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THE HINDU

TNAU initiative pays dividend

A group of 25 farmers get 600 kg an acre of “TRY 3” rice



A farmer harvesting TNAU-TRY 3 paddy variety at Poongudi village near Tiruchi.— PHOTO: A. Muralitharan

A joint effort by various departments and scientists has helped farmers of Poongudi village in Manikandam block – sodic-soil affected area, near here to register a higher yield in paddy.

Against the usual 480 to 600 kg an acre a few years ago, farmers have registered about 3.6 tonnes of the ‘TNAU – Rice TRY 3’ paddy variety this season, being popularised by the Tamil Nadu Agricultural College – Anbil Dharmalingam Agricultural College and Research Institute.

Twenty five farmers were selected in the village for the combined effort by different departments. While the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Sirugamani, supplied the seeds at subsidised price, the Indian Fertiliser Farmers’ Cooperative Society (IFFCO) provided 25 kg of zinc sulphate and 25 kg of water soluble fertilizer.

The scientists from TNAU – ADACRI, led by P. Pandiyarajan, Dean, provided adequate guidance to farmers in keeping the variety free from pest attack.

“Water soluble fertilizer has gone a long way in registering the higher yield,” says D. Subramanian, Chief Area Manager of IFFCO.

The joint meeting by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra and the scientists of the institute helped farmers to register the higher yield, according to A. Balasubramanian, Professor and Head of Soil Sciences of the Institute.

The “Field Day” was organised at the village when the scientists interacted with farmers and ascertained the yield.

N. Suresh, Field officer ,IFFCO, said the IFFCO had been providing the assistance to farmers of Poongudi village, in batches, for the past four years.

With local millers ruling the roost, tapioca farmers get a raw deal



It is troubled time for tapioca farmers of East Godavari district as they struggle to get minimum price for their produce with outside players virtually staying away from the market this season. The tuber that was sold at a price of Rs.1,500 per tonne last year, is now being quoted at Rs. 850.

The irony is that the farmers have spent more on the inputs and are sceptical about the yield due to the spread of diseases. Tapioca, popularly known as ‘Karra Pendalam’ in the local dialect, is the major rain-fed crop in the district being cultivated predominantly in the upland mandals.

It is the second largest crop after paddy in the district, which is being sown in about 70,000 acres.

Generally, the farmers commence the plantation works in June and get the yield in the months of February and March every year. Thousands of farmers from Peddapuram, Gandepalli, Jaggampeta and Gokavaram areas have been into the tapioca cultivation for many years, as they can get guaranteed returns against nominal input costs, as compared to other rain-fed crops such as cotton.

Sago industries located in and around Peddapuram are on the job of purchasing the produce directly from the farmers. At a time when the farmers are about to get the yield, the sago millers have made it clear that they could not offer more than Rs. 850 per tonne. The farmers launched agitations demanding that the millers must retain the last year's price.

“The initial response from the local millers was cold even during last year. But we got a good price, when millers from Kerala entered the local market and began clinching deals with the farmers directly,” recalls Palakarla Viswanatham, secretary of the Karra Pendalam Sagu Rythu Sangham, which is fighting for the cause of tapioca farmers.

“Spread of a disease is suspected in some fields. As the Horticulture Research Station had been shifted to West Godavari, no scientist is available here to help us now,” he says. The millers, however, say there is a drop of price for sago in the export market, due to which they can't offer a better price to the farmers.

Bird flu outbreak confirmed in 11 Nigerian states



AFTER EBOLA, IT'S A FIGHT AGAINST BIRD FLU IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian government on Wednesday confirmed the outbreak of bird flu in 11 States.

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Akinwumi Adesina, made the disclosure at an emergency meeting on avian influenza (bird flu) in Abuja, according to a Xinhua report.

He announced that the government had approved funds to compensate farmers affected by the outbreak. IANS

Chittoor bags national award

Chittoor district, the home turf of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, has bagged the national award for successful implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), which is aimed at arresting migration of small farmers and agricultural labourers from drought-hit areas. The Ministry of Rural Development made an announcement in this regard on Wednesday. The award is for the year 2014-15.

District Collector Siddarth Jain, District Water Management Authority (DWMA) Project Director Rajasekhar Naidu and Assistant Project Director Gopichand will receive the award from Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the NREGS mela at Krishi Vignan Bhavan, New Delhi, on February 2.

Prime Minister to present award on February 2 in New Delhi

Cane price: farmers seek government intervention

Farmers' Associations in Ariyalur district have appealed to the State government to pressure private sugar mills to pay the State Advised Price of Rs. 2,650 a tonne of sugarcane for this year.

On behalf of all farmers associations, Raja Chidambaram, State secretary of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, submitted a petition to the district collector A. Saravanavelraj at the farmers grievances day on Thursday.

In the petition, the associations said that the 24 private sugar mills in the State have paid the SAP till 2012-13. They have to pay for 2013-14 and 2014-15.

District Collector said that samba paddy had been cultivated on 57,205 acres in Ariyalur district this year.

Paddy under System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method had been cultivated on 5,470 acres of land in 95 villages. As samba harvest has started, 25 Direct Purchase Centres of Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC) had been opened in the district for procuring samba paddy.

From January 21, DPCs had been functioning from Thuthur, Guruvadi, Elakurichi, Ilanthaikudam, Keelakolathur, and Kamarasavalli in Ariyalur taluk and Muttuvanchery, Kodalikaruppur, Gangaikondacholapuram, T. Pazhur, and Vazhaikurichi in Udayarpalayam taluk.

From January 29 (Thursday), DPCs had been functioning from Thirumazhapadi, Keelakavattankurichi, Vizhuppanankurichi, Palnganatham, Vilagam, Oriyur, Venganur, Kovilesanai, Karaivetti, and Kallur in Ariyalur taluk and Karaikurichi, Sripuranthan, Periyathukurichi in Udayarpalayam taluk, and R.S. Mathur in Senthurai taluk.

There was a stock of 432 tonnes of urea, 458 tonnes of Di Ammonium Phosphate (DAP), 577 tonnes of potash, and 742 tonnes of complex fertilizers with Primary Agriculture Co-operative Credit Societies and private companies.

A total of 452 tonnes of certified seeds have been distributed. Out of this, 252 tonnes have been distributed by Agriculture Extension Centres, 20 tonnes through co-operatives and 180 tonnes through private parties.

Pulses have been raised on 2,133 hectares of land in 33 villages. The target is to raise pulses on 2,288 hectares in 38 villages.

Call for research-based higher education

'Farm technology should be developed to produce more'

Research oriented higher education is the need of the hour for the overall development of the country, said A. Sivathanu Pillai, Distinguished Scientist and former Chief Controller (R and D), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

Research-based higher education will pave way in a big way for the economic development of the country, Dr. Pillai said while delivering his address at the Graduation Day of the SSM College of Engineering here recently.

