote areas

As there is hardly any procurement centre in some remote areas, CACP pointed out that the Coconut Producer Societies and Coconut Producer Federations could undertake procurement operations in a much better way if the period was extended.

CACP is a statutory body advising the Government on the pricing policy for major farm produces.

Emphasising the need to strengthen the procurement machinery, the Commission lauded Coconut Development Boards' efforts to enhance procurement and productivity of coconut crops and its farmer collective initiatives. It recommended a study on the productivity levels of coconut in districts such as West Godavari (Andhra Pradesh), Chitradurga (Karnataka), Malappuram (Kerala) and Krishnagiri (Tamil Nadu), which have much higher productivity than the respective States' averages. This could help propagate or replicate farming practices and inputs used in these districts in other areas.

Value add

The Commission also mentioned that value-added products from Neera (such as palm sugar, syrup, honey and coconut based products like coconut shell products and coir) need to be supported and produced on a massive scale.

It added that its potential should be considered for commercial exploitation.

CACP said the formation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPO's), which has facilitated better management of the gardens, adoption of scientific technologies and better harvesting and post-harvesting techniques, needs to be replicated on a large scale to increase productivity levels.



NOW, FARMERS CAN HIRE AGRICULTURE EQUIPMENT

The Agriculture Service Centres established in every development block by Chhattisgarh Government are providing agricultural equipments on rent to the farmers, officials stated. The move has benefitted many farmers who cannot afford costly agricultural equipments, they stated.

This apart, the State Government's 'Kisaan Samriddhi Yojana' has also proved to be a boon for farmers. Under this scheme, farmers are provided with section-wise grant for tube-well digging, they stated. More than 75,000 farmers have been benefited under the scheme. State Government is operating number of other schemes, which have proved extremely beneficial for the farmers.

Besides cultivation, animal husbandry and fishery are the additional source of income for farmers. Hence, State Government has included animal husbandry and fishery under its all-round agricultural development policy. With the help of Government schemes, large number of farmers has taken up employment-oriented activities to march ahead on the path of progress.

To encourage farmers practicing traditional animal husbandry, the State Government started the scheme of providing loan upto Rs1 lakh at one per cent interest, from previous year. Moreover, several schemes have also been started to promote fishery. Chhattisgarh has become self-dependent in supply of fish seeds.

This apart, in year 2013-14, fish seeds worth Rs1.22 crore were produced. More than two lakh fishermen have been provided employment opportunities through development of 94 per cent of the total area of 1.635 lakh hectares is available in the State for fishery. Giving due importance to agriculture, the State Government presented its first agricultural budget in year 2013-14. Farmers need cash for various agricultural activities right from sowing to reaping.

Earlier, farmers had to pay 14 per cent interest on agricultural loans. But considering the problems faced by farmers, the State Government gradually reduced the rate of interest on agricultural loans from 14 per cent to only 3 per cent. Later, the interest rate on agricultural loans was further reduced to one per cent. And since last two years, farmers are availing interest-free short term agricultural loans. Last year, agricultural loans worth nearly Rs1,339 crore were distributed to farmers.

Large number of small farmers and the ones living in border areas were relieved, when the State Government waived off their expired loans. The State Government last year also commenced weather-based crop insurance scheme to support farmers. Seven major crops were included in this scheme namely paddy, corn, arhar, soyabean, peanut, moong and urad. Other than addressing the need of cash and multi-crop arrangements, State Government

has also taken significant decisions to ensure regular supply of electricity, which is another major requirement of farmers for cultivation.

Chhattisgarh has become the first State of the country to facilitate 24x7 electricity supply to agricultural fields of farmers. Irrigation pumps of nearly 3 lakh farmers have been provided electricity connection. Grant of Rs75,000 is provided for electrification of pumps. Farmer-oriented schemes of State Government have relieved the farmers of the expenses like meter fare, fixed charge and electricity sub tax, officials stated.

For agricultural pumps of capacity up to 5 horse power, State Government provides free electricity supply of upto 7,500 unit to the farmers, officials stated.

Business Standard

Cotton Corporation's target of 10 million bales cotton half way through

Already 4.82 million bales procured to support prices from falling

The [Cotton](#) Corporation of India (CCI) is set to buy a record amount from the open market this season. About half the CCI's target of 10 million tonnes (mt) for this cotton season (October 2014-September 2015) has been met. So far, it has purchased 4.82 million bales (170 kg each) from areas where prices have fallen below the minimum support price.

This season, India is estimated to produce 40 million bales.

