

DATE:31.01.2015

# THE HINDU

## **TN farm system gets gold award**

A system, being implemented in Tamil Nadu with the aim of increasing productivity and income of the individual farm, has got the attention of policy-makers at the national level.

Called the AGRISNET (Agricultural Information Services Network) - Farm Crop Management System, this provides opportunities for farm-specific interventions for reasons such as raising crops and addressing yield gap.

At the national conference on e-governance in Gujarat on Friday, Tamil Nadu was given the gold award under the category of “incremental innovation.”

Officials of the State government including Sandeep Saxena, former Agricultural Production Commissioner and now Chief Electoral Officer, and M. Rajendran, Agriculture Director, received the medal, according to an official release.

## **Food insecurity acts**



The Hindu

AT THE RECEIVING END: “The Modi government has started subverting the Food Security Act with respect to implementation too.” Picture shows the launch of distribution of highly subsidised food grains under the Act, in 2013, in New Delhi. Photo: S. Subramaniam

*The Shanta Kumar Committee's recommendations to unbundle the Food Corporation of India are in tune with U.S.-led demands raised in the World Trade Organization*

The Shanta Kumar Committee report, released last week, on a range of issues relating to procurement, storage and distribution of food grains is not only deeply flawed in its reading of the situation on food security, but also short on facts. It was prepared under the guidance of the Prime Minister's Office.

For example, the report asserts that only six per cent of all farmers have benefited from Minimum Support Price (MSP) through sale of food grains to an official procurement agency, according to data of the National Sample Survey Organisation's 70th round. But analysts have found discrepancies between the survey's estimates of the food grains sold to official procurement agencies and the actual amount of grains procured by official agencies for that year.

For kharif, the NSSO survey estimates that 13 million tonnes were sold to a procurement agency while the actual procurement that year by government agencies was 34 million tonnes. For rabi, the gap is even larger: 10 million tonnes estimated in the survey while the actual amount procured by an official agency was 38 million tonnes.

### **Selling at distress prices**

Why did the Shanta Kumar Committee overlook these possible underestimates? Was it just to arrive at the sensational figure of six per cent and then argue that since only six per cent of farmers get the benefit of MSP and procurement, why have the Food Corporation of India (FCI) at all?

But there is another way of looking at it. It is true that large numbers of farmers are deprived of the benefits of MSP. It is not because they do not want to sell to the procurement agencies but because they do not have access to official procurement centre, which are set up only in selective States and regions. The majority of farmers sell at distress prices which push them deeper into debt. For this large section of rural India, reforming the system would mean a substantial increase in the number of procurement centres and easier access, so as to enable it to benefit from MSP.

As soon as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) assumed office, the first thing it did was to bring down the rate of increase of MSP to just about three per

cent over the previous year — this when the prices of farm inputs have increased phenomenally.

Some States under pressure from Kisan movements decided to give a bonus over and above the MSP to help farmers. The Modi government stepped in to “punish” such States. It decreed that it would not procure any food grains over and above the requirement for the Public Distribution System (PDS) from such States which gave the farmers a bonus.

Confronted with the Central government’s policy, the Chhattisgarh government, for example, which had given such a bonus, issued a circular that it would procure only 10 quintals of paddy per acre from individual farmers. Andhra Pradesh has also limited its procurement. Thus, open-ended procurement which ensured India’s food security and farmer security is now in the process of being whittled down while the rate of increase of MSP is delinked from the increases in the cost of production and adequate profit margins. This is in contrast to the Swaminathan Commission’s recommendation for MSP to be calculated at the cost of production plus 50 per cent profit, to keep agriculture viable.

The immediate impact in Chhattisgarh has been distress sales by farmers to private traders who can dictate prices, buoyed by the assurance from the government that it would not procure more grains.

The Shanta Kumar Committee report takes these dangerous steps further by advocating limited procurement as the officially declared policy.

This is directly linked to its recommendation to scrap the existing Food Security Act (FSA). The Committee wants to reduce the coverage from 67 per cent to 40 per cent of the population. It also wants to double the prices that these food grains are to be sold at under the present Act by linking the price to the MSP. This means resurrecting the fraudulent and discredited Above Poverty Line and Below Poverty Line estimations and depriving equally poor people of subsidised grains. In fact, as the Left has consistently argued and fought for, it is only a universalised PDS that can meet the requirement to make India hunger-free. The Shanta Kumar Committee wants to eliminate even the inadequate provisions under the existing FSA and push the country back to the worst days of food insecurity.

Ironically, such a recommendation comes at a time when the United Nations agencies monitoring country-wise performances towards meeting the Millennium goals have praised India for its reduction of malnutrition, giving credit for this to food security systems like the “ICDS [Integrated Child Development Services] as well as the public distribution system.” In spite of the reduction, which brings India from the “most alarming category” to the “seriously affected” category, the country is still home to the largest malnourished population in the world; its rank in the Global Hunger Index at 55 out of 76 emerging economies is only slightly ahead of Pakistan and Bangladesh but worse than Sri Lanka and Nepal.

As in the case of procurement, the Modi government has started to subvert the FSA in the case of implementation too. The FSA became law in September 2013. More than a year later, it is being implemented in only 11 States. The Central government has excluded 25 States and Union Territories from the ambit of the Act. According to a release on November 28, 2014, these States and Union Territories “have not completed the preparatory measures required for the implementation of the Act.” It was further stated that “the Central Government extended the deadline for the implementation of the Act by another six months, namely till April 2014.”

The Government of India has no right to make the implementation of the Act conditional to “preparedness” on the basis of parameters it has decided arbitrarily. There is no such legal provision in the Act, nor is there any legal deadline. But the official release reflects clearly the present government’s hostility towards taking any responsibility for food security. This is also reflected in the allocation of food grains. If the FSA is to be implemented, then according to the calculations of the Food Ministry, the allocations will go up to 550 lakh tonnes of food grains compared to the pre-FSA allocations in 2012-2013 of 504 lakh tonnes.

### **Shift to direct cash transfers**

According to the Ministry’s food grains bulletin till December 2014, allocations to the States were just 388 lakh tonnes of food grains. This is roughly the same as it was the previous year, before the Act was passed. In other words, the Modi government has already stayed the implementation of the FSA. It is preparing to shift to direct cash transfers for a more restricted number of families.

The Shanta Kumar Committee's recommendations to unbundle the FCI, allowing the free play of market forces in procurement and storage of food grains, and restricting the FSA are in tune with the demands raised by the western world led by the U.S. in the World Trade Organisation against India's systems of procurement, storage and distribution. The India-U.S. agreement to end the stalemate in the WTO process is clearly premised on the changes being suggested by the Committee.

The government can be expected to try and bulldoze the required amendments to the FSA through Parliament using its majority. But undoubtedly it will face the resistance of the people.

