

Date: 03.07.2015

# THE HINDU

Govt allocates Rs. 200 crore for national agriculture market



[The Hindu](#)

Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley with Minister of Agriculture, Radha Mohan Singh, during a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday. Photo: Shanker Chakravarty

Government has allocated Rs. 200 crore for three years to set up an online national agriculture market by integrating 585 wholesale markets across India — a move that would help farmers realise better prices.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs had on Wednesday approved a Central Sector Scheme for Promotion of National Agricultural Market through Agri-Tech Infrastructure Fund.

“An amount of Rs 200 crore has been earmarked for the scheme from 2015-16 to 2017-18,” an official statement said.

The Department of Agriculture will set it up by creation of a common electronic platform deployable in selected regulated markets across the country.

“Now there will be one licence for entire state, there will be single point levy. There will be electronic auctions for price discovery. The impact will be that the entire state will become a market and the fragmented markets within the states would be abolished,” Finance Minister Arun Jaitley told reporters.

Under the scheme, 585 selected regulated markets would be covered. The plan is to cover 250 mandis in current fiscal, 200 mandis in 2016-17 and 135 mandis in 2017-18.

“Seamless transfer of agriculture commodities within the state can take place. The market size for farmers would increase as he won’t be limited to a captive market,” Mr. Jaitley said.

The Rs 200 crore allocations includes provision for supplying software free of cost by agriculture department to the states and UTs and for cost of related hardware/ infrastructure to be subsidised by the Centre up to Rs 30 lakh per Mandi (other than for private mandis).

Agriculture Secretary Siraj Hussain informed that Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Gujarat have already agreed to join the Scheme, while Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh are “very keen” to participate. Besides, the Centre is also in discussions with Uttar Pradesh.

Unifying the markets both at state and the national level would provide better price to farmers, improve supply chain, reduce wastages and create a unified national market through provision of the common e—platform, the statement said.

### **M.S. Swaminathan hails World Food Prize winner**

Eminent agricultural scientist M.S.Swaminathan has congratulated Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, recipient of this year’s coveted World Food Prize award.

The announcement of Mr. Abed as recipient of the prestigious award was made during a ceremony at the U.S. State Department, in Washington on Wednesday. Prof. M.S. Swaminathan who is the Chairperson of the Selection Committee for the World Food Prize, said the award would be a boost not only to Bangladesh but to the entire South Asian region. Sir Abed has been recognised for his decades of service to human development and through building Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee that operates in 10 countries around the world, a note from M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation said.

#### **‘Sources of inspiration’**

“Your monumental contributions to poverty and hunger eradication as well as to the empowerment of women are sources of very great inspiration to everyone in South Asia as well as the whole world,” Prof. Swaminathan wrote to Sir Abed.

The World Food Prize is the most prominent global award for individuals whose breakthrough achievements alleviate hunger and promote global food security.

## **Ryots told to raise cocoa as internal crop**

Collector M.M. Nayak on Thursday urged farmers to raise cocoa as an internal crop in the targeted 2,000 hectares of horticulture crops as it would fetch greater returns per acre. Inaugurating a three-day training programme for farmers, Mr. Nayak said he would sanction drip irrigation units to farmers for raising cocoa and directed horticulture officials to create awareness among farmers and impart training on how to raise cocoa as an internal crop. He also released a book 'Cocoa and its benefits' on the occasion. YSR Horticulture University Director R.V.S.K. Reddy, JD (Agriculture) Prameela were present.

## **14 crops notified for insurance coverage**

To encourage farmers to adopt progressive farming practises without any fear of losing crop due to natural disasters, pests and diseases, as many as 14 crops have got 'notified for insurance coverage' in the 'notified areas' of the district for the current kharif season.

Officials sources told *The Hindu* that the crops and the areas were notified by a coordination committee on crop insurance comprising officials from agriculture department and insurance sector and all farmers, including sharecroppers and tenant farmers, were eligible for insurance coverage under National Agriculture Insurance Scheme.

Of the 14 crops notified for insurance coverage in the district, cholam and gingelly got notified at the block level with the other crops namely paddy, maize, black gram, green gram, red gram, ground nut, cotton, sugar cane, turmeric, onion, tapioca and banana, been notified at the select 31 'firkas' level.

## **Delta farmers all set to open a super market**

*A 1,400 sq. ft. space has been taken on rent at a building*

Reaching out to consumers directly to market their produce at a competitive price, a group of farmers of Thanjavur district have joined hands to start a super market in Thanjavur town.

Christened "Delta Mart", the sales outlet will be run by the Cauvery Delta Agro Producers Company Limited encompassing 1,000 farmer members of Thanjavur and neighbouring Pudukottai district.

Farmers have pooled in necessary financial resources to start this novel initiative aimed at improving their financial position.

Set up on a 1,400 square feet area in a rented building near the busy new bus stand, the "Delta Mart" would be akin to a departmental store to market a slew of agro products and other items at a competitive price.

In addition to this, the “self service” sales outlet would sell agri-related inputs to farmers, including organic manure, vermin compost and inputs required for dairy farming.

Slated for inauguration on July 5, the Delta Mart would market agro-products of the company members, including different varieties of rice, vegetables, coconuts, edible oil, various varieties of fruits, and stationery as well.

The objective of the novel initiative of the farmers is to reach out to consumers directly to market their agro-products, says Amirtha Pandian, executive director of the company.

The super market will work on the motto “from farmers to consumers”, Mr. Pandian said and added that the initiative had been taken with the objective of helping farmers and improving their economic condition.

The products sold at the outlet would definitely be cheaper than those sold in the open market, he said.

The profit would be divided among members.

Talks were being held with farmer producers companies of other districts such as Erode, Karur, and Coimbatore so as to link their products with the outlet to market them to the consumers.

The company has plans to expand the outlet in future to further improve its sale.

- ***About 1,000 farmers from Thanjavur, Pudukottai have floated a company***
- ***The aim is to deliver the agriculture produce directly to the consumer***

## **More samba paddy procured**

*Late arrivals force TNCSC authorities to extend the exercise*



**CLEAN OPERATION:** Paddy being winnowed before purchase at a Direct Procurement Centre near Tiruthurapoondi.— Photo: B. Velankanni Raj

Late samba paddy arrivals have forced the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC) authorities to extend the procurement of paddy at various villages in the district far beyond mid-April when these centres are normally closed.

About 19,000 hectares were brought under what is termed as 'summer crop' or 'late samba.' Many farmers have raised CR-1000, a 'Grade A' variety for which the demand is far less in the open market forcing the farmers to sell it at the Direct Procurement Centres.

The TNCSC had opened 73 direct procurement centres (DPCs) during the samba season as per the recommendations of the Collector M. Mathivanan. "We had procured 4.73 lakh tonnes of paddy till that date," A. Azhagirisamy, Senior Regional Manager, TNCSC, told *The Hindu* here on Thursday.

But, to the surprise of the official, arrival of late samba during the summer season forced the authorities to extend the procurement exercise much beyond the deadline.

From April 15 to till date, an additional 26,000 tonnes of paddy was procured. "The additional procurement was possible due to increase in the 'samba' coverage by 9,000 hectares," he added.

Tiruthurapoondi belt witnesses active procurement these days where the summer crop is being harvested. One of the Movement Officers at the DPCs, K. Senthilkumar, said that the paddy bags brought by farmers were procured after winnowing using a machine.

A. Chinnaiyan, one of the farmers of a nearby village, said he had brought 20 bags but he could market only 18 bags of paddy after winnowing. Mr. Senthilkumar said adequate care was being taken to ensure that farmers were satisfied with the winnowing process.

The Senior Regional Manager said that every DPC had been supplied with a winnowing machine. The staff had been directed to ensure speedy procurement as winnowing consumed some more time while procuring paddy free from dust or weeds.