Priority

He said that India has every capability of becoming a super power in the near future. Priority should be accorded to agriculture.

Farm technology should be developed to produce more from the limited land area.

Under the 'Make in India' programme of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the successfully functioning industrial houses should be identified and encouraged to achieve self-sufficiency. He also favoured increasing the exports and bringing down the imports.

Dr. Pillai gave away degree certificates to 447 students. University gold medallists and rank holders were honoured.

J. Maheswaran, Principal, presented the Graduation Day report. College Chairman M. S. Mathivanan presided over the function.

Earlier, at an interaction session, Dr. Pillai clarified the doubts raised by the students.

Now, Raj Bhavan takes to organic vegetable farming



Pesticide-free option:Governor P. Sathasivam inaugurates the organic farming initiative on the Raj Bhavan premises in Thiruvananthapuram on

Thursday. Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan looks on.— Photo: C. Ratheesh Kumar

The verdant premises of Raj Bhavan, the official residence of the Governor, will soon become a micro hub of organic farming. The Agriculture Department has tied up with the garden wing of Raj Bhavan to create an organic vegetable garden on 50 cents of land on the premises.

The garden will use modern organic methods of cultivation to produce ethnic vegetables such as cucumber, bitter gourd, snake gourd, pumpkin, okra, chilli, cowpea and amaranthus as well as North Indian varieties such as palak and beans to meet the daily requirements of Raj Bhavan. Organic manure and biocontrol agents will be used for farming.

An official press note issued here said preparations were on to neutralise the acidity of the soil and enrich the nutrients for proper plant growth. Agricultural technicians attached to the Karshika Karmasena, Kudappanakunnu, were using mechanised equipment to prepare the beds for farming.

Governor P. Sathasivam inaugurated the venture on Thursday by planting saplings. Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan, Director of Agriculture R. Aajithkumar and officials from the department were present.

Wayanad ideal for fruit, flower farming: expert



The International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS) is gearing up to organise an international symposium on horticulture at Ambalavayal.

Sisir Mitra, Chairman, ISHS, told the media here on Thursday after visiting Poopoly-2015, a State-level flower show, and National Agrifesta, organised by the Kerala Agricultural University at its Regional Agriculture Research Station here, that horticulture and floriculture had good potential in the district.

“I foresee a bright future for floriculture and pomology in the region,” Dr. Mitra said the favourable climate and fertile soil would help in commercial cultivation of flowers such as dahlia, gladiolus, rose, and gerbera, and exotic fruits like litchi, raspberry, strawberry, rambutan, and avocado. Even macadamia, an indigenous Australian fruit, could be successfully grown here, he added.

The symposium to be organised in association with the KAU by the middle of December would expose the unexplored potential to global traders, opening up new avenues for farmers and agri-entrepreneurs here, he said.

Dr. Mitra said advantages of a different harvesting season would be a blessing for the farmers. About Agrifesta, Dr. Mitra said it was a unique experience as it set an excellent example for technology transfer combined with entertainment. “Imparting modern technologies to farmers had always been a challenge and this method seemed so effective,” he added.

Agricultural varsity refutes allegations

The Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) has dismissed as baseless allegations of corruption levelled by a former staff member.

In a statement here on Thursday, the Registrar said the allegations were deliberate attempts to malign the university. “Some of the allegations are exaggerated versions of audit observations made in the 1980s and 1990s that have either been dropped or are under scrutiny. Appointments and service conditions of the KAU staff and teachers are governed by the KAU Act, statutes and approved norms. Nothing has been implemented without the approval of the executive committee. The total number of teaching and non-teaching staff in the university is below 60 per cent of the sanctioned strength. In all, 284 posts of professors and 52 posts of associate professors are still vacant,” he said.

The Registrar said some of the vacant posts would get filled when staff members were promoted. “Another major allegation relates to appointment of staff from an expired rank list. In cases pointed out by complainants, university had followed the orders of the Kerala High Court,” he added.

Microbes in soil degenerating fast

If the agriculture officers are to be believed, all is not well with farming activity. In the last one decade, the level of microbes in the soil has come down from 80 to 40 per cent. It may further go down if proper steps are not put in place by the farming community.

Farmers not following soil conservation, imbalanced use of fertilizer and not using organic manure at required intervals are stated to be main reason for the prevailing conditions. Excess use of fertilizer worsening the situation further. Farmers following the same crop pattern for years together without rotation, not tilling organic manure and not adhering to the suggestions by agriculture officers are also resulting in adverse conditions.

For instance, while three bags of urea, one bag of DAP, half bag of potash and 10 kilograms of zinc sulphate is the recommended dose for one acre of maize cultivation, farmers at Siddipet, Gajwel and Dubbak areas are using almost the double quantity of urea while reducing DAP, which is crucial for strengthening of roots. Instead, they are focusing on green look of field, which attracts more pests, thus incurring more losses. The officials at soil testing centre have identified about 562 tanks, whose silt can be used for farms. They have also recommended not using silt of two tanks located at Patancheru, indicating the seriousness of pollution that is adversely affecting the tanks.

However, the officials feel that the removed silt from the tanks that is to be used in the farms would improve conditions for better. “The silt removed from the tanks will have all required nutrients that rejuvenate yielding capacity of the soil and works as catalyst for application of fertilizer,” M. Karunakar Reddy, Assistant Director, Soil Testing Lab, told *The Hindu* .

Only 30 acres for exotic Nanjangud rasabale



It is difficult to grow the Nanjangud rasabale owing to infestation of Panama Wilt.— File photo

Notwithstanding the efforts of researchers and government agencies, the slide of Nanjangud rasabale, a variety of banana, into extinction seems to be continuing.

“Nanjangud rasabale is now confined to only around 30 acres in Mysuru district,” said B.M. Shivalingappa, senior Assistant Director of Horticulture, Mysuru.

Farmers in the region prefer the more high-yielding and disease-resistant varieties over Nanjangud rasabale, which is susceptible to soil-borne disease Panama Wilt.

In the 80s, the Nanjangud rasabale, which has secured a Geographic Indication (GI) tag, was grown in around 600 acres of land in the district. Till about a decade ago, it was cultivated in about 100 acres.

“But, ever since the Panama Wilt started affecting the Nanjangud rasabale, farmers began avoiding it. Now it is almost extinct in Devarasanahalli in Nanjangud. It is being grown only in patches in some parts of the district,” Mr. Shivalingappa said.

Even though the government is offering incentives, including a subsidy of Rs. 19,500 for every hectare of crop under the National Horticulture Mission, farmers are wary of taking chances.

“A few farmers have taken up its cultivation in small pieces of land, ranging from 10 guntas to 50 guntas. There is no large-scale cultivation of the crop,” Mr. Shivalingappa said. Similarly, the scientists of University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) have come up with disease-free varieties of crop, but the initiative did not lead to improving the area under cultivation, he said.