### **Climate change deniers**

The passage of the Keystone XL pipeline bill, the first priority of the new U.S. Senate controlled by Republicans, hit a roadblock on January 27 when the Senate managed to muster just 53 votes in its favour, seven shy of the 60-vote threshold to limit debate. The nearly 1,900-km-long proposed pipeline, which will transport 830,000 barrels of oil a day from Alberta's (Canada) vast oil sands to Nebraska, is a highly controversial project. Unlike conventional crude, mining and turning tar sands into oil is highly carbon-intensive and hence has far worse consequences for global warming. It is for this reason that President Barack Obama had threatened to veto the bill. But the bill produced some interesting results before it reached the stage when the Senate voted on it. For the first time, the Republicans' slowly but surely shifting position on climate change became evident. When the first measure — climate change is real and not a hoax — offered as an amendment to the legislation that will pave the way for the Keystone XL pipeline project was put to vote on January 21, except for one Republican the entire Senate agreed that climate change is for real. Interestingly, Republican Jim Inhofe, the veteran climate change denier in the Senate, was one of those who voted for the amendment. For him, the hoax was that “some people think... they can change climate”.

Though a majority of the Senators also agreed that humans are singularly responsible for climate change, two crucial amendments that pointed a finger at humans failed to cross the 60-vote threshold. While an amendment affirming that humans contributed to climate change was just one short of 60, the third amendment, that “human activity ‘significantly’ contributes to climate change”, got only 50 votes; just five Republicans voted for it. Apparently, the emphasis on human contribution turned out to be the



sticking point. The Senate has till date refused to widely agree that man-made climate change is real. Despite a body of evidence unequivocally proving that human activity has been the causal factor for climate change, the deniers are in no mood to change their stand. So long as policymakers fail to acknowledge the havoc created by human activity, there is little possibility that anything substantial will be done to address it. The consequences will be terrible and irreversible if ideology continues to stand up to science. With reckless emission of greenhouse gases continuing, the Earth is already on “track to warm by 3.6° Celsius”, as the International Energy Agency estimated last year. This is way beyond the goal of limiting the increase in global average surface temperature to 2°C above the pre-industrial level.

### **Bird brain? Study says chicks count like we do**

Humans are not the only ones to count from left to right. Researchers in Italy found that mental number lines, where numbers rise from the smallest on the left to the largest on the right, come naturally to newborn chicks too.

In experiments at the University of Padua, three-day old chicks were trained to find food behind a panel bearing five bright spots. Once they had become familiar with that, they were confronted with two panels bearing different numbers of spots.

Footage of the chicks showed that when faced with panels that had only two spots, the birds consistently looked behind the left of the two panels. But when faced with eight spots on each panel, they went poking around the righthand panel.

The researchers repeated the experiment with a different set of numbers and found that the chicks again went right for higher numbers and left for lower ones.

Rosa Rugani, who led the study, said the findings suggest that newborn chicks might share the human tendency to map numbers in space, from the lowest on the left, to the highest on the right.

Writing in the journal *Science*, she argues that the ability probably evolved millions of years ago, before human ancestors split from those of modern birds. “During evolution, the direction of mapping from left to right rather than vice versa, although in principle arbitrary, may have been imposed by

brain asymmetry, a common and ancient trait in vertebrates, prompted by a right hemisphere dominance in attending visuo-spatial and/or numerical information.” — © **Guardian Newspapers Limited, 2015**

### **Traditional banana varieties to get a boost**

The National Agro Foundation (NAF) and the Tamilnadu Banana Producers Company Limited (TBCL), along with Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, signed an agreement on Friday to utilise the lab facilities and expertise of the NAF for producing several tissue culture varieties of native bananas such as poovan and rasthali.

Many of these varieties are not freely available and their market potential is huge across the country and abroad.

The TBCL has ambitious plans to arrange and distribute quality tissue culture seedlings of these varieties grown in various parts of Tamil Nadu

At the programme held at the Centre for Rural Development at Illedu village in Kancheepuram district, Managing Trustee of NAF S.S. Rajsekar, in the welcome address, outlined the NAF’s history and how in the last 13 years it has touched the lives of nearly 25,000 farmers.

### **Storehouse facilities**

Chairman of TBPCCL A.P. Karuppiah said, “We will facilitate growers to form societies and set up storehouse facilities in production centres to evolve a business model to standardise the marketing that will reduce the post-harvest losses of fruits and improve the farm revenue. The company will also market the value-added products from banana from its member groups.”

Director-General of the National Institute of Rural Development and Chief Executive of the National Fisheries Development Board in Hyderabad M.V. Rao, who was the chief guest, said the big gap between knowledge and practice in agriculture should be closed.

### **‘Lean farming’**

A project titled, “Lean farming”, which combines organic, bio and inorganic inputs without compromising on the yield potentialities of high yielding

varieties, as well as environmental safety and ecological sustainability, was also inaugurated on the occasion.

Vice Chancellor of TNAU Dr. K Ramasamy said the project would be jointly implemented in about 40 villages in Villipuram district jointly by the TNAU and the NAF. Its objective is to increase crop productivity, reduce the use of agrochemicals and increase the profit per unit. A series of training programmes were planned in the district to popularise this concept.

Dr. K. Sreenath Dikshit, Zonal Project Director, ICAR, Bangalore, said, “Though agriculture is considered the backbone of the Indian economy and is a business model, it does not seem to draw a lot of people into it. This is one business, which is going to be there till mankind exists.”

TBCL Managing Director G. Ajeethan said there was need for the cultivators to rejuvenate the traditional banana varieties. Around 500 farmers from several regions in the area attended the programme held in commemoration of the 105 birth anniversary of NAF founder C. Subramanian.

### **‘Food technologists have great scope’**

*Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti says Rs. 44,000 crore worth grain lost*



Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti giving away gold medal and a certificate to S. Nancy Jennifer, B. Tech student of Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology, in Thanjavur on Friday. K. Singaravadivel, centre, Director, IICPT, is at the centre.—  
PHOTO: R.M. RAJARATHINAM



About Rs. 44,000 crore worth crops and food grains are lost annually for want of proper processing and safe storage facilities. Crop processing technology offers enormous scope for preventing that loss, Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti said here on Friday.

Addressing the graduation ceremony at the Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology (IICPT), the Sadhvi said the nation must prevent that loss to ensure a better livelihood for millions of people. “For that to happen, we need more crop and food technologists,” she said.

Stating that around 5,300 food technologists, including 2,300 postgraduates, were passing out every year at present, the Union Minister said there was enough demand for more than one lakh graduates to stem the pilferage and loss of foodgrains and crop that was bleeding the rural economy.

Such a large number of graduates would propel India into a pre-eminent position at the global level in the food grains production sphere.

Realising this, the Union Ministry of Food Processing Industries was spending Rs. 1,440 crore on institutions involved in dissipating food and crop processing technology, she said.