## Steep fall in jackfruit price



### JACKFRUIT PRICE NOSEDIVES

Jackfruit is a major horticulture crop in more than 100 hamlets on Kolli hills.

Heavy arrival of jackfruits from Kolli hills, following good monsoon season.

Thammampatti market receives jackfruits everyday, instead of once a week till sometime ago.

Price ranges between Rs. 150 and Rs. 200 per fruit till a couple of weeks ago.

At present the price ranges between Rs. 30 – Rs. 100.

There is a spurt in the arrival of jackfruit in the Thammampatti market, thanks to the good crop season in Kolli hills of the neighbouring Namakkal district.

Heavy arrival has led to the steep fall in the price of jackfruit in the past one week. Jackfruit is a major cash crop in more than 100 villages situated on the Kolli hills. The tribal villages experienced widespread rainfall, leading to good jackfruit season, this year. Earlier, the farmers and traders, during the season period, used to bring the jackfruits only to the Thammampatti weekly market, which met on Wednesdays.

With good yield during this harvest period, jackfruit stock arrives in the mini-trucks and load vans every day from the villages of Kolli hills. As such many temporary shops selling jackfruits have sprung up on all the main roads.

Due to the bulk arrival, the price of the fruits has registered a steep fall. The fruit, which was priced between Rs. 150 and Rs. 200 a couple of weeks ago, is now being sold between Rs. 30 – Rs. 100 each, based on the size.

The steep fall in the price is a big disappointment to the farmers as well as local traders. “With good yield, farmers and traders expected to make reasonable money this season. But the fall in price is a very big disappointment,” says M. Radha, a small time trader of Thammampatti.

Following good yield, the jackfruit season is expected to extend for a couple of months. “We expect the price to improve in the days ahead,” he says with anxiety writ large on his face.

## **TN to get 1,000 MW more solar power this month**

Tamil Nadu's ambitious plan to tap solar energy to narrow the power deficit in will get a boost with the government set to finalise deals assuring 1,000 MW solar energy by the end of this month.

Addressing an international conference and Exposition on Renewable Energy 2015, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) here on Thursday, Electricity Minister Natham R. Viswanthan said that already deals for 1,000 MW were on (including the proposed 700-MW solar plant by Adani Group).

Agreements for another 1,000 MW would be signed by July-end and by the end of this year the government expects to get 2,000 MW of solar power, he said.

The State had set a target of 3,000 MW of solar power generation by 2015. At present, the installed capacity is 149 MW.

Tamil Nadu was a pioneer in the new and renewable energy sector with an installed capacity of 8,482 MW, which accounted for 35 per cent of the sector in the country.

The State's Energy secretary, Mr. Rajesh Lakhoni, suggested that every person who purchases a new air-conditioner buy 1KW of solar panel.

Explaining the statistics behind the idea, he said, "Tamil Nadu offers Rs. 20,000 subsidy per KW of solar roof top installation in addition to the 30 per cent Central subsidy. With an investment of about Rs. 60,000 on solar power, a household could save up to Rs. 10,000 per annum on power bill. It makes a lot of economic sense."

### **CII suggestions**

The CII gave seven suggestions to the industry to unleash the full potential of the sector like stricter enforcement of Renewable energy Purchase Obligations across all States, either through amendment of Electricity Act or Indian Penal Code with penalty for non-compliance.

Extension of accelerated depreciation to all renewable energy systems, allocation of funds to the renewable energy projects from the National Clean Energy Fund and single window system for statutory and environmental clearances were the other recommendations.

It also advocated deemed industry status and deemed open access permission for renewable energy projects in all States and power evacuation and grid integration allowing wind power generators in Tamil Nadu to feed power into the grid.

"Simplification of land acquisition and conversion norms by providing deemed non-agricultural permission for land for renewable energy projects will also help this sector," said Ramesh Kymal, Chairman, Renewable Energy Council, CII-Godrej Green Business Centre.

***By this year end, government expects to get 2,000 MW of solar power: Minister***

## **Six held for pepper theft in Chikkamagaluru**

The Chikkamagaluru police have succeeded in arresting those allegedly involved in a theft of pepper bags worth Rs. 10.5 lakh, which was reported on June 27.

The police took six people into custody on Tuesday and upon interrogation they found that the arrested had stolen 29 bags of pepper from a godown belonging to Harish Kumar Jain of Kabbinahalli in Chikkamagaluru taluk.

The arrested are Mohammed Hanif (34), Jagadish (22), Kumar (28), Ravi (31), Ravi (29) and Girish (22). All are plantation workers, natives of villages in Chikkamagaluru and Belur taluks.

The police said that as they worked in different estates they had information about godowns where planters stored their agriculture produces. With that information they planned and took away the goods.

### **Pepper recovered**

The police have recovered the 29 bags of pepper and also 16 bags of coffee beans they had stolen from another farm at Arisinaguppe in Chikkamagaluru taluk, besides two luggage-carrying vehicles and two two-wheelers used in the crime.

## **Rs. 2-crore project for pepper cultivation**

The Agriculture Department is preparing to launch a Rs. 2-crore project aimed at rejuvenation of pepper gardens by expanding the area of cultivation

Under the project, 22 lakh rooted pepper cuttings would be planted in 1,000 hectares of land in the traditionally pepper cultivating areas in the district, K. Mohan, Principal Agriculture

Officer, told *The Hindu* .

He said the planting materials would be made available through the decentralised pepper nurseries established under the Wayanad agricultural package, nurseries set up with the financial assistance of the State Horticulture Mission, and the pepper nursery of the Regional Agriculture Research Station (RARS), Ambalavayal.

Earlier, the Agriculture Production Commissioner had sanctioned a project costing Rs.2.2 crore to RARS to attain self-sufficiency in the production of pepper saplings during the current fiscal. The estimated cost for cultivating 1 hectare of pepper garden is Rs.40,000 and 50 per cent of the cost would be provided as subsidy to the farmers, Mr. Mohan said .

The assistance admissible would be credited to the bank account of beneficiary farmers. Farmers who want to avail themselves of assistance under the scheme can contact their respective Krishibhavans, Mr. Mohan said

***Under the project, 22 lakh rooted pepper cuttings will be planted in 1,000 hectares of land in traditionally pepper cultivating areas.***



## **Agriculture Price Commission to submit report by August**

Karnataka Agriculture Price Commission Chairman T.N. Prakash Kammardi has said that the commission will submit its report to the State government in August. He visited the house of Shivalinge Gowda, the debt-ridden farmer, who committed suicide recently, at Honnanayakana Halli in the taluk on Thursday. He consoled the family members and suggested to the farming community to look at crops other than sugarcane. The area of sugarcane cultivation has been increased by many folds in recent years causing crisis, he said.

The commission has studied various factors pertaining to cultivation of 17 major crops in the State. The proposed report, which would be finalised after a meeting of officials and experts on July 14, would suggest steps not only to prevent suicide by farmers but also for the development of the farming sector.

Rajasulochana, Joint Director of Agriculture; K. Rudresh, Deputy Director of Horticulture, Mandya APMC Deputy Director Kodi Gowda and others were present.

## **Phablet for Telangana farmers soon: KTR**

The Telangana government, as part of the Digital Week programme line up, will launch a phablet for farmers to help them stay updated on information that they can use. Involving premier agricultural research institute, ICRISAT, and the Departments of IT and Agriculture, the initiative is to provide easy, timely access to farmers on issues pertaining to their area.

Announcing this here on Thursday, at a curtain-raiser event on India Gadget Expo 2015, IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao said, “Technology can be a great leveller... opportunities that modern technology provides should also be accessible to the farming community.”

Mr. Rao, who is also Panchayati Raj Minister, said the device is robust and water-proof. The idea is to popularise it initially through Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies. Noting that the cost of the device may be a constraint, he said efforts were under way to make it affordable and in future, the State government may think of supplying it to farmers directly.