The department is now encouraging farmers to avail government subsidy by procuring organically produced banana suckers. Officials of the Horticulture Department are advising farmers to use organic manure and bio-fertilisers to minimise the chance of pest attacks, Mr. Shivalingappa said.

Most farmers find other varieties of bananas like Yalakki and Pachchabale (Cavendish) more remunerative and less risky to cultivate, he said.

While a kilo of Nanjangud rasabale costs around Rs. 50 to Rs. 55, Pachchabale and Yalakki are available for Rs. 10 and Rs. 30 respectively. Bananas are grown in around 7,219 hectares in Mysuru district.

Farmers seek water supply for irrigation

Farmers of Puthiyamputhur have sought the intervention of the Collector to ensure sufficient supply of water from Kombai odai. They told the Collector, M. Ravikumar, who was on a visit to Puthiyamputhur on Thursday, that his intervention would be beneficial to farmers of 20 villages, who were dependent on Malarkulam. Supply to Malarkulam from Kombai odai had been disrupted as water got diverted at Pudupacheri tank to reach the sea.

Mr. Ravikumar gave an assurance that a meeting involving PWD and Water Resource Organisation officials would be convened to provide water supply as demanded by the villagers. A few farmers alleged that they faced difficulties in getting crop loans from the Puthiyamputhur cooperative credit society.

The Collector instructed the credit society official to extend crop loans as required by farmers

The farmers assured the Collector that they would continue to supply vegetables to the government-owned farm fresh vegetable outlet. M. Velraj, a farmer, sought one more farm fresh vegetable outlet either at Teachers' colony or Millerpuram in Tuticorin. The Collector said there was overwhelming response for the vegetable outlet near Tuticorin new bus stand and efforts would be made to establish one more outlet.

With a good rainfall of 763.35 mm, crop yield in the district would improve over that of last year, the Collector said. This year, paddy had been cultivated in an area of 17,000 hectares, millets in 48,464 hectares, pulses in 76,728 hectares, oilseeds in 4,186 hectares, cotton in 6,671 hectares, chillies in 11,414 hectares, vegetables in 3,116 hectares and banana in 8,890 hectares.

Paddy yield touched 4,800 kg per hectare and millets 4000 kg per hectare. As for pulses, the yield touched 1000 kg per hectare on an average. Joint Director of Agriculture, N.K. Dhakshinamorthy and Deputy Registrar of Cooperatives Sivakami accompanied the Collector.

800 vegetable outlets to be opened

: The government will open 800 outlets across the State to procure and sell vegetables, Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan has said.

Inaugurating a retail stall for vegetables set up by the Agriculture Department at Pangappara here on Thursday, he said each procurement and marketing outlet would be provided an assistance of Rs.2 lakh for purchase of equipment and vehicles. Mayor J. Chandrika inaugurated the procurement centre.

M.A. Vahid, MLA, presided over the function.

Millet cultivation to get a push

WELCOME INITIATIVE	
JOINT EFFORT	IMMEDIATE TASK
➤ Farmers from 45 villages join hands 	➤ To constitute committees
“ The new concept helps us hone our profit-making skills VENKATALAKSHMI, Miller producer	AIM
	➤ To address the concerns of farmers
	FOCUS AREAS
	➤ Production, procurement, processing, and marketing

Organisation formed to promote best farming methods

After reviewing the present millet farming practices, farmers from 45 villages across Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and other districts have come up with the concept of integrated millet cultivation.

The recent biodiversity festival, organised by the Millet Network of India (MINI) in collaboration with Sabala and Sarada Valley Development Samithi (SVDS), paved the way for setting up of Millets Producers' Organisation wherein millet farmers from 45 villages across Coastal Andhra will join hands to constitute four committees under a registered body.

According to the NGO representatives, the prime objective is to identify the lacunae in the millet farming system and bring out multiple solutions to address the concerns of farmers.

“These committees will mainly focus on four departments -- production, procurement, processing and marketing. Since the villages already have farmers’ club, a couple of members from each club will be conducting reviews and meetings on a periodical basis at various villages,” says K. Saraswathi, executive secretary of Sabala.

With the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) extending its support in the inclusive growth, the newly-formed organisation will be one-of-its-kind initiative to promote best farming methods across various mandals.

For those who like to concentrate on effective marketing techniques, the initiative appears to be a welcome move.

“It is a challenging task to make considerable margins in millet farming. Platform such as this will not only help us get into different layers of cultivation but also help us strengthen our profit-making skills,” says M.B.A. Naidu, a farmer from Cheedikada mandal.

Regular training

Besides improving effective marketing techniques, the committee members plan to address the challenges involved in cultivating millets and chart out diverse methods to help producers come up with innovative cultivating procedures. “By conducting regular training in cost-effective methods of millet cultivation, there is always a wider scope to enhance our livelihood as well,” says Venkatalakshmi, a millet producer from L. Kota.

Best Paper Awards announced

Best Poster Awards presented to recipients

The winners of the Best Paper Awards and the Best Poster Awards of the 27th Kerala Science Congress were declared at the valedictory session on Thursday.

The recipients of the Best Paper Awards in various subject areas are Maneetha T.K., Kerala Forest Research Institute (Agriculture and Food

Sciences); Laxmi M., Cochin University of Science and Technology (Biotechnology); Smitha George, Cochin University of Science and Technology (Chemical Sciences); M.B. Dhanya, Space Physics Laboratory, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (Earth and Space Sciences); Jos Prakash A.V., Cochin University of Science and Technology (Engineering and Technology); Radhika S., Kuriakose Elias College, Mannanam (Environmental Science, Forestry and Wildlife); Ajith Kumar G.S., Chief Disease Investigation Office, Palode (Fisheries and Veterinary Sciences); Resmi R., Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (Health Sciences); Sajan Ambadiyil, Centre for Development of Imaging Technology (Information Technology and Computer Sciences); Naicy Thomas, College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Mannuthy (Life Sciences); Azeef Muhammed P.A., University of Kerala (Mathematical and Statistical Sciences); Prabeesh P., Centre for Materials for Electronics Technology (Physical Sciences); Neena Thomas, University of Kerala (Science Education, Science Communication, Science and Society); and Neenu Mariam Thomas, College of Engineering, Thiruvananthapuram (Transportation Engineering).

The Best Paper Award carries a certificate of merit and a cash prize of Rs.10,000.

The awardees are also eligible for a contingency grant of Rs.1 lakh for two years for pursuing further research, based on a proposal submitted to the Kerala State Council for Science, Technology, and Environment.

The winners of the Best Poster Awards in 14 subject areas were also announced. They were presented with certificates of merit.