Urging the graduates to “show their mettle to improve the food and crop processing technological field,” the Union Minister assured them that the Centre was fully behind them if they chose to become entrepreneurs providing jobs for others.

“The Centre under Narendra Modi is encouraging entrepreneurs to establish food parks across the nation with the help and assistance of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development. The youth must come forward to utilise the opportunity,” she said.

The Union Minister said India had moved up from a starved nation to one that had adequate food security. But steps must be taken to ensure that the food was not lost. That would be a real tribute to the cherished dreams of Mahatma Gandhi who stressed on the need for rural uplift at the heart of national development, she said.

Thanjavur Collector N. Subbaiyan, Director of Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore, Ram Rajasekaran; Director of IICPT K.

Singaravadivel, Deputy Secretary of Union Ministry of Food Processing Industries, G.D. Sharma, and Controller of Examinations at Annamalai University A. Raghupathy spoke.

### **Water table depletion hits azolla cultivation**

Depletion of groundwater has been affecting cultivation of azolla in various parts of the district.

A farmer of Melur village near Annavasal in the district, V. Anbazhagan has been toiling hard to harvest azolla in the last four months following a steady depletion in the water table. The farmer has recently drilled four borewells for ensuring irrigation facility for azolla. He had to spend Rs. 4 lakh for drilling additional borewells. He says there has been a growing demand for azolla which can be used as a fodder.

The application of azolla in agricultural fields, particularly paddy, shortly after the onset of monsoon, would prevent the growth of weeds. He says azolla could be mixed with flour for preparing dishes such as “idly” or “dosai” making it more delicious.

“The cultivation of azolla needs a steady follow-up during the course of cultivation. It should be properly cleared or harvested periodically as any huge deposit of azolla would result in a serious damage to the tub,” he said. It could be harvested weekly and fetches Rs. 100 a kg and about 3 kg could be harvested every week.

### **Proposal for crop insurance**

The Karnataka Agriculture Prices Commission is battling for State-assisted insurance for all crops.

“The commission is devising a long-term strategy to help farmers get remunerative prices. Farmers should always have something to fall back upon. That is why we feel crop insurance is vital,” T.N. Prakash Kammaradi, chairman of the commission, told presspersons on Thursday. He said he would recommend steps to increase acreage of food crops, especially jowar and ragi.

Mr. Kammaradi said he would also explore possibilities of mechanising farm markets.

## Need to expand area under cocoa cultivation highlighted

*'Access to quality planting material essential to ensure success'*



S. K. Malhotra, Commissioner of Horticulture, Government of India, speaking after inaugurating the national seminar on cocoa cultivation in Shivamogga on Friday.— Photo: VAIDYA

S.K. Malhotra, Horticulture Commissioner, has said that concerted efforts are essential to expand the area under cocoa cultivation in India.

Inaugurating a national seminar on the cocoa cultivation, held under the aegis of the University of Agriculture and Horticultural Sciences (UAHS), Shivamogga, and the Directorate of Cocoa and Cashew Development (DCCD) here on Friday, he said the total annual production of cocoa in India stood at 17,000 metric tonnes against the demand for 30,000 metric tonnes. To bridge up the gap between demand and supply, it had been planned to undertake a massive expansion of the area under cocoa cultivation. The access to quality planting material to farmers was necessary to ensure success of the expansion programme, he said.

The regional station of the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) at Vittal and the Kerala Agricultural University had developed nine high-yield varieties of cocoa. It had been planned to distribute these quality planting material among farmers through private nurseries. A system of providing accreditation to private nurseries that provided quality planting material would be evolved, he said.

The companies engaged in the production of confectioneries should also join hands with the government in ensuring success of the area expansion programme. Companies should voluntarily enter into buy-back agreements

with farmers engaged in cocoa cultivation or cooperative societies engaged in procurement and processing of cocoa, he said.

Mr. Malhotra appealed to the confectionery firms to promote study and research on diversification of their product portfolio. Possibilities of preparing chocolates by adding spices and fruits should be explored. Diversification of products and value-addition activities would increase the demand for cocoa and thereby the farmers would be benefited. . He stressed on the need for research on processing and fermentation of cocoa.

P. Chowdappa, Director of CPCRI, in his address said that it was possible to improve the economic status of farmers by motivating them to cultivate cocoa in arecanut and coconut plantations as a mixed crop. By accommodating cocoa in arecanut and coconut plantations, it was possible to control weed growth and retain moisture content in soil. The leaves of cocoa plant would serve as a rich manure for the main crop, he said.

Venkatesh Hubballi, Director of DCCD, and C. Vasudevappa, Vice-Chancellor of UAHS, Shivamogga, were present.

***Only 17,000 metric tonnes of cocoa is produced in India against a demand for 30,000 metric tonnes***

### **Fruit merchants to be relocated**

Constructed about 120 years ago, Devaraja Market in the heart of Mysuru presents an authentic flavour of the city complete with its sights, sounds and colour. Devaraja Market is spread over 15,764 sq.m. Restoration will also involve rehabilitating the nearly 725 tenants occupying the market. Mayor R. Lingappa said temporary arrangements would be made for them.

However, 176 wholesale fruit merchants will be permanently relocated to the agricultural produce market committee yard on the New Sayyaji Rao Road. The Deputy Commissioner has been instructed to issue a notice to the wholesale fruit merchants who have agreed for relocation, said Mr. Lingappa.

### **Many words, no action**

In 2005, experts from Torsteel Foundation, Bengaluru, conducted a structural study of the building and submitted a report. In 2006, a 20 member

team from the Institution of Engineers studied the structure and submitted a report. In 2011, a UNESCO team paid a visit to the market and agreed to provide technical inputs for restoration. The HUDCO was supposed to restore the market along with 10 other heritage structures but nothing transpired further.

### **Millet magic in water-starved areas**



A field of kuthiraivaali, a minor millet.

For a water-starved district like Vellore, cultivation of millets is suitable, say experts. The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Vrinjipuram, is encouraging farmers to take up millet cultivation.

M. Pandiyan, Professor and Head, Agricultural Research Station and KVK, said that for several years, farmers had been cultivating millets in various parts of the district.

### **Minor millets**

“Vellore and Tiruvannamalai are among the top districts where minor millets are cultivated on a large scale (at least 2,000 hectares of land in Vellore), particularly at the places such as Alangayam, Yelagiri and Javadhu hills,” he said.



Farmers in Javadhu Hills have been traditionally cultivating minor millets.

Minor millets include “samai” (little millet), “thinai” (foxtail millet), “varagu” (Kodo millet), “kuthiraivaali” (barnyard millet) and “pani varagu” (proso millet).

“Samai” was cultivated most in Vellore followed by “thinai”, he said.

“We have seen that disease occurrence was less in millets and there is no need for pesticides and use fertilisers. Organic fertilisers are more than enough for millets,” he added.