The Digital Telangana campaign from Friday will showcase various initiatives stemming from efforts to “bring about convergence of various line departments”.

“We are working with the Endowments Department to start online services, reservations and bookings, for a couple of famous temples [Bhadrachalam and Yadadri],” the Minister said. Other launches planned during the week include biometric attendance in Warangal and wi-fi at the State universities.

“Starting tomorrow, in fact, we are launching our own Digital Telangana campaign,” Mr. Rao added.

The priorities of the Centre and the State government, as far as IT and the Digital India campaign are concerned, are in perfect alignment, Mr. Rao said, adding that

there were plans to launch a few more Mee-Seeva services on mobile phones. Cyber security is another focus area and an MoU with a prestigious institute in Hyderabad will be signed soon for more cyber warriors. The State government, he said, proposed to lay optic fibre cable network along its water grid project.

### Eco steward to get starry promotion

The Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department has roped in actor Mammooty as the brand ambassador of its ‘eco steward’ programme through which an army of eco-sensitive persons will mould the lifestyle of people in tune with nature.


The programme, which is implemented with the active participation of various government departments, including Agriculture, Education and Environment, aims at creating awareness among public by drawing inspiration from the sustainable lifestyles of eco stewards.

At a function held in the city on Thursday, Minister for Health V.S. Sivakumar declared Mr. Mammooty as the ambassador of the programme. Chief Minister Oommen Chandy was present.

Mr. Chandy urged the people to take up environmental protection as an agenda, saying that environmental degradation would lead to catastrophe. “The damage to environment has been done. Of late, there is a growing awareness of environmental degradation. All concerned should use the opportunity to further create awareness of the need to protect environment,” he said.

### Big push for vegetable cultivation

*Cultivation to be taken up in 400 hectares of fallow land*

<b>STEPS TO BOOST FARMING</b>	
	<b>Initiative of Agriculture dept.</b>
	▪ <b>Vegetable cultivation</b> in 400 ha of fallow land in 2015-16
	▪ <b>Production</b> of 5,200 tonnes likely this year
	▪ <b>Implementation</b> through panchayat, Krishi Bhavan
	▪ <b>Rs.120 lakh</b> made available for the project
<b>1,805.802 ha</b> of fallow used for paddy cultivation during 2014-15	➔ <b>1,227.32 tonnes</b> of rubber procured till December
<b>Mission 676</b>	➔ Procurement will go on till price reaches <b>Rs.171 a kg</b>
▪ 76 of 348 projects taken up completed	

Vegetable cultivation will be taken up in 400 hectares of fallow land in 2015-16 on the initiative of the Agriculture Department.

Replying to a question in the Assembly on Thursday, Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan said the department was hoping to produce 5,200 tonnes of vegetables from 400 hectares this year. It would be executed through panchayats and krishi bhavans.

### **Subsidy**

Mr. Mohanan said a subsidy of Rs.5,000 a hectare would be given to the landowner and Rs.25,000 to those engaged in vegetable cultivation.

The government had made available Rs.120 lakh for the project.

Kudumbashree, Janashree, self-help groups, youth clubs, farmers, and others would be roped in for the initiative.

Seeds and saplings would be made available to those coming forward for vegetable cultivation through krishi bhavan depots, Kerala Agricultural University, and the VFPCK.

The Minister said paddy cultivation was taken up on 1,805.802 hectares of fallow land during 2014-15 in the State.

The Minister informed the House that 1,227.32 tonnes of rubber was procured till December last through Rubbermark and Marketfed.

The procurement would go on till the price of rubber touched Rs.171 a kg.

The Minister said Rs.16 crore was given by the Agriculture Department for procuring rubber.

### **Mission projects**

Only 76 of the 348 projects taken up under Mission 676 had been completed, Minister for Rural Development and Planning K.C. Joseph said.

He said Rs.7,686.32 crore was allocated for centrally sponsored projects during the 2015-16 annual Plan in the State, of which Rs.104.08 crore had been utilised. In 2014-15, Mr. Joseph said, Rs.2,733.53 crore was allocated for the Centrally sponsored projects.

## **More labs to keep tabs on food quality**

The government has taken steps to make available services of 12 accredited laboratories under various departments and universities for the Food Safety Department, considering the difficulties in conducting food safety and quality standard tests in a timely manner.

The services of 12 identified laboratories will be available for the department apart from its own labs in Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, and Kozhikode.

### **NABL accreditation**

As per the Food Safety and Standards Act, NABL-accredited labs or labs notified by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) should be used for analysing food samples.

The labs thus identified are the ones under the Animal Husbandry Department at Maradu, the labs under the Kerala Veterinary University at Pookkode and Mannuthy, the lab under the Fisheries University and Panangad, the milk testing labs of the Dairy Development Department at Pattom and Alathur, the Council for Food Research and Development (CFRD) lab at Konni, and the Pesticide Residues Testing lab at the Kerala Agricultural University. Statutory analysis of food samples may also be done at any other lab specified by the Food Safety Commissioner as well as the labs notified by the FSSAI from time to time.

The service of the new laboratories would mean that quality testing of cooked or raw food products, edible oils, curry powders, fish, meat, fruits and vegetables as well as microbiological examination of samples of cooked food could be done in a timely manner, Health Minister V.S. Sivakumar said.

### **Operation Ruchi**

He was addressing a meeting of food safety officials across the State, as part of strengthening Operation Ruchi, here on Thursday.

### **A count to cheer about for ornithologists**



Birders have identified over 10,000 nests in heronries across the State.

A comprehensive survey on heronries has identified 10,380 nests of waterbirds from 157 sites across the State.

Birders recorded 44 heronries and 2,586 nests from Palakkad, the highest in the State. Malappuram had 25 heronries and 1,826 nests followed by Kannur (24 heronries and 1,302 nests), the report said.

Heronries are the communal nesting places of large waterbirds. Mixed species heronries could be seen as different species breed at the same place. Kerala has about 15 species of resident and breeding waterbirds nesting in various heronries.

Painted Stork, one of the three rarest breeding waterbirds of Kerala, was found nesting only at Kumarakom heronry. The other two species, Grey Heron was found nesting at Koduvally near Thalassery and Eastern Cattle Egret breeds at Panamaram in Wayanad. The heronries at Kumarakom, which has 12 species of

birds breeding, and the one at Panamaram with 10 species were the two prominent ones in the State.

Though Woolly-necked Stork is known to breed in Kerala, it does not breed in the colonial heronries here, the survey report prepared by a team led by noted ornithologist C. Sashikumar for the State Forest Department pointed out.

Ornithologists say that protection of heronries is important for the conservation and management of the bird species. These birds are integral part of the agricultural ecosystem and have a role in pest control and enhancing nutrients.

Most of the heronries were found located on government land and on roadside trees. Many trees located at busy market places, bus stands, railway station compounds and places where people congregate were used by the birds.

In Kochi, heronries could not be identified during the survey.

The heronries in Kerala become active since May, prior to the onset on southwest monsoon and breeding will continue till October. The two months from July is considered as the peak breeding season, the report pointed out.

### **Conflicts**

Heronries often find themselves in conflict with local population due to the annoyance caused by the cacophony of nesting birds and the food-begging nestlings. The nuisance caused by bird droppings and fallen food items often provoke action against the nesting birds. People often drive birds away. There have also been instances of killing of birds for meat. Cutting of roadside trees too is a matter of concern, according to ornithologists.

Ornithologists have come up with heronry guards, a metal structure which could be fixed on the trees to collect droppings. Planting of trees at near wetlands and paddy fields with the cooperation of farmers have been mooted. These sites would also serve as tourist attraction with assured sighting of a few species, said an ornithologist.

### **Campaign to boost farmers' confidence and cut down suicides**

The president of State Sugarcane Growers Association, Kurubur Shanthakumar, has said that a State-wide 'Raitha Jagruti Abhiyan' has been organised to boost the confidence of the State's farmers to prevent distressed farmers from committing suicide.