· *Awards in 14 subject areas*

· *Awardees eligible for contingency grant of Rs.1 lakh*

Farmers find varagu cultivation more lucrative

AN ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE	
● The crop needs about 160 to 165 days in all	● It is less water-intensive than paddy or any other conventional crop
● About 150 farmers in four blocks in Tiruchi district have switched to Varagu	● A farmers' producers' company procures varagu millet in Pudukottai district

200 acres of land brought under cultivation in various blocks

The conventional millet variety of 'varagu' has been gaining popularity, particularly among farmers in the rain-fed blocks in the district. About 200 acres of land has been brought under the crop mostly in Annavasal, Kundrandarkovil, Pudukottai, and Gandarvakottai blocks in the district.

A group of farmers of Melur village near Annavasal in the district who commenced the harvest of 'varagu' on Thursday, pointed out that they were hopeful of harvesting at least 500 kg an acre. They have shifted to 'varagu' from the conventional crop, including paddy, in the light of failure of monsoon in the last few years.

The duration of this crop ranges between 160 and 165 days and it needs moderate showers of about 350 mm all through the season.

“There has been a sudden increase in the number of farmers raising 'varagu' in the rain-fed areas.

About 150 farmers had raised the crop in the above four blocks this season,” says A. Adhappan, founder of the Pudukottai District Organic Farmers Producers Company.

He says although the average yield could be 500 kg an acre, the yield would be higher if farmers adopted crop protection techniques, particularly clearing of weeds.

Marketing

The processing of the 'varagu' involves several procedures. "Unlike paddy, 'varagu' needs special machinery for hulling," he says.

The company purchases 'varagu' for a price ranging between Rs.1,500 and Rs.1,700 a quintal which is Rs. 200 in excess of the market price which fluctuates between Rs. 1,300 and Rs. 1,500 during the post-harvest period.

A taste of the hills

There is unusual fare at The Taj Vivanta as its Badaga Chef prepares a traditional Badaga feast for you



It's a combo of *bathalu*, *sandege*, and *uppukorai* that introduces us to the traditional Badaga fare at Vivanta by Taj Surya. *Bathalu* is crispy sun dried potatoes, *sandege* is the tangy onion and garlic chutney that we dip into, and *uppukorai* is steamed and salted beans. That's starters for you and they score high on taste. It gets better with a cup of hot rasam or *maasu neeru*, as the Badagas call it. The Badaga farmers are known for their mixed farming of millets, barley, wheat, and commercial vegetables including potato, carrots and cabbage, and hence the food they eat often uses seasonal and locally grown vegetables.

"Traditionally, our staple diet includes millets, raagi, saamai and wheat. The Badaga menu is our effort to revive and promote the forgotten recipes of the community," says executive chef H.N. Vijayan. Taj Vivanta promotes regional cuisine and the food of the Badagas who inhabit the Nilgiris is an automatic choice. It is not that well known either and is not usually available in eateries. Lucky for Vivanta that Chef Vijayan is a Badaga himself. So he

brings a lot of love and passion into the menu. He and his team have stuck with the tried and tested recipes, and the result is the delicious and honest taste. Venugopal, associate director of Sales says the Badaga menu will be available a-la-carte from February. “We wanted to add something that is very local and authentic.”

Ragi mudde (ragi flour ball) is another Badaga specialty. Before eating, we make a depression on the buttery mudde, just enough so that it holds the molten ghee poured into it. And then we take a delicious bite. To go with it there is a choice of avarai uthakka curry made of seasonal beans and potato, a double beans curry, and baby brinjal. A special spice powder, *hatti maas hudi*, made from chillies, coriander seeds, jeera, pepper, fenugreek, cinnamon, asafoetida, and khus khus, is used in the vegetarian curry preparations. While for the non-vegetarian counterpart, it is a deep black masala made from chillies, whole coriander seeds, jeera, pepper, and cloves. *Soppu*, or greens is the other healthy component to the menu. There are a variety of greens, simply prepared and wholesome. There is methi leaves prepared with mashed potato, and other greens tempered with spices and sometimes with coconut.

Also on offer is gassu dhotti (rotis), made of maida, mashed potatoes and butter. It is melt-in the mouth and goes well with the Nilgiri kaai curry, a traditional preparation of mixed vegetables in mint and coriander sauce. There is kaara dhotti and a sweet one too. Chef Vijayan says all the preparations form a part of the Badaga platter and is traditionally served on a brass plate.

Meen baruthathu (masala fried fish fillets), koi uthakka, a traditional chicken curry and aadu baadu uthakka (mutton gravy) make up the non-vegetarian menu. While the fish is tangy, the chicken and mutton gravies burst with a fine balance of spices and flavour, and make for a perfect combo with the rotis.

After a round of *mosuru hittu* (curd with raagi dumplings), we have *hattchike* (saamai soaked in hot milk and finished off with grated coconut) and *t huppadhittu*, a deep fried sweet snack for the sweet platter.

Available from first week of February. To find out, call 6681000/ 2224050.

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Water released from Kelavarapalli dam

It will meet irrigation needs of farmers



For irrigation: Water was released from Kelavarapalli Dam on Wednesday.–
Photo: Special Arrangement

Kelavarapalli dam in Hosur was opened for the second season irrigation, for a 120-day period, on Wednesday.

The opening of the dam for irrigation is slated to bring under irrigation over 22 villages in Hosur.

The places that will benefit from the flow of water from the dam include Thattaganapalli, Poodhinatham, Pethamuthali, Muthali, Attur, Kadhiraepalli, Marachathiram, Kotthur, Moranapalli, Thorapalli, Tiruchipalli, Kamanthotti, Thinnur, Subagiri, Koneripalli, Chinakollu, Pethakollu, Samanapalli, Senathur, Attakuruki, Nallakanakothapalli, and Marthandapalli.

The water from the two sluices will be released based on turn system as 88 cusecs in both sluices.

The dam will remain open till May 28.

Over 22 villages are expected to benefit from flow of water from dam till May 28

Modern fish market opens

Fisheries Minister K. Babu has said that a modern fish breeding centre will be started at the Thodupuzha taluk soon. Inaugurating a modern fish market at Kumily on Thursday, he said that farmers would be supplied with all requirements as part of a government scheme to promote fish farming. As many as 200 artificial ponds were being promoted by the government and fish seeds were supplied to the farmers, he said. The fish market was set up by the Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation at a cost of Rs 1.19 core. - A Correspondent

White arecanut prices recover, go up to Rs. 300 a kg



The rise in the prices of arecanut has been attributed to several factors.—
Photo: H.S. Manjunath

Prices of different grades jump by Rs. 15 in the last fortnight

White arecanut prices in Dakshina Kannada have recovered after over five months and some grades are close to touching Rs. 300 per kg again.

Prices of different grades of white arecanut jumped by Rs. 15 per kg in the last fortnight itself, Ramesh K., a grower, said. After crossing Rs. 300 per kg in July, 2014, prices had come down to Rs. 235 per kg, he said.

The 'chol' grade (harvested between November, 2013, and April, 2014) now commands Rs. 295 per kg compared to Rs. 280 per kg a fortnight ago.