### **One-day programme**

In a step towards encouraging farmers to take up millet cultivation, the KVK conducted a one-day capacity building programme on modern Technologies in millets production on Thursday. Fiftyfive farmers participated.

Training in understanding the scope and potential of millet cultivation, high-yielding varieties and season for millet cultivation, technologies for enhancing millet productivity in maize, sorghum, cumbu, ragi, panivaragu and samai and value addition in millets was conducted.

### **Booklet**

A booklet on millet cultivation techniques was given to farmers, a press release said. Mr. Pandiyan said that the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore had come up with high-yielding varieties and recommended to farmers to use these varieties.

### **Cattle face green fodder shortage in TS**

*Each animal needs 30 kg every day, but only 15 kg could be supplied*

Believe it or not, about five lakh high-yielding milch animals were facing green fodder shortage, which was stated to be very crucial for keeping the reproduction system in good health.

According to sources there are about 25 lakh milch animals in Telangana out of which five lakh animals are murrah buffalo, Jersey cow and Holstein Friesian (HF). As these animals are high milk-yielding varieties they need more green fodder consisting of minerals, proteins, carbohydrates and

vitamins which are important for milk synthesis. The green fodder also play key role in protecting the reproductive tract of these animals.

While each animal need to be supplied about 30 kilograms of green fodder every day to continue high milk-yielding the farmers were able to supply 15 kilograms only as there was sufficient fodder not available. The officials admitted that only one crore kilograms of green fodder was available for farmers while 1.5 crore kilograms of green fodder was needed every day to meet the requirement of five lakh animals.

The situation may further fall during the summer season if proper steps were not put in place. So far, the Animal Husbandry Department has supplied 357 metric tonnes of fodder seed on subsidy to farmers suggesting them to get ready for the peak summer.

“The animals need to be given good fodder, mineral and vitamin mixture and trace minerals for good milk-yielding. We have to increase the supply of fodder seed on subsidy, in addition to taking up community-based dairy fodder plots and linking up fodder production with Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Generation Programme (MNREGS),” said an officer in the Animal Husbandry Department.

## **Water hyacinth menace hits boat movement in Vembanad Lake**

*Crop management affected in Kuttanad*



The Vembanad Lake area covering the western border of the Kottayam municipality is infested with water hyacinth.— Photo: By Special Arrangement

The Vembanad Lake area from Kanjiram to Vettikkad to Pazhukkanilam to Vilakkumarom covering hundreds of acres on the western border of the Kottayam municipality is infested with water hyacinth and other weeds, threatening the movement of boats.

According to Sunny Kalloor, former chairman of Kottayam Municipality, the situation would become unmanageable unless immediate steps were taken to clear the hyacinths.

Already the movement of boats have been affected. Those living on the islets and in the Upper Kuttanad area are the worst hit as they depend on water brought from far-off areas by motor boats and country boats for drinking purposes.

The paddy farmers are also a worried lot as the crop management has already been affected. Because the water transport has been affected, they are not able to take the workers to the paddy fields.

The State Fisheries Resources Management Society (FIRMA) was responsible for clearing the area of water hyacinth and other weeds for the past four years. However, this year the cleaning process has not commenced yet.

The closure of shutters of Thannermukkom Bund has contributed to sudden spurt in the growth of weed. Normally, the saline water incursion had helped to keep the weed at bay. However, with the closure of the bund the entry of the saline water has been checked resulting in the extensive growth of weed.

It has also been pointed out that the lack of development of water ways in the region has affected the inflow of water into the lake.

### **A. P. may have crop-saving irrigation**

Andhra Pradesh may soon have crop-saving irrigation as intervention at critical stage of growth. The irrigation equipment, mounted on a tractor with a hose pipe, will carry water and sprinkle it on the identified crop to save it.

Farmers spend thousands of rupees in providing water to a withering crop and it particularly happens with irrigated dry crops, says Simma Netaji, Country Head of SynTech Research.

But the irrigation equipment would help water the crop at a tentatively minimum cost of Rs.1,000 per acre.

The equipment would have a water tanker with 5,000 litre-capacity on a tractor and once the field was identified it would there with a hose pipe and a mini vehicle that would take up the wetting at the request of the farmer, he said.

The equipment developed by Lindsay Corporation of the USA was demonstrated at the Regional Agricultural Research Station at Anakapalle on the Republic Day, says Dr. Netaji.

It would cost roughly Rs.20 lakh and would be of great use in the country where flood irrigation was the norm, Mr. Netaji said.

Mr. Netaji said the Government of Andhra Pradesh was urged to give access to its fields in view of the rain-fed conditions, particularly in North Andhra.

The equipment is already in use in Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh.

### **Commodity prices**

Here are the prices of various commodities in Chennai.

Price scale is given as Rs./kg

<b>Commodity</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Now</b>	<b>Month ago</b>
Rice	1 kg	55	55
Atta	1 kg	42	42
Rava	1 kg	26	52
Tur Dal	1 kg	98	90
Urad Dal	1 kg	92	96
Channa	1 kg	80	80
Sugar	1 kg	44	44

<b>Commodity</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Now</b>	<b>Month ago</b>
Table Salt	1 kg	12	12
Mustard	100 g	9	9
Dhania	1 kg	165	165
Red Chillies	1 kg	190	190
Garlic	1 kg	120	120
Tamarind	1 kg	120	120
Refined Oil	1 ltr	168	168
Gingelly Oil	1 ltr	165	165
Ghee	1 kg	450	450
Milk	500 ml	19	19
Coffee	50 g	77	77
Tea	100 g	42	42
Health drink	500 g	184	184
Potato	1 kg	39	40
Onion (big)	1 kg	27	25
Tomato	1 kg	34	32
Beans	1 kg	30	35
Carrot	1 kg	55	50
Beetroot	1 kg	35	45
Brinjal	1 kg	45	35



Commodity	Quantity	Now	Month ago
Cabbage	1 kg	36	42
Cauliflower	1 kg	45	35
Drumstick	1 kg	140	165
Pumpkin	1 kg	18	18
Banana	1 kg	35	38
Apple	1 kg	170	160
Grapes	1 kg	60	60
Sweet Lime	1 kg	55	52

*\*Source: Nathan Enterprises & Kovai Pazhamudir Nilayam, Chennai.*



**Express recipe: How to make Aloo Palak in five easy steps**



**Aloo Palak recipe**

Sometimes I get a little sad by the fact that many of my friends and cousins couldn't be bothered to cook meals for themselves and their families. I have

heard all things from not having time after office to I don't know how to cook or even that cooking is a waste of time and that they had rather spend that time with family!

My strongest belief when it comes to cooking is that when cooked with love, a simple dish will taste out of this world. Everyday cooking need not be complicated. The beauty of home cooked food is its simplicity. Like this simple aaloo palak sabzi. Just 10 mins and five simple steps for home made heaven on your plate.