Addressing presspersons here on Thursday, he said the increasing number of farmer suicides was a dangerous trend in the community. He said the padayatra had been organised under the slogan "Move farmers towards villages". He said that the government was responsible for the suicides of farmers in the country. The padayatra will be start from the Mahatma Gandhi statue at Mysuru on July 6 and will reach Ganada Hosur in Pandavapura taluk where a farmer committed suicide. He said a 'jagruti sabha' will be conducted in all the villages en route during the padayatra.

Mr. Shanthakumar said the suicide was a not a solution to problems. He called upon the farmers to unite and fight against the injustice meted out to the community. He also called upon progressive thinkers and socially concerned persons to participate in the padayatra. He said heads of Mutts, writers, intellectuals and film actors should support the padayatra to boost the morale of the farmers.

The government should organise more confidence boost programmes at village level in association with the government officials, he said, and urged the government to give a compensation of Rs. 10 lakh to the families of suicide victims.

He said the Union government must implement the Dr. M.S. Swaminathan Committee report to solve the problems of the agriculture sector.

### **Indian-American named World Agriculture Prize laureate**

*R. Paul Singh is known for a body of research in areas such as energy conservation, freezing preservation, post-harvest technology and mass transfer in food processing.*

Indian-American professor R. Paul Singh has been named as the 2015 Global Confederation for Higher Education Associations for Agriculture and Life Sciences World Agriculture Prize laureate.

The award was announced at the annual GCHERA conference, held last week at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Jounieh, Lebanon. The award will be formally presented on September 20, during a ceremony at Nanjing Agricultural University, Jiangsu Province, China.

“I’m deeply humbled and honoured upon receiving news of this award,” said Singh, a distinguished professor emeritus who has held dual appointments in the departments of Biological and Agricultural Engineering and of Food Science and Technology at the University of California, Davis.

Singh earned a bachelor’s degree in agricultural engineering at India’s Punjab Agricultural University, then a master’s degree and Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Michigan State University, respectively.

He joined the UC Davis faculty one year later in 1975.

“For over four decades, Professor Singh’s work as a pioneer in food engineering has been improving lives the world over,” said UC Davis Chancellor Linda P B Katehi.

“This prestigious, and well-deserved, honour is a testament to the importance of his research, and UC Davis is tremendously honoured to call him a member of our faculty,” he said in a media release.

Singh is known for a body of research in areas such as energy conservation, freezing preservation, post-harvest technology and mass transfer in food processing.

His research on airflow in complex systems helped design innovative systems for the rapid cooling of strawberries, and his studies on food freezing led to the development of computer software that is used to improve the energy efficiency of industrial freezers.

Under a NASA contract, his research group created food-processing equipment for a manned mission to Mars, the university said.

He has helped establish and evaluate food-engineering programs at institutions throughout the world, including in Brazil, India, Peru, Portugal and Thailand.

### **Organic workshop**



Iyal, an organic shop, organises a millet cooking workshop at Iyal, Puliyakulam Road (behind Hotel Anandas) on July 3 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The workshop will be conducted by Rajamurugan of Nallasoaru.

Iyal brings fresh stock every day from the farm and certified suppliers.

Iyal was founded with the aim to reduce the gap between the farmer and consumer.

The registration fee is Rs. 600 per person.

For details, call 98947-50220.

## **Call for Jackfruit Development Board**

One of the resolutions taken at the eighth jackfruit fair, held recently at at Kumta by Kadanba Marketing Souhard Sahakari Niyamita, was that the government should be urged to set up a Jackfruit Development Board on the lines of the Cashewnut Development Board, according to a release on Thursday.

Resolutions also include a proposal to the Horticulture Department to distribute varieties of jackfruit to interested farmers for cultivation and among others.

— Correspondent

## **Campaign launched for making food poison-free**

Expressing concern over the poisoning of food items due to adulteration and excessive use of fertilizers, Dharwad-based Green Army has launched a campaign seeking to create awareness on the issue.

In an interaction carried out as part of the campaign at the Power Grid Corporation complex at Narendra on the outskirts of Dharwad, Green Army volunteers gave information on how to keep food grains, vegetables and food items 'healthy'.

The volunteers threw light on various facets of the issue through demonstration and statistics.

Expressing concern over the degrading quality of food, president of Green Army Prakash Goudar said that almost all food items were slowly turning into poison and creating health problems for the consumers.

While developing good eating habits was one aspect, the other was encouraging farmers to go for organic farming. As there was not much domestic demand for organic food, the farmers were using chemicals for cultivation, which in turn was resulting in these crops losing their nutritional value, he said.

He said that organic farming would help in retaining the fertility of the soil and would consequently lead to nutritional security to the citizens, he said.

Officials of the Power Grid Corporation and others were present.

## **KVASU sets a model in e-governance**

While the Central government is promoting Digital India, the Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU) has set a model in e-governance for educational institutions in the country.

“With technical assistance from KELTRON, the KVASU has implemented Integrated University Management system which has 24 modules covering various day-to-day activities of the university such as admission, academics, student attendance management, examination, result, student fee management, financial accounting, student portal, human resource management, payroll, tax management, file movement and farm management. Now the varsity is fully equipped to utilise the different modules as part of e-governance,” Vice Chancellor B. Ashok told *The Hindu*.



“The university has implemented a videoconferencing system and virtual classrooms across its campuses for shared classroom facilities and distance learning,” Dr. Ashok said.

The university would launch a round-the-clock veterinary service, christened e-vet connect, in a month to provide advisory and emergency services to livestock farmers and entrepreneurs across the State. “Now we are in the processes of developing separate android applications to launch smart phone-based courses for knowledge dissemination in the emerging areas of organic farm production and dog rearing,” Dr. Ashok said.

A student entrepreneurship portal, to be launched within two months, would work as a platform for employers and students and would facilitate campus recruitment. Moreover, it would act as a job portal for graduates and diploma holders of the university. The university was also planning to launch virtual campus recruitment through e-portals, he added.

***The varsity will launch a veterinary service, christened e-vet connect, in a month.***

## **Black tiger shrimp to become the new vannamei**

*Native breed to step up national seafood business*



Tiger shrimps displayed for sale at Fort Kochi.— Photo: K.K. Mustafah  
: Indian seafood business is on the verge of a major transformation, like the one ushered in by the exotic vannamei shrimp, with scientists at Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Aquaculture, Chennai, closing in on a stock of domesticated, disease-free black tiger shrimp, native to Indian waters.

“We are into the sixth generation of SPF tiger shrimp and trial farming in Odisha and Kerala, using bio-secure enclosures, has produced good results,” said an official of Marine Products Export Development Authority here on Thursday. He said that commercial-scale aquaculture using genetically-improved black tiger shrimp should be on in about five years. With it, black tiger shrimp will join Atlantic salmon, Pacific vannamei and unisex tilapia in the roster of genetically-

improved varieties. SPF stocks are capable of doubling productivity, said the official pointing out what it meant to the seafood export business in the country.

Genetically improved, farmed tilapia yield is near five tonnes per hectare; vannamei yield is 3.5 to five tonnes and black tiger shrimp yield has been three tonnes. Farmers get Rs. 300 a kg of 30-count vannamei and the price of tiger shrimp is higher.

Besides a surge in production, acquiring a genetic base for aquaculture means more eco-friendly, sustainable business, he said.

### **A mission to empower women farmers**

Arguing that farmers are the primary entrepreneurs, an all-woman outreach programme addressing empowerment of farmers to develop food processing skills has been planned at CSIR-CFTRI here on August 19. “Our mission is to support a transformative process addressing improved food security and nutrition security by empowering women farmers with knowledge on food processing,” according to the institute. The programme encompasses demonstrations of various food processing technologies — sugarcane juice preservation, papad making, jam preparation, packaging of various cereals and many more. The travel and local hospitality will be sponsored by CSIR-CFTRI.