At the same time, 'double chol' (harvested during 2012-13) commands Rs. 300 per kg compared to Rs. 285 per kg this mid-January.

Prices of new supari (harvested from November, 2014) have shot up from Rs. 210 per kg to Rs. 225 per kg in the fortnight, Mr. Ramesh, who was also a member of the G.V. Joshi Committee on Production Cost of Arecanut, said.

Konkodi Padmanabha, president, Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Ltd., Mangaluru, attributed the rise to multiple factors. He claimed that the Union Commerce Ministry had recently written to Sri Lanka to prevent the export of arecanut and that had worked, he claimed.

He said that strict vigil on the borders with Bangladesh and Nepal has curbed the "illegal means of transport" of arecanut into the country.

In addition, he said that there was good demand from Gujarat for white arecanut especially for 'chol' grade due to its quality. Economically strong consumers in Gujarat preferred quality supari, he said.

A CAMPCO official said that as it is the season of marriages and other functions in Gujarat and the demand would continue till April. The prices are likely to remain stable till then.

Manchi Srinivasa Achar, president, All India Areca Growers' Association, Puttur, said that as 'kole roga' (fruit rot disease) had hit many plantations in 2013 its impact is seen now. Due to short supply prices of 'chol' have touched Rs. 295-300 a k.g.

Mr. Ramesh said that a year ago during the same season (January, 2014) prices of 'chol' grade stood between Rs. 185-Rs. 190 a k.g.

[Aloo lovers, try Potato Sesame Salad!](#)



Potato Sesame Salad (Source: nishamadhulika.com)

You can do many things with potato – make paratha, chaat, tikki, sabzi and what not. You can even make a salad out of it and it tastes delicious. In Nepal, this recipe is called Aloo achar or Nepalese Potato Salad. The difference is that in Nepal people use sesame oil to make it, while we will use olive oil.

POTATO SESAME SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 4 potatoes (medium sized)
- Salt (as per taste)
- 2 green chilli (chopped)
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/2 inch long piece ginger
- 2 teaspoon olive oil
- 2 teaspoon sesame
- 1 tablespoon coriander leaves (chopped)

METHOD

- * Wash and boil potatoes in cooker.
- * Peel them and cut them into 4-6 pieces each.
- * Do not cut the potatoes immediately after boiling them. Rather let them cool down for 1 hour and then cut into pieces.
- * Roast the sesame in a small pan until brown.
- * Put olive oil, salt, green chilli, lemon juice and ginger into the potatoes and mix well.
- * Put 1/2 tablespoon coriander leaves in the salad and mix it well too.
- * Potato Sesame Salad is ready. Put the salad in a serving plate and garnish with coriander leaves. You can also eat it as an evening snack.

Green tea ingredient shows promise against oral cancer



Green tea (Source: Thinkstock Images)

A compound found in green tea may trigger a process that kills oral cancer cells while leaving healthy cells alone, finds a promising study.

ALSO READ: [Smoking ups risk of developing second cancer](#)

According to food scientists from Pennsylvania State University, the research could lead to treatments for oral cancer as well as other types of cancer.

Earlier studies had shown that epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG), a compound found in green tea, killed oral cancer cells without harming normal cells.

ALSO READ: [Two-thirds of cancer cases due to bad luck](#)

“But researchers did not understand the reasons for its ability to target the cancer cells,” said Joshua Lambert, associate professor of food science and co-director of Penn State’s Center for Plant and Mushroom Foods for Health.

The current study shows that EGCG may trigger a process in the mitochondria – the cells’ powerhouse – that leads to cell death.

“EGCG is doing something to damage the mitochondria and that mitochondrial damage sets up a cycle causing more damage and it spirals out, until the cell undergoes programmed cell death,” Lambert explained.

It looks like EGCG causes the formation of reactive oxygen species in cancer cells, which damages the mitochondria, and the mitochondria responds by making more reactive oxygen species, he said.

As this mitochondrial demise continues, the cancer cell also reduces the expression of anti-oxidant genes, further lowering its defenses.

“So, it is turning off its mechanism of protection at the same time that EGCG is causing this oxidative stress,” Lambert added.

The EGCG did not cause this reaction in normal cells.

In fact, it appeared to increase the protective capabilities of the cell, according to the researchers.

The findings were reported online in the journal *Molecular Nutrition and Food Research*.



[5 secrets to low-calorie cooking](#)

While it is known that the calories you put in and the calories you burn out decide your weight loss journey, in real life, keeping a tab on calorie intake is one mammoth task.

We spoke to Tarani Kapur from TLC (Tarani's low calorie) Kitchen, a calorie and portion controlled Gourmet Food Delivery program that offers

meal plans for healthy living, about the tricks to cook a sumptuous low-calorie meal. These tricks will save your diet plan and offer you a nutritious and wholesome meal.

Cook smart: Use techniques like grilling, baking, boiling, steaming, sauteing for all your meals. Use nonstick cookware like pans, nonstick tawa etc to make your meals healthy and low cal.

Opt for low cal ingredients: Opt for vegetables like broccoli, peppers, spinach, lettuce, celery, zucchini etc that are loaded with vitamin, minerals and antioxidants.

Choose a protein rich ingredient for every meal: Protein renders a sense of satiety and fullness. Opt for fish, lean meat, chicken, tofu, soya to make your meal healthy and wholesome.

Make smart cereal choices: Opt for high fiber cereals like oats, muesli, multigrain, flaxseeds, mix bran, ragi, barley, quinoa, brown rice etc for all your breads and *rotis*.

Right kind of oil for cooking: Rotate your oils on monthly basis and use a combination of oils like cooking in olive, rice bran, mustard and probably use vegetable oils for *dals* or curry based meals on daily basis.

10 best foods to reduce cholesterol



Have a salmon fish dinner. Snack on a handful of nuts. Pour a dash of olive oil in your salad.

And bite into that sinister chocolate. Now you can do all this guilt-free! All these foods help in fighting bad cholesterol. According to the American Heart Association, 'You can reduce cholesterol in your blood by eating healthy foods'. So, here we are today with our list of top 10 cholesterol fighting foods.

Oats: If you change your morning meal to oats then you can do your cholesterol level a whole lot of good. Do note that two servings of oats can lower LDL cholesterol by 5.3% in only 6 weeks. Essentially, oats contain a substance called beta-glucan which absorbs bad cholesterol.

Red Wine: Here's yet another reason to toast to your health. The red grapes used in the manufacturing of red wine have an important effect on cholesterol levels. Two glasses of red wine in a week can do you a whole lot of good.

Salmon and fatty Fish: Full of Omega-3 fatty acids, salmon is a natural health wonder, which helps in keeping heart conditions such as heart attacks, stroke and high cholesterol levels at bay. Fishes such as salmon, sardines and herring help in raising good cholesterol levels by 4%.