### **Aaloo Palak (Sautéed Spinach with potatoes)**

Preparation Time: 5 mins| Cooking Time: 10 mins| Serves 2

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 bunch spinach/ palak, roughly chopped
- 2 medium sized potatoes, chopped into cubes
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 inch ginger, chopped
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- A pinch of asafoetida
- 2 tsp coriander powder
- ½ tsp red chilli powder
- ¼ tsp turmeric powder
- Salt to taste
- 2 tbsp oil

#### **Method**

- \* Heat oil in a non-stick pan.
- \* Add asafoetida and cumin seeds to hot oil.
- \* When they start sputtering, add ginger and potatoes. Sauté for 3-4 minutes.
- \* Add onions, mix well and cook for another couple of minutes.
- \* Add all the spices and mix well. Add the chopped spinach and cook till the spinach starts to wilt and the potatoes are soft.
- \* Serve hot with chapatis

### **Are vitamin drinks a bad idea?**

Companies are increasingly adding vitamins and minerals to juices, sports drinks and bottled water, responding to a growing consumer demand for these products. Even though the amounts of added nutrients in these drinks are typically small, some nutrition scientists are concerned that through their overall diets, many people may be ingesting levels of vitamins and other nutrients that are not only unnecessary, but potentially harmful.

“You have vitamins and minerals that occur naturally in foods, and then you have people taking supplements, and then you have all these fortified foods,” said Mridul Datta, an assistant professor in the department of nutrition science at Purdue University. “It adds up to quite an excess. There’s the potential for people to get a lot more of these vitamins than they need.”

Today more than ever, studies show, the average person is exposed to unusually high levels of vitamins and minerals. Already, more than half of all adults in the United States take a multivitamin or dietary supplement. Bread, milk and other foods are often fortified with folic acid, niacin and vitamins A and D.

A study published in July found that many people are exceeding the safe limits of nutrient intakes established by the Institute of Medicine. And research shows that people who take dietary supplements are often the ones who need them the least.

Particularly concerning, experts say, is the explosion of beverages marketed specifically for their high levels of antioxidants, like Vitaminwater, POM Wonderful, Naked Juice and many others. The body requires antioxidants to neutralize free radicals that can damage cells and their DNA. But it also uses free radicals to fight off infections and cancer cells, experts say, and when antioxidants are present in excess, it can throw things out of balance.

A study published this month analyzed 46 beverages – both with and without sugar – sold in supermarkets alongside bottled water. It found that many of these drinks contained vitamins B6, B12, niacin and vitamin C in quantities “well in excess” of the average daily requirements for young adults.

Some of these products promised improvements in energy and immune function, while others promoted “performance and emotional benefits related to nutrient formulations that go beyond conventional nutritional science,” the researchers said.

The most common nutrients added were vitamins that are already plentiful in the average person’s diet, so their widespread inclusion in these drinks is almost completely unnecessary, said Valerie Tarasuk, the lead author of the study and a nutrition science professor in the faculty of medicine at the University of Toronto.

“It’s very hard to figure out the logic the manufacturers are using to do this fortification,” she said. “There’s no way that the things that are being added are things that anybody needs or stands to benefit from.” Sugary drinks were just as likely to be concentrated with vitamins as those that were sugar-free. Dr Tarasuk said as sugar has become the focus of public health concerns about beverage consumption, “this extreme micronutrient addition has fallen

## Diet Diary: Add Makhana to your diet for that healthy edge



**By: Ishi Khosla**

Extracts from different parts of this water plant including its leaves, stems, roots and seeds have been reported to show several benefits, such as antioxidant, free radical scavenging, anti-inflammatory, and immunomodulatory activities. Makhanas have also been used in religious rituals in India.

Interestingly, the lotus seeds are also called fox nut or gorgon nut. However, being low in fat and high in carbohydrates, these are nutritionally distinct from nuts and seeds. Lotus seeds are a good source of protein, carbohydrates, fibre, magnesium, potassium, phosphorus, iron and zinc. Lotus seeds are also low in sodium.

Their low sodium and high magnesium content makes them useful for those suffering from heart diseases, high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity. These seeds have been used extensively in traditional Oriental and Chinese medicine for their health benefits and are valued for their nutritional and healing properties.

These seeds contain an anti-aging enzyme, which is believed to help repair damaged proteins.

Lotus seeds are also known to contain kaempferol, a natural flavonoid also found in coffee which prevents inflammation and aging.

It is believed that roasted lotus seeds make a coffee substitute. In addition, lotus seeds are high on phyto-nutrients (disease fighting nutrients) including alkaloids, gallic acid, saponins.

Most significantly, the glycemic index of lotus seed is significantly lower than most high carbohydrate foods like rice, bread and others. It appears that

lotus seeds may have a beneficial effect on diabetic individuals, and may be one of the more appropriate foods for them.

According to Ayurveda, lotus seeds have astringent properties that have specific benefits to the kidneys, helping to restore vital energy within the body.

The seeds can be eaten raw, roasted, or ground and boiled into a syrup or paste. The most common use of the seed is in the form of lotus seed paste, which is used extensively in Chinese pastries as well as in Japanese desserts. Dried lotus seeds may be soaked in water overnight prior to use. They can then be added directly to soups, salads or used in other dishes. Puffed seeds are used in curries, kheer, puddings and dry roasted snacks.

So far, as there are no detailed reports on the toxic effects of long-term consumption of lotus seeds and their products, further experiments are warranted. Although nutraceutical value of lotus seeds is established, further precise exploration of value-added compounds might be beneficial in health promotion.

Lotus seeds hold a promising future as an alternate gluten-free protein supplement and potential nutra-ceutical and pharmaceutical source. Blending its flour with other nutritionally rich legumes like daals and soybean or millets like bajra and jowar will be of immense value to develop low-cost, gluten-free, protein-rich food supplements to combat malnutrition, particularly relevant to India.

Hence, introduce the 'makhana' snack food in your regular diet for that healthy edge.





# THE TIMES OF INDIA

Recipe: Instant garlic bread with toppings



*Instant Garlic Bread with Toppings -- A quick snack that's mostly a hit with the kids*

## **Ingredients:**

Garlic Breads: 6 slices

Capsicum: 1 (chopped into cubes)

Onions: 1 (chopped into small cubes)

Boiled sweet corn: 1/2 cup

Tomato: 1 (chopped into small cubes)

Oregano: as per taste

Red chilli flakes: as per taste

Salt: as per taste

Butter for greasing

Cheese cubes or slices

Pizza Topping spread

**Method:** Take a slice of garlic bread and apply Pizza topping spread over it. Place all the vegetables over it. Sprinkle oregano, red chilli flakes and salt. Layer with with cheese finally. Grease a baking dish with butter and place the bread in the microwave for 4-5 minutes, till the cheese melts. Yummy snacks are ready to eat!