Registration is on a first come, first served basis. Women farmers from Mandya and Mysuru can register by calling Renu Agrawal, Rural Development Coordinator, on 9448208142 or writing [torenu@cftri.res.in](mailto:torenu@cftri.res.in)

*Those from Mandya and Mysuru can register in the outreach programme*

### **Food for thought**

*The next best thing to great food is a well-made documentary about it*



Amidlife crisis is a rum old thing. As one stares at the wrong side of 40, the desire to do something new and different takes root. This can take many forms, ranging from sad to noble to hilarious. An acquaintance of mine, upon touching the big 'four oh' promptly bought a 1960 Corvette convertible in glorious Roman Red, polished it to within an inch of her life, parked it in a garage in Edison, New Jersey (that delightful town that I. K. Gujral described as the international capital of India), and every Sunday, raced it over the bridge and tunnel into Manhattan. Another friend sought refuge in Sufism, and a third, in rum.

I'm finding my salvation in food, specifically in documentaries about food. It was an easy segue, since cooking has been a lifelong passion. It began with curiosity about the pipettes, burettes, emulsifiers and foams of molecular gastronomy.

Not having the wherewithal to travel to Spain and sample the delights of the El Bulli restaurant, the cheaper alternative was to watch Gereon Wetzel's mesmerising *El Bulli: Cooking in Progress* (2010), in which we are treated to a detailed look at chef Ferran Adrià's process. No less fascinating is Sally Rowe's *A Matter of Taste: Serving Up Paul Liebrandt* (2011), in which we follow a decade in the life of the British-born New York-based chef as he struggles up the culinary ladder until he hones his craft to the point where he becomes the youngest to receive three stars from the *New York Times*, which for fine diners in the Big Apple carries more value than a Michelin star. David Gelb's *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* (2011), a portrait of the 89-year-old sushi expert Jiro Ono, is justly celebrated the world over. And this year, Gelb served up further delights in the form of the Netflix mini-series *Chef's Table*, in which we sample the worlds of masters Massimo Bottura, Dan Barber, Francis Mallmann, Niki Nakayama, Magnus Nilsson and Ben Shewry.

To confine oneself to just chefs and their ways of cooking would be sheer gluttony, and to that end, I learned the process of how restaurants are built from the ground up in Roger Sherman's *The Restaurateur* (2010), in which we follow Danny Meyer in New York as he races against time to open Eleven Madison Park and Tabla, that, presided over by chef Floyd Cardoz, quickly become the city's Indian dining destination of choice. Food waste has long been a concern of mine and nothing illustrates that criminal squandering of resources in a world where many sleep hungry than Grant Baldwin's *Just Eat It: A Food Waste Story* (2014) that follows a Canadian couple who spend six months eating only food disposed of as trash.

My only complaint about all these documentaries is that the vast majority of food featured is not vegetarian, but I'm of course in a minority here. The only dish I remember with any clarity is Cardoz's watermelon curry.

In the recesses of my middle-aged mind, I have conveniently forgotten the rice-flaked halibut you're supposed to eat it with.

***My only complaint about all these documentaries is that the vast majority of food featured is not vegetarian, but I'm of course in a minority here.***

## **Information on packaged food**

*Public can even get the food TESTED at the Government laboratory in Coimbatore*

Indo Nissin on Monday announced withdrawal of its instant noodles brand Top Ramen from the Indian market on orders from Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

Following this, there is considerable concern among the public to purchase any packaged food products, which are the staple food of bachelors and others living alone.

However, there are a set of simple things people can look out for to ensure they are buying a safe product, says R. Kathiravan, Designated officer of Tamil Nadu Food Safety and Drug Administration Department (Food Safety wing).

Mr. Kathiravan says that people must check at the expiry/best before/date of manufacture in the packs. The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 places the onus on the retailer not to store any product that is past these dates and makes them legally liable for prosecution.

Next and just as important is the product description, which must explain what exactly the product is made of.

As an example, he says, many packaged food products contain food preservatives. Mentioning them in the label will enable the consumer to find out if the product contained any unauthorised preservative.

Further, nutrition value must also be scrutinised. Some 100 gm of chips can contain as high as 160 calories.

People must also read the instructions contained on the food products. For instance, ready-to-eat chapattis and parathas have a shelf-life of four days when stored in room temperature and 15 days if refrigerated. However, most shops display it in the open and yet keep it for 15 days, cautioned Dr. Kathiravan.

For those unconvinced by the labelling, the Government Food Safety laboratory here offered a solution. Coimbatore had one of the six laboratories accredited under FSSA.

“Anyone can bring a sample and have it tested to find out the contents, for a fee, in the Government laboratory,” he adds.

*(Reporting by R. Sairam)*

## What's your way of eating?

*Being smart and mindful about the food you eat will help realise your long-term health goals*

Nutrition is a tricky subject, mainly because there is no one way to do it right. There are many ways we eat, but most of us will fall under one of these five. Which one do you fall under and which one would you like to fall under?

### **1 Cultural eating**

You eat what you eat. It's that simple. You ate foods that were specific to where you were born and/or brought up. You were born into a family that ate a certain way and so you ate that way too, and today, that's the only way of eating that feels normal to you. That's all you were taught, that's all you know and that's all that was ever needed.

### **2 Mindless eating**

Westernisation happened and you let it come into your house and onto your plate. These new foods came in boxes, could be cooked in very little time and little more than salt was needed to make it tasty. They could also be stored easily and for a long time. You initially ate these foods as a treat – the rare ice cream, black forest cake or milkshake. With time, these western foods wore Indian hats and you embraced these foods as your own. Now these foods are an integral part of your regular diet. Boxed cereals are now breakfast, a cool drink or a chocolate bar is mandatory at lunch and extra-sweet health drinks act as finishers for dinners. This way of eating is tasty and convenient but mindless and hence unhealthy.

### **3 Dieting**

You probably overdid the first two types of nutrition, and now you're either overweight or your unflattering blood work made your doctor ask you to eat better. So you try to swing the pendulum the other way. You try to clean up everything. Nutrition, training, sleep, stress and everything in between. You deprive yourself of food, are always hungry and frustrated, and hence tend to give up. If you haven't already, you'll soon realise that this doesn't work. All the yo-yoing only leaves you frustrated and exhausted from the highs of gluttony and lows of dieting.

### **4 Cruising**

By this point, you are a little stuck. Thanks to the unsuccessful dieting phase, you have knowledge that's making you feel guilty about eating mindlessly. So you use the knowledge you have and the information you can get from mainstream media to make healthy choices. You choose lassi over gulab jamun, order fruit juice instead of ice cream and do some form of exercise that doesn't involve dietary changes. You may soon realise that you are missing details, and in spite of making the right food choices and exercising regularly, you continue to gain weight as fat.

## 5 Smart eating

This is something that folks who've been through the previous four phases tend to do. This is when you realise that nutrition is not about culture or religious beliefs or fads or fat loss but about health, and it is a part of a much larger equation. You understand that nutrition is about finding the most optimal way to eat, given the unchangeable circumstances. If you live in a city like Chennai, you'd eat a predominantly vegetarian diet with some eggs, meat or cheese in it, you'd keep packaged goods away from being staples, you'd eat tropical and seasonal produce and you'd take advantage of the fact that we have sunlight available all days of the year. If you lived in Toronto or Thirunelveli, you'd modify accordingly. You'd also provide yourself enough buffer to enjoy the occasional treat, which may be cultural, religious and foreign in nature.

Realise that long-term health results from the “way of eating” you choose and not from the sporadic diets you do for a few months here and there. While there is no one way of eating that will work for everyone, irrespective of how you like to eat, being smart and mindful will go a long way.