Nuts: Mono-unsaturated fats (found in nuts, seeds etc.) have the lowest fatty acid molecules and are the best of the three fats, namely poly-saturated fats, saturated fats and mono-unsaturated fats. Nuts are the best way to get those required healthy fats into your body without feeling guilty. Since the fats that come from nuts are natural and are not chemically processed, this makes them heart healthy, filling, and nutritious options.

Beans: Excellent for the heart, ½ a cup of beans added in our diet (in the form of any dish or soup), helps in lowering cholesterol levels by 8%. You should try black, kidney, or pinto beans; each one of them supplies about one-third of your day's fiber needs.

Tea: Tea has antioxidants and less amounts of caffeine than coffee. An eight-ounce cup of coffee contains around 135 mg caffeine; tea contains only 30 to 40 mg per cup. Tea helps in protecting your bones because of the presence of phytochemicals in them. It is also a great defense against LDL cholesterol levels.

Chocolate: Chocoholics can celebrate with a healthy dose of dark chocolate as it is full of antioxidants and cholesterol-reducing properties. According to a Spanish study published in 2010 in the "Journal of Hepatology," "the antioxidants in dark chocolate reduce the damage that can occur to blood vessels, which can further threaten the health of people with cirrhosis. The dark chocolate can help prevent the blood vessels in the liver from rupturing". Medical experts suggest that munching on 100 grams of chocolate every day helps in reducing the occurrence of cardiovascular mishaps by 21 percent.

Spinach. Popeye the sailor was quite right when crediting his muscle power to this green leafy vegetable. It is believed that spinach contains around 13 flavonoid compounds which keep us away from cancer, heart diseases and osteoporosis. 1/2 a cup of this lutein-rich food, daily, guards us against heart attacks.

Olive oil: This oil has many health benefits. It contains mono-unsaturated fatty acids which lower bad cholesterol and triglycerides, without lowering good cholesterol levels. Different stages of pressing and processing yield different varieties of olive oil.

Extra virgin

Virgin

Pure

Pomace

Read more Personal Health, Diet & Fitness stories on www.healthmeup.com

[7 best foods for your heart](#)

Include these foods in your diet for your cardiovascular health.

Walnuts: Rich in omega-3 fatty acids, fiber, Vitamin E, and folate, eating unsalted walnuts regularly can go a long way in protecting your heart. Like walnuts, almonds too are a good source of nutrients for your heart.

Spinach: Leafy veggies, particularly spinach, provide iron, vitamin C, vitamin A and magnesium. Saute spinach in garlic and have it as a side dish.

Oats: This fiber-rich superfood also comprises omega-3 fatty acids, folate and potassium, all of which can help reduce your cholesterol levels and maintain healthy arteries. Start your day with a bowl of oats.

Asparagus: This thin, green stick comes packed with anti-inflammatory nutrients like folate and vitamins C and D. Low in calories, asparagus can be cooked quickly.

Beans: Beans, particularly kidney beans, are a good source of heart-healthy and stress-busting vitamin B, iron, and calcium. Make a kidney bean, tomato and carrot soup or use them in a veggie dip.

Blueberries: Rich in antioxidants and vitamin C, blueberries contain lesser calories and sugar, so you can eat them to your heart's content. They are also a good source of fiber, which can help relieve the cramps and constipation that can occur when you're under stress. Eat them raw or make a blueberry smoothie.

Salmon: Containing omega-3 fatty acids, having grilled salmon is a good way to keep your heart healthy.

[Desi superfoods available at your local grocery](#)

Whether you kicked off your health kick on January 1st or you are a seasoned wellness warrior, chances are you share my woe: the lack of whole foods (or any health store of that caliber) in India.

With various products like sprouted bread and high-protein ice cream popping up on the shelves and into the freezers of grocery stores in the West, there leaves plenty to be desired for us living in India. Oh how much easier it would be to eat healthy if we had such innovative healthy options available! Fortunately we do have a huge variety available to us. The only difference is that they aren't marketed as being 'healthy' or covered in buzzwords like 'paleo-friendly' or 'vegan'. If you want to nourish your body, look no further than your local grocer:

Haldi (aka turmeric) Commonly used in Indian cooking, this spice boasts a number of health benefits including diabetes control, arthritis relief and protection against certain liver diseases.

Alsi (aka flaxseed) Due to its content of omega 3 essential fatty acids, consuming one tablespoon of flaxseeds daily can help boost heart health. Its omega 3 content can also help reduce inflammation within the body. To reap the benefits of this superfood, be sure to consume flaxseeds in ground form rather than whole. Whereas whole flaxseed tends to get passed through the body, ground flaxseed is easier for the body to digest.

Nariyal Pani (aka Coconut water) Put down the sugar-filled energy drink and instead load up on coconut water for instant hydration. Especially as it is filled with potassium, magnesium, sodium, phosphorus, and calcium. Sipping on coconut water will help replenish electrolytes lost from your body during a workout and/or in warmer temperatures.

Besan Flour (aka chickpea or gram flour) Open up your pantry and chances are you will have a packet of besan flour tucked away. Made from ground chickpeas, besan flour is naturally higher in protein than wheat-based flours: ½ cup contains 10g of protein whereas the same amount of wheat flour packs in 8g of protein. Although red meat is often associated with iron, besan flour contains that mineral, along with magnesium and phosphorus.

Ghee (aka clarified butter) Modern scientists in the West are now saying what our grandmothers have preached for decades. Although feared as a high-fat food, ghee provides a hefty dose of antioxidants including carotenoids and vitamins A and E. These antioxidants fight free radicals and promote skin cell growth, good vision and immune system health, and also reduce the risk of certain cancers and heart disease. As the method of clarifying butter into ghee removes the lactose and casein content, those who are lactose intolerant can enjoy ghee without suffering any adverse reactions.

While India may not be currently full of trendy health stores, it still remains to be quite the goldmine when it comes to healthy options. Happy shopping!

Delicious ways to use pineapple



When you think of tropical delights, the one fruit that comes to mind is the evergreen pineapple! Be it for table decoration or for various small eats and even mains - the versatile fruit can be eaten, dressed and arranged for a visual or a tasty treat. Here's how you can use it in your food.

Grilled Paneer and potatoes are a passe! Try rubbing some juicy chunks of pineapple in a generous mix of sugar and cinnamon and sizzle them on the grill during a barbeque.

Curry Who says pineapple have to be sweet only! Add chopped pieces of the fruit to your regular spicy curry for a sweet and sour kick and be rest assured, your guests will come asking for seconds and thirds!

Pickled Yes! If you can pickle raw mango and lemons, pineapples too can join the league. Make them the way you pickle your regular fruits and veggies and enjoy a taste of the tropical all year round.

Recipe: Kaju burfi

A cashew nut fudge also known as Kaju katli.