At a time when demand is substantially low, steady arrivals in states such as Gujarat are forcing [CCI](#) to procure more and hold stocks. Yarn spinners, too, aren't buying cotton and the yarn export window has shrunk considerably.



It is assumed a glut in the market is behind CCI's reluctance to release cotton in the open market.

Speaking to Business Standard, B K Mishra, chairman and managing director of Cotton Corporation, said, "CCI has not taken any stand on the liquidation of cotton." He added 4.8 million bales had been procured and arrivals were in full swing in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.

Daily arrivals stand at 250,000-300,000 bales.

Through a credit line guaranteed by the central government, the corporation has arranged warehouse facilities. "We plan to procure about 10 million bales; we can store this much comfortably. Considering the volume of procurement in the past few years, if we achieve the target, this will be the highest procurement. So far, the highest procurement was in 200809, when it stood at 8.9 million bales," Mishra added.

So far, CCI has spent Rs 9,600 crore on procurement, at an average cost of Rs 1,060 a quintal. It is wary of releasing the stock, as the prices are unlikely to be viable. It is likely CCI will consult the Union agriculture ministry before taking a decision on offloading to millers.

An exporter said though prices in the global market were slightly higher, after accounting for freight, the margins were low.

While traders think liquidation by CCI at a certain price will create a benchmark in the market and help raise the prices, officials fear this might trigger a fall, as supplies will increase.

Mishra said there should be an agriculture produce market committee (APMC) every 25 km and CCI should operate through these. If there weren't enough APMCs, states should stream-line the process and help farmers, he added.

Monthly domestic cotton consumption stands at 2.2-2.4 million bales.

Hardyal Singh Cheema, senior vice-president, North India Textile Millers Association, said, "Domestic mills are in no hurry to stock cotton. They have some inventory."

When CCI commenced sales, smaller mills would be given a grace period to lift cotton, said a CCI official.

Garlic price surges on seasonal demand

Up 15% this month, with a delay in the new crop; price expected to stay high for a while

After high volatility in 2014, the price of [garlic](#) settled higher last week due to strong seasonal demand and falling stocks, plus a delay in harvesting of the new crop. Lower crop output estimates supported the upward march.

The price is up 15 per cent spurt so far this month, to trade at Rs 3,785 a quintal on Tuesday. After a high of Rs 4,250 a qtl on January 9, it fell to Rs 3,625 a qtl a week later.

"Harvesting of the new crop is delayed by over a month. While new arrivals have started in Madhya Pradesh, the quantity is insufficient. Consequently, supply into spot mandis is coming from cold storages," said R P Gupta, Director, National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation.

Replanting of garlic saplings was delayed by a month after a proportionate delay in harvesting of kharif crops. Normally sown towards the end of September, the early variety of garlic is harvested in January. The normal variety is sown in October, for harvesting in February. Sowing of all agricultural crops was delayed in the 2014-15 crop year (July-June), due to delay in monsoon rain.

"The entire season is late by a month. Last year's crop is gradually getting exhausted in warehouses. Bulk dealers, therefore, are selling to wholesalers at a higher price. Consumers will have to live with higher prices for at least a fortnight," said a Rajkot-based trader and exporter.

The [Union agriculture ministry](#) has, in its third advance estimate, anticipated garlic output at 1.18 million tonnes for 2013-14, down from 1.22 mt in the

HOTTING UP

Garlic acreage and production

Crop year (Jul – Jun)	Area (‘000 ha)	Output (‘000 tonnes)
2008-09	190.47	1,003.76
2009-10	187.27	975.40
2010-11	200.6	1,057.80
2011-12	242.49	1,228.32
2012-13	247.52	1,259.27
2013-14	227	1,181.00

Source : National Horticulture Board, Spices board

second advance estimate and 1.26 mt in the first. The National Horticulture Board put output at 1.26 mt the previous year.

"Lower crop size is the only reason for the price firming up," said Mohinder Singh, general secretary of the Delhi-based Garlic Merchants Association.

Foreign demand has been low so far. Demand from Bangladesh is expected with the receding supply from China, the world's largest producer and supplier. Harvesting takes place in India at the time the supply exhausts from China. [Garlic export](#) was 34,020 tonnes worth \$14.3 million in 2013-14, as compared to 36,227 tonnes for \$13.8 mn the previous year. India suddenly strengthened its position in the export market after a mere \$2 mn worth shipped in 2011-12.

"European demand has seen a lull, probably because of the region's weak economic trend. Asian markets turn towards India due to the supply lag from China," said the Rajkot trader.

With a 60 per cent share, Bangladesh was the largest importer of garlic from India in 2013-14, followed by Pakistan with 20 per cent.