*Long-term health results from the “way of eating” you choose and not from the sporadic diets you do for a few months*



### **Agriculture reform: Government takes first step for a national farm market**

Currently, the Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) Acts in different states permit the first sale of crops — after harvesting by farmers — to take place only in regulated market yards or mandis.



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In what could potentially transform marketing of crops in India, the government has approved the creation of a common electronic platform which will allow farmers and traders to sell their produce to buyers anywhere in the country.

Currently, the Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) Acts in different states permit the first sale of crops — after harvesting by farmers — to take place only in regulated market yards or mandis.

The farmer's universe of buyers is restricted only to traders or commission agents licensed to operate in the area under a particular APMC. In most cases, multiple licences are required to trade in different mandis within the same state.

What is now being envisaged, based on the proposal cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Wednesday, is a National Agriculture Market (NAM) online trading portal where farmers can offer their produce to buyers in any part of the country.

“This virtual marketplace will allow a farmer from, say, Narsinghpur in Madhya Pradesh to sell his chana to a dal miller in Delhi who may be willing to pay a higher price. The miller, too, benefits by virtue of not having to be physically present in Narsinghpur or being forced to depend on traders in that APMC area,” Pravesh Sharma, Managing Director, Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), told [The Indian Express](#).

SFAC has been designated the lead agency for developing the NAM e-platform. “While buyers can log into the platform from homes or offices anywhere in India, the transactions will, however, be recorded as having been conducted through the mandi where the seller would normally bring his produce. The APMC concerned will, therefore, continue to earn the mandi fee on the transaction even if it does not happen in that particular market yard,” Sharma said.

The APMC-regulated mandis will, in fact, gain through the significant increase in turnover volumes likely from more buyers bidding for produce. “The NAM e-platform basically gives farmers the choice to accept the bids of local traders or price offers by online buyers. In either case, the APMC is not deprived of revenues through mandi fees. The portal will provide an integrated platform for transferring the money to the accounts of farmers and the APMC after ensuring delivery of the produce to the buyer,” Sharma said.

The Centre has earmarked Rs 200 crore for creation of the NAM portal that targets to cover 585 mandis across India: 250 in the current fiscal, 200 in 2016-17 and 135 in 2017-18.

The idea of integrating the existing APMC markets through a common e-platform has come from [Congress](#)-ruled Karnataka. The state government has established Rashtriya e - Market Services Private Limited, a 50:50 joint venture with NCDEX Spot Exchange, to offer an automated auction platform for connecting all the

mandis in Karnataka. Already, 55 of the 155 main market yards have been integrated into a single licensing system through this platform. Mega irrigation plan cleared Moving to improve farm productivity and reduce dependence on the monsoon, the government has approved spending of Rs 50,000 crore over the five years to expand irrigation in rural areas. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said: “The major objective of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana is to achieve convergence of investments in irrigation at the field level... expand cultivable area under assured irrigation.”

### **Punjab farmers turn to WhatsApp group for farming solutions**

From crop health to seed procurement, soil health, use of fertilisers and pesticides — farmers in Punjab can now get immediate advice via a WhatsApp group which includes agricultural experts.



There is also an effort to create interest in the field of farming with farmers sharing good agricultural practices.

From crop health to seed procurement, soil health, use of fertilisers and pesticides — farmers in Punjab can now get immediate advice via a WhatsApp group which includes agricultural experts.

The group, ‘Young Innovative Farmers’, was set up by Gurdaspur Agriculture Development Officer Dr Amrik Singh on August 15 last year. “I started it with a few farmers, but it has now increased to 100 members, including 90 farmers and 10 experts. Moreover, the farmers in the group have set up their own groups with local farmers to disseminate the information,” said Singh.

“Besides farmers from across Punjab, there are even farmers from Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. State Principal Secretary K S Pannu and Gurdaspur Deputy Commissioner Dr Abhinav Trikha are also part of the group,” said Singh.



“We have a shortage of staff in our department. If we visit a few villages daily, we can only meet a few dozen farmers. But on WhatsApp we can interact with several farmers daily,” he said.

Some farmers upload photographs of their disease-hit crops to seek advice. “Whatever problem comes to us, we try to find a solution with the help of experts. Sometimes, we even visit the fields if it is a serious problem,” he added.

Besides removing misconceptions about farming practices, information is also provided on new techniques of cultivation of different crops. Crucial information on seed treatment of wheat and paddy, soil test-based fertilisers is made available.

There is also an effort to create interest in the field of farming with farmers sharing good agricultural practices.

Jagroop Singh, who returned to his village in Gurdaspur after spending seven years in Australia, said he started farming after joining the group last November. He said that Dr Amrik Singh’s four research papers, published in various journals, have also been made available to the group.

“It has changed my views on farming. I now use limited fertilisers and pesticides,” said Nirmal Singh Brar, a farmer.

Another farmer, Sarwan Singh, said he has been using the easily available information to improve his yield.

Barkat Ali, a farmer from Bikaner, said he obtained details of soil testing and its benefits from this group.

### **Seed of an idea, but it can’t replace monsoon**

Amid growing fears of another drought year, Maharashtra has revived talk of cloud seeding. Indian Express explains the process, what it might achieve.



Over 63 per cent of Maharashtra had witnessed below average rain in 2014. (Express Photo)

### **What is cloud seeding?**

It is a process of intervening chemically to induce precipitation — rain or snow — from clouds. Rain happens when moisture in the air reaches levels at which it can no longer be held, and cloud seeding aims to facilitate and accelerate that process by making available chemical ‘nuclei’ around which condensation can take place. These ‘seeds’ of rain can be the iodides of silver or potassium, dry ice (solid carbon dioxide), or liquid propane. Research has shown promising results from the use of salts, including table salt, as well.

### **How are clouds seeded?**

Cloud-seeding chemicals can be dispersed in clouds either by fly-through aircraft or by ground-based dispersion devices that use rockets or guns to fire canisters into the sky. Seeding has been shown to work better on days that are cloudy but rainless, and with clouds that already have some moisture. In case of seeding by aircraft, the pilot fires sodium chloride flares to the base of the cloud, and silver iodide flares to the top. The chemical particles are the embryos for the formation of larger drops, which ultimately fall as rain. When fired by rockets, chemical ‘seeds’ are propelled by air currents.

### **How much rain, and over what area, can seeding produce?**

That depends on several factors, including the dimensions and moisture content of the cloud, and prevailing atmospheric conditions. It is difficult to assess the amount of rain produced by seeding unless a dense network of automatic rain gauges is employed. Rain is generally seen to start approximately 30-40 minutes after seeding, and continue for an hour or two. Since seeding is carried out in individual cloud cells, the availability of suitable clouds is key to how much area the artificial rain can cover.

### **Can cloud seeding substitute for a bad monsoon?**

In terms of the area it covers, the precipitation it brings, and the length of the time it lasts, there is no substitute for the Indian monsoon. But cloud seeding can produce good rain over smaller areas, and can supplement the natural phenomenon. Since timely rain, rather than a lot of it, is what is often more important for crops, seeding can help. It is now a fairly advanced science — even though more research is needed for a deeper understanding of cloud formations, so that more significant meteorological interventions can be made. Different types of clouds may exist over a region, and the same type of seeding may not be effective for all; sometimes seeding is effective only over certain areas.