Preparation time: 15 mins

Cooking time: 30 mins

Serves: 4

Ingredients

3 cup cashew nuts

2 cup sugar

2 cup water

A few silver foils

Method

Grind the cashew nuts to a fine powder. Set aside. Bring the sugar and water to a boil in a pan. Cook till a syrup of two string consistency is achieved. Remove from fire and add the cashew nut powder. Mix well till very smooth. Pour the mix in a greased thali or tray and allow to set. Cover the top layer with silver foil and cut into diamond shapes.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Turmeric tops Rs. 8,000/quintal on quality arrivals



Erode, January 29:

Spot turmeric prices gained in Erode markets as the quality of arrivals was good. Prices topped Rs.8,000 a quintal.

“Traders are having some local and upcountry orders. They purchased 1,520 bags . Arrival of the new crop was 100 bags. We expect an increase in new turmeric arrival from next week,” said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

In view of quality arrival, local turmeric prices were up Rs. 300 a quintal at the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard; Rs. 400 at the Regulated Market Committee.

The new turmeric was up Rs. 600 and all 100 bags that arrived for sale were sold.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger turmeric was sold at Rs. 5,899-8,011 a quintal and the root variety Rs. 5,769-7,531.

Salem Hybrid: The finger turmeric fetched Rs. 8,089-9,029; the root variety Rs. 7,300-7,731.

New Turmeric: The finger variety went for Rs. 7,019-8,129 and the root variety for Rs. 7,077-7,499.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger turmeric ruled at Rs. 6,899-8,313 and the root variety Rs.6,799-7,899.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger turmeric was sold at Rs. 7,059-8,168 and the root variety at Rs. 6,809-7,891.

Coconut oil imports will hit farmers: traders' body

Kochi, January 29:

The Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA) has expressed concern over coconut oil imports, saying it will affect farmers and lead to crash in prices.

Reacting to reports that a Mumbai-based FMCG company has started importing coconut oil from Indonesia, Thalath Mahmood, Director, COMA, wondered how the firm had received the licence when the State Trading Corporation had the exclusive right to import coconut oil and copra. As per official figures, the domestic coconut oil production was to the tune of five lakh tonnes annually. A major part of it is consumed domestically.

However, production in the last couple of years has remained stagnant due to drought, rains, natural calamities, etc.

Meanwhile, the coconut oil market in Kerala and Tamil Nadu has been steady this week with prices quoting at Rs. 13,800 a quintal and Rs. 13,400 a quintal respectively.

Copra prices also quoted at the same level last week at Rs. 9,800 in Kerala and Rs. 9,600 in Tamil Nadu.

Meanwhile, at Erode, coconut oil prices increased on the lines of rising copra prices.

RM Palanisamy, a coconut oil trader, said the price may decrease on slack upcountry demand.

Coconut oil stood at Rs. 1,970-2,030 for 15-kg loose pack and copra was sold at Rs. 9,600-9,750 a quintal.

(With inputs from Our Erode Correspondent)

For Agribusiness page (brief)



Kochi, January 29:

GLOBAL COCONUT BODY MEET ON FEB 2

Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh will inaugurate the 51st Asia Pacific Coconut Community (APCC) meeting to be held at Crowne Plaza here from February 2 to 5. India, one of the founder members

of APCC, currently holds the Chairmanship of APCC. Sanjeev Chopra, Joint Secretary (MIDH) and APCC Chairman, Ministry of Agriculture will deliver the welcome speech and Uron N Salum, Executive Director, APCC, will present an official introduction of the 51st APCC session/ministerial meeting. APCC has 18 coconut-producing member countries which account for 90 per cent of the world's production and export of coconut products. Our Bureau

Board to monetise 'Coffees of India' logos

New initiative expected to encourage and promote the Indian brew in overseas markets



Bengaluru, January 29:

Exporters, traders, roasters and curers displaying the 'Coffees of India' and the other regional/speciality coffee trademarks on their packages will now have to seek the Coffee Board's permission to do so and pay a fee for using each logo.

The State-run Coffee Board, which had devised the unique identities/logos and trademarks under the umbrella brand 'Coffees of India', has filed for registration of some 19 logos as the Certification of Trademarks.

Issuing certificates

The Registrar of Trademarks, Chennai, has issued the registration certificate for about nine logos including the Robusta Kaapi Royale, Pulneys, Annamalais, Chikmagalur, Coorg and Coffee Swami.

Another set of ten applications for logos such as Mysore Nuggets and Monsooned Malabar are pending registration, though provisional numbers have been issued for the same.

Coffee Board is the sole custodian of the trademark of all logos and those planning to use them on their packets, sacks and publicity material will have to obtain written permission.

Payment details

Exporters or roasters seeking to use the logos will have to apply to the Board in a prescribed format with samples of the beans or instant/roast and ground coffees.

The board has fixed a fee of Rs. 10,000 for use of each logo and Rs. 2,500 for every additional logo.

Coffee Board officials said the rationale behind registering the trademarks/logos was to regulate and prevent the misuse. Also, the new initiative is expected to help encourage and promote Indian coffees in overseas markets. However, the trade is divided on the Board's move to regulate and monetise the logos. "It is good idea.

The logos would enhance the visibility of Indian coffees in the overseas markets," said Ramesh Rajah, President of the Coffee Exporters Association.

It will also help create awareness among the consumers, Rajah said adding that "the Board should be given a chance." However, some exporters, who have developed their own brands, do not see major benefits from these trademarks or logos.

Coffee exports

“The logos will help the newcomers the most,” said Ashok Kurian of Balanoor Plantations, who exports under the Balanoor brand.

Coffee exports during January 1-27 were down 32 per cent, provisionally, at 14,672 tonnes against 21,573 tonnes in the corresponding period a year ago.

In 2014, coffee exports stood at 3.01 lakh tonnes valued at Rs. 4,984 crore or \$818 million.

Crop size estimates

The Board, in its latest post monsoon estimates, has pegged the 2014-15 crop size at 3.31 lakh tonnes, a four per cent decline over its post blossom estimate of 3.44 lakh tonnes (lt), primarily due to lower arabica crop that faced a severe pest attack, erratic rainfall and a cyclone.

However, the latest estimates for 2014-15 are 8.7 per cent higher than last year’s final estimate of 3.04 lt. Arabica output for the current season is pegged at 99,600 tonnes, while production of Robusta is expected to 2.31 lt for the 2014-15 season, a decline of 5.6 per cent and 3.28 per cent respectively over the post blossom estimate.

Re-constitute Tea Board, say growers

Coonoor, January 29:

Growers have appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to re-constitute Tea Board and provide for election of the chairman from the new members.

“Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has voiced her concern on Tea Board’s efficiency. She has underlined the need to revamp the Board,” Samir Roy, President, National Federation of Small Tea Growers of India, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, told *BusinessLine* in Coonoor. He has been a member of Tea Board for over 30 years.