## Your rich and hearty winter food guide



*With winters setting in across the country, Nashikites too are prepping up with woollens and changes to their diet. We spoke to a few people from the city and asked what are the things that they are adding to their food to stay warm and healthy this year.*

During winters, our body craves for rich food that provides warmth and nourishment. Speaking about such beneficial food items, Dr Subhash Deore said, "Any vegetable whose edible part grows beneath the ground like carrot, potato, onions, garlic, radish, yams, sweet potatoes, beet root, groundnuts, ginger etc usually have a warming tendency and are good for consumption during winters. Certain dry fruits, nuts and seeds also have similar properties."

During winters there is a marked increase in appetite when the body yearns for richer food items. Many Nashik households make various winter delicacies like gond ke ladoo, ponkh, besan ladoo. Samsa Panjwani, a homemaker said, "There are many healthy food items that my children like and I am planning to make them all for the winter season."

Sarson ka saag coupled with makke di roti, white butter and lassi (yoghurt smoothie) from Punjab, is a favourite across India. Manju Narang a Nashikite from Punjab said, "This combination is highly nutritious as mustard leaves have a lot of iron and protein and my whole family enjoys it a lot during winters." Panjiri is another traditional snack made from wheat flour which is eaten extensively during the winter months.

Similarly Gujarati cuisine too has special dishes for the winter months. Sadhana Patel, a homemaker, said, "During winters, Gujaratis prepare undhiyu, a spicy vegetable dish comprising of peas, beans, and eggplants."

Black sesame seeds or black til is another thing that can be consumed during winters. This rich in iron seed can be consumed in various forms including til ladoos and til chikkis. Bajre ki roti served with ghee and jaggery or baingan bharta and uda dki dal she is another classic winter combination.

Things that one can drink to combat the cold include chicken soup, vegetable soup, ginger tea. Kashmiri kahwa and hot chocolate. "A mug of brimming hot cocoa just sounds wonderful to fight the chill," said Vaibhav Sharma, a computer engineering student.

With a gain in appetite and sumptuous fattening food at our disposal, it is very easy to gain weight during winters. Hence one needs to be careful to consume whole grains and condensed calories such as upma or dalia, plenty of low-sodium soups and lean protein. Sunita Savkar from the city said, "We should choose something like gur-chikki, which has enough fat to give a feeling of fullness and is healthy too."

Gajar or carrot halwa is one of the most important and widely available desserts of the winter months. While carrots are healthy, the ghee in the halwa boosts physical health and provides warmth to the body. The ingredients required for making this very simple dish are:

- Carrots - 1/2 kgs or 5 approx
- Sugar - 1 cup (200 gms)
- Whole Milk - 1+1/2 cup (300 ml)
- Ghee (clarified butter) - 6 tbsp
- Cashew nuts - 10
- Almonds - 7 (for garnishing)
- Cardamom powder - 1/2 tsp

**Instructions:**

- Wash, peel and grate the carrots.
- Soak the almonds in warm water for 15 - 20 minutes and then peel off the skin and chop finely.
- Finely chop the cashew nuts.
- Heat a heavy bottomed pan and add three tbsp of ghee. When it becomes

warm, add the chopped cashew nuts and roast over low flame till it turns golden brown and remove them from the pan.

- To the same pan add the grated carrots.
- Simmer the flame and saute for 15-20 minutes.
- By now the carrot should be cooked and the raw smell should have gone.
- Add milk and increase the flame to medium.
- Allow the milk and carrots to cook together till the mixture become semi-dry.
- Keep mixing to avoid the carrots from sticking to the pan.
- In 15-20 minutes add the sugar and mix well. Following this the mixture will again get liquefied.
- Continue cooking till mixture becomes thick.
- The sugar would caramelize making the mixture sticky.
- When the halwa becomes dry, add the remaining 3 tbsps ghee, cardamom powder, roasted cashew nuts and mix well.
- Cook for another five minutes while continuously mixing the ingredients.
- Garnish with almonds and serve hot or cold.

### Recipe: Moong dal sandwich

*Leading a healthy lifestyle is something that each of us strives for. Although, we try our best to indulge in enough physical activity as well as eat a balanced diet, our busy schedules and increasing stress levels do not allow us to do so.*

However, the best way to make sure you stay healthy is to sneak in healthy stuff in your daily eating habits. Pulses are one of the best things to maintain a balance, as they contain a higher percentage of protein. Moong Dal being one of them, here's a healthy and tasty pulses sandwich that you can try.

**Moong Dal Sandwich** Ingredients: White / Brown Bread- 4 slices Moong dal (with skin)- 1 small bowl Roasted peanuts (without skin)- 50 grams

For the green chutney Coriander leaves- a bunch Mint leaves- few leaves Raw mango- 1/2 Salt- as a per taste Green chilli- 2-3 Onion- 1 small-sized

Method: Soak the dal overnight, this will help you grind it easily Drain the water; grind the dal into a fine paste and mix salt as per taste Grind all the ingredients of the green chutney and grind into a fine paste Take a slice of bread, spread the chutney and then the ground dal Break the peanuts into halves and crush them by pressing them between two sheets of paper Then

sprinkle them over the spread Spread some butter in a pan and grill the sandwich for a while Your healthy Moong Dal Sandwich is ready

You can eat it for breakfast with a glass of fresh fruit juice or as a part of your evening snack this monsoons with a steamy cup of strong coffee.

### Recipe: Ice cream cake with Oreo cookies



*Here's something that you can't let your hands off. A mouth-watering dessert in the form of an ice cream cake with Oreo cookies, I bet you wouldn't want be interested in the main course.*

### **Ice cream Cake with Oreo cookies**

Ingredients:

Butter: 100 grams

Cocoa Powder: 2 tbsp

Powdered sugar: 2 tbsp

Oreo cookies: 1 pack (remove the cream and grind it into a powder)

Parle cookies: 3 packs

Milk: 1/2 cup

Vanilla ice cream: 2 scoops

Silver Balls Butter for greasing

**Method:** Mix butter, cocoa powder and powdered sugar together. Dip Parle cookies in milk and arrange it on a plate and make a square of 12 biscuits Apply cocoa mixture on those biscuits Follow the same procedure for the second layer of Parle cookies and cocoa mixture Make as many layers you want Refrigerate it for 2 hours Then cut into pieces; then place the cake in



between two scoops of vanilla ice cream Garnish this with crushed Oreo cookies and silver balls

### How to reduce salt in your diet



*Too much of sodium content in your diet can increase your cholesterol levels leading to an increased risk of heart attack and other cardiovascular issues.*

While salt is an essential ingredient in any recipe you cook, here are some ways to reduce the intake of sodium.