### **What does cloud seeding cost?**

It involves use of infrastructure such as aircraft, radar, balloons and measuring and communications equipment, and is not cheap. Some years ago, the union Ministry of Earth Sciences allocated about Rs 14 crore to study the possibility of cloud seeding on a large scale in the country. The report submitted by the nodal agency, Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, was largely positive. A plan to procure an aircraft for cloud physics studies is under consideration. Where has seeding been successful? While it is practised around the world, doubts remain

over the ability of seeding to modify international weather, with studies in the US and Israel casting doubts over the efficacy of the process. Even so, rainmaking experiments have shown increasingly better results since being first attempted in the 1940s. The biggest faith in cloud seeding has been shown by China, which believes it can make it rain on arid regions by firing silver iodide rockets. It also claimed to have used cloud seeding to clear the air during the Beijing Olympics. Thailand, Indonesia, the UAE, several countries in Europe, Australia and the US have all experimented with cloud seeding. In India, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have attempted to seed clouds since the 1980s. Some positive impact notwithstanding, results have generally been patchy. What does Maharashtra intend to do? The state has seen three straight years of drought, and Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Eknath Khadse said at the beginning of June that cloud seeding would be taken up, especially in Vidarbha and Marathwada, if the India Meteorological Department's forecast of a poor monsoon appeared to be coming true. This week, with the unusual rain in June drying out, Ram Shinde, Minister of State for Agriculture, said a few companies had offered to seed clouds for free to test the situation. In an editorial in Saamna on Thursday, however, the Shiv Sena, a partner in the Maharashtra government, called for trying out other options too. "There is no reason to complain against the cloud seeding project, but the question is how much rainfall will this project actually generate?" the Sena said. So, what is the status of the experiment? Shinde, who spoke in Pune, said the government had finalised Aurangabad as the base for carrying out cloud seeding, which would be conducted in a 250 km radius. A final decision would be taken in the next 15 days, he said. The Maharashtra Cabinet has in principle approved Rs 10 crore for cloud seeding. Seeding was last planned in the state in 2004, with Baramati as its base. The Baramati centre was expected to cover the districts of Pune, Satara, Sangli, Osmanabad, Beed, Nasik, Ahmednagar and Aurangabad. HOW CLOUD SEEDING WORKS: \* Particles of dust or salt that have the ability to absorb moisture from the air rise as 'haze' into clouds. \* These hygroscopic particles form 'nuclei' around which moisture builds, but no rain can occur unless they reach a certain size. \* An aircraft (or rocket from the ground) can fire flares of chemicals that act as aerosols — additional nuclei in the cloud. \* As the particles of moisture grow larger, it may rain. How much it rains depends on the kind of cloud, among other things .

### **Be calm, take control: Seven easy tips to beat the stress**

Psychologist Nisha Khanna gives tips to keep our stress levels in check.

A lot of people today are in stress and suffering from stress-related disorders like heart disease, obesity, diabetes, depression etc.

What a calm mind can achieve, a stressed mind cannot even attempt. Yet, a lot of people today are in stress and suffering from stress-related disorders like heart

disease, obesity, diabetes, depression etc. According to health surveys, stress is increasingly becoming a lifestyle risk factor and India is one of the most stressed countries in the world. So what do we do? Is it possible to get rid of stress? Psychologist Nisha Khanna gives tips to keep our stress levels in check.

**1. Physical Workout:** Physical activity helps in increasing the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins. Simple physical activities like jumping, cycling, skipping, swimming, badminton, jogging, yoga, etc can go a long way in stress management. "Walking on treadmill at the speed of 8.5 for 10-15 minutes can prove beneficial," advises Dr. Nisha Khanna.

**2. Travelling:** Take out time and plan an outstation trip or go out for a holiday with your friends or family. This will re-energize your body and help relieve stress. "Traveling changes your state of mind, and help in releasing stress" says Dr. Khanna.

Take out time and plan an outstation trip or go out for a holiday with your friends or family.

**3. Recreation:** In order to release stress, it's essential to relax your mind. This can be done by watching entertaining serials, happy movies or comedy shows. People interested in art or music should paint or play instruments to de-stress themselves. "We should watch comedy shows and light serials after coming back home post a tiring day," says the psychologist.

**4. Eating Habits:** Keep munching healthy snacks like almonds, pistachios, walnuts, pretzels etc. It helps in boosting the immune system and also lowers blood pressure levels to make the body relaxed and stress free. "One should have a heavy and healthy breakfast between 9-10 am and lunch after 2 pm," says Dr Khanna.



Keep munching healthy snacks

**5. Sharing and listening:** Getting into the habit of sharing your thoughts with someone and listening to others can help in de-stressing. “Some people are in the habit of listening but they don’t share their opinions whereas some people only speak and don’t listen to others. There should be a balance between sharing and listening.” says the expert.

**6. Sound sleep and smile:** 6 hours of sleep is a necessity. It is essential to plan your day and work accordingly. A good sleep taps your energy for the rest of the day. Take out a few minutes for laughter therapy. Smiling curbs the stress hormones and controls the blood pressure level in the body. ”It’s essential for us to plan our day in a way that we can take time for minimum 6 hours of sleep,” feels Dr Khanna.

Take out a few minutes for a laughter therapy.

**7. Have a relaxation mantra:** Positive statements like “I am strong enough to handle this”, “I feel relaxed, I can maintain my cool” can work as a tool of de-stressing yourself in a complex situation. “Having a mantra helps in self motivation and having a positive attitude.”



### **Last week of June saw 14% dip in rainfall**

NEW DELHI: Rainfall dipped sharply to 14% below normal for the week ending Wednesday as monsoon weakened in large parts of the country after two weeks of bountiful showers. Met officials said rain activity could remain subdued for up to two weeks.

Overall, monsoon remained 10% above normal for the season but the surplus was diminishing by the day, with rain activity falling dramatically in the core monsoon regions.

Rainfall data for June 25-July 1 released by IMD on Thursday showed central India (except Gujarat) and the northeast were largely dry during the week while the north received good rains.

This was the worst monsoon week this season and it came, ironically, after the wettest week (June 18-24), when a 44% rain surplus was recorded.

"There's no activity in either Bay of Bengal or Arabian Sea which could bring substantial rain into the mainland," said India Meteorological Department director B P Yadav.

Yadav said larger weather systems were not favourable for the monsoon. Storms were building up in the Pacific, with a likelihood of typhoons developing in the next few days. "This is taking energy away from the southwest monsoon and changing the flow patterns," he added.

A rise in the number of typhoons is one of the effects associated with the current warming phase of the tropical Pacific called an El Nino. Experts also said that the Madden Julian Oscillation, a travelling pulse of wet weather that had energized the monsoon for two weeks, had moved into an adverse phase.

However, some wet weather was headed for north India from Monday. Till then, hot and humid weather in Delhi and much of northwest India is likely to continue.

"A change in the pattern can be expected by Monday. The main impact will be in the northern hill states. We are expecting very heavy rain in J&K. Rains will also pick up, although not substantially, in the northern plains and central India. This likely to last till July 9," Yadav said.

## 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.

Read more Personal Health, Diet & Fitness stories on [www.healthmeup.com](http://www.healthmeup.com)

### Innovative low calorie Papad Baskets



*Papads add that 'X' factor to the food. But, why serve them in a plain traditional way? Here is an amazing innovative idea from Nita Mehta!*

### Ingredients

- 3 small urad papad (roasting ones) mix together
- ¼ cup black gram (kala chana) sprouts
- ¼ cup green moong beans (hari moong dal) sprouts
- ¼ cup boiled/frozen corn - washed well
- ¼ cup fresh pomegranate (annar)
- 4 tbsp chopped coriander (hara dhania)



2 tbsp curd (dahi)  
1 tsp tomato ketchup  
¼ tsp chaat masala  
¼ tsp salt

### **Directions**

1. Place one papad at a time between 2 paper napkins and keep on the turn table. Microwave for 30 seconds.
2. remove immediately from microwave and gently turn the sides the hot papad to give a basket (tokri) shape. Keep aside.
3. If the papad seems a little undone on the bottom, keep the papad basket upside down on the paper napkin and microwave for 30 seconds.
4. Mix moong dal sprout, kala chana sprout, corn and ¼ cup water in a microproof bowl. Microwave for 2 minutes. remove. Strain to remove water.
5. Add curd, tomato ketchup, chaat masala, salt and pomegranate (anaar). Mix.
6. Fill each papad bowl with some filling and garnish with chopped coriander and serve.