“Prime Minister Modi is showing direct concern on developing the tea industry. Last month, at the meeting of Cabinet Committee on Economic

Affairs, which he chaired, a sum of Rs. 1,425 crore (including Rs. 200 crore for small-scale sector) was allotted to tea industry based on the Commerce Ministry's proposal. Tea Board should utilise this fund before March 31, 2017, but there is neither a properly constituted Board nor a full-time Chairman. So, whether this will benefit the industry is doubtful," he said.

Fresh rain-maker western disturbance to arrive over north-western India

Thiruvananthapuram, January 29:

North-West India's productive tryst with rain-maker western disturbances is set to continue as the next in line prepares to call in across the international border over next two days.

The India Met Department has said that rainfall and snowfall would scale up over the western Himalayan region from Sunday onwards.

Incoming system

On Thursday, the incoming western disturbance was located to over north-west Pakistan. It had induced the formation of a cyclonic circulation over central Pakistan, Punjab (Pakistan) and west Rajasthan.

The presence of this circulation will help accentuate the winter weather over north and north-west India in the form of moderate to heavy snowfall and rain over the high reaches of the Himalayas.

Some of the moisture brought in by the western disturbance and offspring cyclonic circulation will get radiated to the plains of north-west India, too.

Isolated heavy snowfall has been warned of over Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh on Monday and Tuesday.

Rain, showers

Rain and thundershowers would break out afresh over the plains in south Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, east Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Vidarbha from Monday.

This comes on the back of a productive run of a predecessor western disturbance that has exited into the east and northeast border.

In the North-West, only three Met subdivisions – west Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir – are currently in rain deficit.

Seasonal forecasts put out by a few global models had said that the precipitation over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand would improve from February onwards.

This may apparently be panning out, if the arrival of the laden western disturbance expected over the next two days is any indication.

Normal rainfall

Almost the rest of the Rabi crop growing areas have received normal to excess rainfall from the New Year. Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi are the last to join the ‘normal’ rainfall category.

Excess rainfall has now been recorded in entire Gujarat state, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Telangana and Karnataka.

But rains have been scanty or deficient in the rest of the South peninsula with the subdivision of coastal Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Lakshadweep being the worst hit.

The Met subdivisions of Rayalaseema, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry fared hardly better with their own individual loads of deficit.

There is no hope either of a drastic reversal in weather conditions over these parts despite the presence of a trough of lower pressure around Sri Lanka and adjoining Comorin region.

Business Standard

Horticulture price stabilisation scheme might receive lukewarm response

Nominated agencies Nafed and NCCF not to participate due to 100% profit sharing and CAG audit clauses, SFAC to procure 10k tonnes potato and 6k tonnes onion with own corpus



The government's plan to damp volatility in the prices of horticultural commodities, especially onion and potato, through a Price Stabilisation Fund with a corpus of Rs 500 crore, is likely to receive a lukewarm response from the agencies supposed to implement it.

The latter are apprehensive over the draft guidelines calling for entire profit sharing with the government and scrutiny by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

The draft guidelines name three bodies — National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed), National Consumer Cooperative Federation of India Ltd (NCCF) and Small Farmers Agri-business Consortium (SFAC) — for getting an interest-free working capital advance. Additionally, state governments, state agencies such as civil supplies corporations, and marketing boards are entitled to apply.

Two of the three [central government](#) bodies, [Nafed](#) and NCCF, have said they are not keen to participate. [SFAC](#) is planning to procure a negligible 10,000 tonnes of potato and 6,000 tonnes of onion this season, beginning February, through its own corpus. SFAC doesn't wish to take working capital from the government.

The guidelines say losses, if any, incurred by the central government agencies, on account of interventions under this scheme, will be met out of this fund. However, such losses in the case of interventions by state government agencies will be met to the extent of 50 per cent (75 per cent for northeast states) only.

Profits, the draft guidelines say, earned on interventions will go back to the fund entirely from central agencies and 50 per cent with state government agencies (75 per cent for northeast). There will be a Price Stabilisation Fund Management Committee, headed by the agriculture secretary.

"Why should we share our profits with the government? Instead we will raise our own corpus and procure as lots of traders are willing to sell onion and potato directly to us," said Virendra Singh, Chairman, NCCF.

Nafed chairman V R Patel had earlier categorically denied participation in this scheme.

SFAC, meanwhile, is planning to set up procurement centres each in Nashik (Maharashtra), Agra (Uttar Pradesh), Indore and Rajasthan. It will also build up storage facilities in these centres for supply of commodities in peak demand season.

Interestingly, the guidelines limit administrative expenses at 1 per cent of the working capital fund and also allow agencies to forecast selling prices for 2-

6 months along with procurement price proposed to be paid in absence of the minimum support price (MSP).

When quizzed about the system of intervention may be termed as hedging, the SFAC official said, "That I don't know. It is the government's scheme and extremely workable."

Being nodal agency, SFAC will have to intervene as per government orders, the official added.

Global shrimp prices up as supply crunch on the anvil

Prices for 150/250 count shrimp has ticked up over 6.5% from last week to \$7.20 per pound



[Shrimp](#) prices have been rising in January in response to a global [supply](#) crunch with production in Canada and Greenland, major producing countries, on the decline.

Trading prices for 150/250 count shrimp have also risen 6.5 per cent last week to \$7.20 a pound, a five-year-high. Since the start of January, prices for cold water shrimp are up 7.5 per cent or \$.50 per pound. This sharp rise is due to the expectation of a serious shortfall in production.

Farmers in [Vietnam](#) are now worried about slow and stunted growth of shrimp. For the past couple of years, the country had suffered a serious attack of early mortality syndrome, which affected production and export volume heavily. In order to meet export commitments, Vietnam had imported roughly \$1 billion worth shrimp from India. Shrimp farming there has not developed a strategy to deal with diseases and still relies on antibiotics to protect its investment. According to reports, production is likely to be lower this year as well, which will badly affect the global supply of the product. The US, Japan and the European Union are the major markets for Vietnam's shrimp. Vietnam expects to sign a free trade agreement with the European Union soon, which will eliminate tariffs on its shrimp exports.

In India too, production is in rough weathers in this season and for the last couple of months supply is very limited both from the sea catch and from aqua culture farms. Anwar Hashim, a top exporter and former president of the Seafood Exporters Association of India [SEAI] told Business Standard that Vannamei production had been affected badly this time and supply crunch is obvious in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. There is also drop in sea catch also and this naturally build up pressure on the price line. There is an average increase of 10-15% in prices in local markets during last three months.

Global demand is picking up now, especially in the Euro zone, but US market is still dull, he said. The production is not matching with the demand as of now, So there is a chance for further increase in the prices in the global trade, he added.

According to reports in Asia, farmed shrimp production is likely to decrease in the coming months. Industry reports from Thailand indicate less than 200,000 tones of production for 2014-15, which is lower than the earlier forecast of 250,000 tones.