- If you are cooking using a recipe book, add less than the amount of salt mentioned.
- According to studies, most of the additional seasonings you add to your food contain about 95% salt. So, while making pasta, add fresh herbs instead of using a herb seasoning or freshly chopped garlic instead of garlic powder.
- Choose healthier options at a grocery store. Often, packaged foods tend to be high in sodium content because it helps preserve them for longer. Read the food labels carefully for nutritional facts.
- Go for fresh or frozen veggies instead of their canned varieties, which often contain added salt to help increase shelf life.
- Olives and pickles are saturated in salt, as are many smoked and cured meats, like salami and bologna. Limit your intake of these high-sodium foods.
- Add fresh lemon instead of salt when marinading fish or other vegetables.
- Cut down on sodium-rich condiments such as soy or mustard sauce and ketchup.



## Food for your healthy bones



*Nutrients like calcium and vitamin D are essential if you want to build strong bones. While calcium helps strengthen bones and teeth structure, vitamin D improves calcium absorption and bone growth.*

One of the main reasons of osteoporosis is a calcium and vitamin D deficiency . Hence, it is important to have a diet that is rich in these two nutrients. Here are some foods you should consume regularly ...

**Milk** With high quantities of calcium and vitamin D, make it a habit to drink a glass of milk every day . Making a face at the sound of having milk?

Substitute it with yogurt or cheese.

**Bananas** Packed with calcium as well as potassium, bananas are an excellent way to improve your immune system, metabolize proteins and prevent calcium loss from your body .

**Green vegetables** Vegetables like spinach, spring onions, fenu greek, cabbage and broccoli are excellent sources of calcium. The vitamin K present in spinach boosts bone mineral density .

**Nuts** Almonds and groundnut contain a generous amount of potassium that is known to prevent loss of calcium through urine. Walnuts are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which are important in slowing down the rate of bone loss and speeding up bone formation.

Prunes Prunes contain a fibre called inulin that helps the body to absorb calcium faster and also strengthens bones.

Sardines and salmon Sardines are known to have high levels of both vitamin D and calcium.

Salmon contains hearthealthy omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin D.

Eggs Don't go overboard with egg consumption. An egg a day is considered healthy, according to experts. And don't throw away the yolk -that is where the vitamin D is.

### 5 essential items in a vegetarian diet

*Here are five essential food ingredients that a vegetarian must have*

It can be difficult sometimes for a vegetarian to get the complete dose of essential nutrients which are required for a healthy body. Here is a list of five ingredients that a vegetarian should have daily for a healthy body -

**Nuts:** Nuts such as almonds, raisins, pistachios, walnuts and pecans are full of proteins. Seeds like flaxseeds too are important as they contain unsaturated fats. A handful of nuts and seeds daily will assure that your body gets a dose of fibers, vitamins, proteins and iron.

**Eggs and dairy products:** Eggs and dairy products provide a healthy dose of proteins, which is otherwise difficult in a meatless diet. Milk and milk products also provide calcium and vitamin D.

**Lentils:** Legumes, including beans and lentils, are a very important part of a vegetarian's diet. They are the best source of proteins and also offer essential fibers, vitamins and minerals.

**Grains:** Whole grains are a good source of carbohydrates for vegetarians. They also provide minerals like zinc, copper and iron. So stock up on oats, whole wheat breads and pasta, brown rice and quinoa.

**Fruits and vegetables:** This is of course, the most important staple in a vegetarian's diet. Fruits and vegetables are abundant with vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.

# THE HINDU BusinessLine

**Basmati exports set to drop on Iran ban; buffalo meat shipments gain traction**

**Agri export body identifies processed fruits, concentrates as new area of growth**



**New Delhi, January 30:**

The share of Basmati rice in India's agri-export basket is likely to fall this fiscal but beef exports will continue to grow, according to statistics provided by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda).

The authority, under the Ministry of Commerce with 22 scheduled products under its purview, shipped farm produce worth \$22 billion in 2013-14 and expects a slight decline this fiscal.

Agri produce worth Rs. 87,553 crore were exported between April and November 2014. Exports totalled Rs. 1.37 lakh crore last fiscal.

Basmati rice, among key drivers of export earnings, has been hit as Iran is not allowing imports due to ample stocks. Some 3.7-3.8 million tonnes (mt)

of Basmati rice worth Rs. 29,291 crore were exported last fiscal, with Iran importing about 1.4 mt.

“Overall, we’re looking at lower export volumes this fiscal, about 3.5 mt. The ban in Iran and downturn in the global economy, particularly in the European Union, has resulted in lower demand for Basmati rice,” said Santosh Sarangi, Director, Apeda.

### **Beef exports**

Buffalo meat exports – which have posted significant growth over the last few years touching 1.5 mt worth Rs. 26,458 crore in 2013-14 – have continued their upward trajectory.

The country exported 817,844 tonnes of buffalo meat worth Rs. 16,083 crore between April and October 2014.

Sarangi, however, said the growth was flattening and competition from Brazilian beef, which was costlier by about \$400-500/tonne prior to their currency, real, depreciating about 18 per cent against the dollar over the last two months, would pose challenge for Indian exporters in the Gulf countries and China, which imports 45 per cent of Indian buffalo meat routed through Vietnam.

“Growth this year in beef has been about 15 per cent. It was 30 per cent last year. This is expected after continuous high growth over the last few years. Our market penetration and new destinations, such as Russia were added this year,” he said.

### **New potential**

Grapes, processed foods and biscuits and confectionaries hold considerable potential for growth and Apeda would be undertaking efforts to promote these categories in 2015-16.

“Our grapes have the advantage of being harvested in a window when others do not, it’s an advantage and our penetration in key markets such as China, Taiwan and the US has been low. Processed foods, particularly mango pulp, juices and juice concentrates, are another area holding promise,” said Sarangi.

## **African market**

Biscuits and confectionaries' exports, particularly to African countries, have grown from a base of \$100 million in 2011-12 to about \$170 million last fiscal.

Saranghi believes this could hit \$350-400 million soon.

## **Tyre makers not buying rubber at reference price, say growers**

Kochi, January 30:

Rubber procurement drive by tyre companies at the initiative of Kerala Government from the domestic market seems to be facing rough weather.

Various rubber growers associations have expressed concern over the violation of agreement by tyre companies and Kerala Government on rubber procurement.

Growers associations including the United Planters Association of Southern India (Upasi), in a statement issued here, said that no rubber was being bought at levels notified by the Rubber Board and growers are offered a price some Rs. 10-12 a kg lower than the daily reference price.

The purchase tax paid by the companies was to be refunded on production of purchase bill (2.5 per cent within 30 days) and balance 2.5 per cent as an input VAT credit.

However, the Government notification waived the purchase tax for all grades of rubber instead of RSS alone and modified the daily reference price as Bangkok RSS3 price plus 20 per cent.

Listing out a number of issues which are causing problems, the association said that there was a clear agreement that the tyre companies will buy RSS 4 at the daily reference price put up on the site by the Rubber Board.

According to growers, tyre companies together have procured an approximate quantity of 18,000 tonnes in one month after the agreement.

This, compared to the normal buying of nearly 30,000 tonnes per month, is low and has contributed to poor market sentiments.

Also, huge imports continue to take place despite these commitments while the objective of this agreement was to encourage more buying from the domestic market.

The price of Indian rubber at the factory gate is far cheaper than the landed price of imported rubber. Today the factory gate price of imported rubber (RSS 3) is around Rs. 133-135, while that of Indian rubber will not be more than Rs. 120-125a kg.

### **Maharashtra approves field trials for 4 GM crops**

Brinjal, rice, chickpea and cotton strains to be tested on university farms



Alex011973/shutterstock

**New Delhi/Mumbai, January 30:**

The Maharashtra government has decided to allow agricultural bodies and companies to conduct field trials of four genetically-modified (GM) crops.

According to a source in the know, no-objection certificates (NOC) have been given for trials of brinjal, rice, chickpea (chana) and cotton on Thursday.

“Field trials will be conducted in four crop segments in the State, the NOC was given on Thursday,” said CD Mayee, ex-Director of the Central Institute



for Cotton Research, at a meeting held by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications here on Friday.

The Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises Agricultural Group (ABLE-AG), a GM-advocacy body, and Monsanto India declined to comment saying they were unaware of the development.

However, official sources in Mumbai said the State government has decided to accept the recommendations of Anil Kakodkar-led sub-committee, which advises the state on allowing field trials. Mayee serves as a member of a sub-committee.

Trials for GM maize, conducted by Monsanto in at least two agricultural universities in Maharashtra, had been allowed last year by the panel.

It is mandatory for bodies to get an NOC from States, besides an initial nod from the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee, to conduct field trials of GM crops since June 2011.

“The tests will only be conducted only on university farms and not farmers fields and every application will be scrutinised thoroughly by sub-committees, like the one I serve on, and then recommended to the Kakodkar panel,” said Mayee, adding that approvals took about eight months. Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh besides Maharashtra, are among the key States to have allowed non-laboratory-based GM trials while Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, among others, have banned the tests.

Around 8-10 companies, including Bayer BioScience and BASF, have submitted applications to test rice and cotton varieties reared for nitrogen efficiency while the brinjal variety was evolved by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI). Chickpea trials were requested by Sungro Seeds which obtained Bt technology from the Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat.

## **Sugar output seen rising; cane arrears top Rs. 11,000 cr**

### **New Delhi, January 30:**

With sugarcane arrears climbing to Rs. 11,000 crore this month and the country billed to produce 26 million tonnes (mt) of sugar this season, the industry is pushing for the Centre to announce a continuation of the export

incentive scheme on raw sugar at the earliest to help farmers and beleaguered mills.

The production estimate, revised upward by the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) from 25-25.5 mt earlier, marks the fifth consecutive year of surplus output which has depressed prices. The revised numbers are because of higher output in Maharashtra and south Karnataka.

India, the world's second largest sugar producer, had produced 24.3 mt in the 2013-14 marketing year and the annual demand is pegged at 24.8 mt.

Ex-mill prices, according to ISMA representatives, are the lowest in three years and currently stand at Rs.2,700-50 a quintal down from Rs. 3,000-50 at the start of the season on October 1.

“The export incentive must be announced as soon as possible with only a month and a half of crushing left. Thailand and Pakistan have already announced support for their domestic industries while prices here have declined by Rs. 3/kg,” A Vellayan, President, ISMA, told reporters here on Friday.

### **Trouble ahead**

Vellayan feared that arrears, which had crossed Rs. 13,000 crore last March-April, will likely to rise if the government support on the export front is not forthcoming. As of Friday, arrears in Uttar Pradesh stood at Rs. 4,600 crore while Maharashtra had outstanding payments amounting to Rs. 1,650 crore.

Last February, the UPA-led government had provided mills an export subsidy between Rs. 2,277 and Rs.3,371 a tonne on raw sugar and had shipped about 750,000 tonnes under the scheme.

“The review of the scheme and extension was supposed to have been done at the start of the season. Last season, after the incentive was announced, exporters had managed to ship about 750,000 tonnes which helped prop up prices,” he told *BusinessLine*.

A subsidy of Rs. 4,000/tonne on raw sugar exports has been recommended by the Sugar Directorate but the Cabinet is yet to approve it. Vellayan said at least 2 mt of surplus sugar was required to be exported given an opening stock of 7.5 mt if sugar prices were to rise.

## India, China, Indonesia want cap on foodgrain procurement removed

WTO kicks off dedicated session on public stockholding and food security



For food security Since the Bali deal on food procurement is subject to a number of conditions, India wants a 'simple solution' to this vexatious problem.

### **New Delhi, January 30:**

Maintaining its hard posture on food security at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), India has said that Government procurement of foodgrain at non-market prices should be allowed without limits.

China, Indonesia and Turkey were some of the other members of the G-33 alliance of developing countries in agriculture which pushed for exclusion of support prices for foodgrain from the list of trade-distorting subsidies.

### **Difference of opinion**

The proposal, discussed in the first session on finding a “permanent solution” to India’s (as well as some other developing countries) problem of ensuring food security without bending global trade rules was, however, opposed by some such as the US, the EU, Pakistan, Australia, Japan, Argentina and Paraguay.

“While India and some other G-33 members argued that unlimited Government food procurement was necessary to ensure food security to poor, those objecting said that without adequate disciplines it could lead to

unintended consequences such as hurting the food security of other countries,” a Government official told *BusinessLine*.

WTO members are supposed to find a “permanent solution” by the end of this year as per the agreement reached in the Bali Ministerial meeting in December 2013, which was later re-negotiated by India.

New Delhi, meanwhile, has got a short-term solution as part of the Bali deal where members have agreed not to take legal action against it in case subsidy cap is breached. Since the reprieve granted to India is subject to a number of conditions including sharing of numerous data and details, India wants a simple ‘permanent solution’ to the problem as soon as possible.

“India and the G-33 want that on account of public stockholding, whatever amounts of subsidy go beyond *de minimis* (the subsidy cap fixed at 10 per cent of total production), it should be excluded from the aggregate measurement of support (actionable subsidies),” the official said.

The G-33 proposal, made in 2012, also talks about alternative solutions which includes calculating procurement subsidies by changing the base year from 1986-88 and making it more recent, or by indexing it to inflation.

“We are flexible in our approach. We don’t intend to just stick to one proposal, but are ready to discuss the alternatives suggested in G-33’s earlier proposal,” the official said.

India runs the risk of breaching the agriculture subsidy cap, at least in rice, in a few years’ time once it fully implements its food security legislation.

In Bali, it agreed to give its approval to an agreement on trade facilitation that places obligations on all members to upgrade their customs infrastructure only on the condition that the rules on food procurement subsidies are changed.