### **5 'Ramadan Special' recipes NOT to be missed!**



*It is celebration time and one of the most awaited by the food lovers.*

Ramadan means buzzing food streets, glittering lights and loads of fun. Here are few recipes that you should not miss cooking this Ramadan!

### **Gulab Doodh Recipe**

#### **Ingredients:**

1/2 cup rose syrup  
1/4 cup sabza seeds (tulsi seeds), soaked in water for 3 hours  
3 cups milk  
3/4 cup sugar  
1/4 cup cream

#### **Method:**

1. Mix rose syrup, milk, drained sabza seeds and sugar.
2. Mix till sugar melts.
3. Chill.
4. Serve in glasses topped with a serving of cream.

### **Pasanda Gosht Shahi Recipe**

#### **Ingredients:**

1 kg mutton, cubed and beaten to flat pieces  
2 tbsp cashews, ground  
1 cup cream  
1 tsp turmeric powder  
1 tsp sugar  
1/2 cup coriander leaves, chopped  
3 tbsp ginger-garlic paste  
1/2 tsp pepper powder  
1 cup curd  
2 tbsp chilli powder  
2 tsp garam masala powder  
1/2 cup oil  
salt to taste

**Method:**

1. Mix meat with curd, cashew paste, ginger-garlic paste, chilli, turmeric and garam masala powders and salt. Reserve for one hour.
2. Heat sugar in a pressure pan till it caramelises.
3. Add oil.
4. When it is hot, fry the marinated meat in it till browned.
5. Add 2 cups hot water and cook till done.
6. Add cream and coriander leaves.
7. Mix well.

**Seviyan Recipe****Ingredients:**

- 2 cups vermicelli
- 1/2 cup khoya (burnt milk)
- 1 tsp cardamom-nutmeg powder
- 1/4 cup raisins, soaked in water
- 5 cups milk
- 1/4 cup almond powder
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 tbsp ghee

**Method:**

1. Heat ghee in a pan.
2. Add vermicelli and stir-fry till golden.
3. Add drained raisins. Reserve.
4. Heat milk and dissolve khoya in it.
5. Add almond powder and blend to a thick creamy liquid.
6. Add sugar and cardamom-nutmeg powder.
7. Mix in the vermicelli and add more milk if needed to achieve required consistency.
8. Serve hot or chilled.

**Nawabi Hyderabad Biryani with Almonds Recipe****Ingredients:**

- 1 1/2 kgs chicken, skinned, cut into serving pieces

1 1/2 cups ghee  
5 cardamoms  
1/2 cup almonds, blanched, halved  
8 sprigs mint, leaves only  
1 tsp mixed cumin seeds and shahjeera  
1/2 tsp saffron  
2 tsp chilli powder  
salt to taste  
3 tbsp ginger-garlic paste  
2 cups curd  
10 peppercorns  
8 cloves  
1 cup coriander leaves, chopped  
3 1/2 cups long grain rice, soaked in water, washed  
1 cup milk  
4 onions sliced  
1 tsp turmeric powder  
1 tsp garam masala powder

**Method:**

1. Marinate chicken in ginger-garlic paste and curds.
2. Add salt to this.
3. Heat 1 cup ghee to hot.
4. Add cloves, cardamoms and peppercorns.
5. Add cumin seeds, shahjeera and almonds.
6. Add chicken, turmeric, chilli, garam masala powders and 1 1/2 cups hot water
7. Cook till chicken is tender.
8. Add coriander and mint leaves. Reserve.
9. Heat 1/4 cup ghee to hot and fry the rice to golden.
10. Add double the quantity of hot water (7 cups) and pressure cook the rice till it is done but not soft.
11. Fry onions in the remaining 1/4 cup ghee.
12. Drain and keep crisp.
13. In a large pan, put a layer of rice. Top with a few fried onions and saffron strands.
14. Add a layer of chicken.
15. Repeat till rice and chicken are over.
16. Sprinkle milk over. Cover tightly and finish cooking in an oven or by placing the pan on a hot griddle till each grain of rice is fluffy.

## Coconut Lobster Curry Recipe

### Ingredients:

Lobsters - 7 to 8, cracked  
Coconut Oil - 3 to 4 tbsp  
Onions - 3 to 4, finely sliced  
Green Chillies - 10, slit lengthwise  
Turmeric Powder - 3 tsp  
Garlic Cloves - 3, sliced  
Curry Leaves - handful  
Coconut Milk - 4 to 5 cups  
Coriander Leaves - handful, for garnishing  
Salt - 2 to 3 tsp or as per taste

### Method:

1. Heat oil in a pan over medium heat.
2. Saute onions, green chillies and garlic.
3. Add half of the curry leaves and cook.
4. When the onions become translucent, add turmeric powder and salt.
5. Add coconut milk and reduce heat to low.
6. After a minute, add the lobsters and cook for 7 to 10 minutes.
7. Allow it to simmer gently over low-medium heat.
8. In a separate pan, fry the remaining curry leaves.
9. Garnish the lobster curry with the curry leaves and coriander leaves.
10. Transfer to a serving bowl.
11. Serve hot with plain cooked rice.

*Recipes Courtesy: [Awesomecuisine.com](http://Awesomecuisine.com)*

# THE HINDU BusinessLine

**Agri boost: schemes for irrigation, reforms in mandi get CCEA nod**



Big thrust Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, flanked by Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh (left) and Power Minister Piyush Goyal, at a press conference in New Delhi, on Thursday Kamal Narang

**New Delhi, July 2:**

The government plans to spend Rs. 50,000 crore in five years (2015-16 to 2019-20) to provide irrigation facility to all farm lands. This will be part of new scheme 'Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana,' approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Wednesday.

Announcing the decisions here on Thursday, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said that spending will start from this year itself. In fact, Rs. 5,300 crore has been provided for the current fiscal. At present, 45 per cent of total farm lands are irrigated. Agriculture Secretary Siraj Hussain said that effort would be to bring in six lakh hectares under irrigation, besides providing drip irrigation facility in 5 lakh hectares during the current fiscal.

The scheme aims to achieve convergence of investments in irrigation at the field level, expand cultivable area under assured irrigation (*Har Khet ko pani*), improve on-farm water use efficiency to reduce wastage of water, enhance the adoption of precision-irrigation and other water saving technologies (more crop per drop), enhance recharge of aquifers and introduce sustainable water conservation practices by exploring the feasibility of reusing treated municipal based water for peri-urban agriculture and attract greater private investment in precision irrigation systems.

As a precursor to establishing a national market for agricultural produce, the CCEA also approved a scheme which will facilitate setting up a common market at the State level.

This will end various mandis in one State and farmers will have flexibility to sell their produce according to their convenience. Jaitley said that the scheme would cover all the 585 mandis in the country.

“There will be one licence for the entire State beside single point levy. Electronic auctions will be used for discovery of prices,” he said while adding that most of the States have agreed on the scheme.

The scheme is Central Sector Scheme for Promotion of National Agricultural Market through Agri-Tech Infrastructure Fund (ATIF). An amount of Rs. 200 crore has been earmarked for the scheme from 2015-16 to 2017-18.

This includes provision for supplying software free of cost by DAC to the States and Union Territories (UTs) and for the cost of related hardware/infrastructure to be subsidised by the government up to Rs. 30 lakh per Mandi (other than for private mandis). The Centre will meet expenses on software and its customisation for the States and provide it free of cost to the States and UTs.

It will also give grant as one time fixed cost subject to the ceiling of Rs. 30 lakh per mandi for related equipment or infrastructure in the 585 regulated mandis, for installation of the e-market platform.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated July 3, 2015)

### **Seafood exports cross 1m tonnes in FY15**

Up by nearly 7 per cent, earnings at\$5.5 billion



Alexander Rathshutterstock

**Kochi, July 2:**

Global market volatility and currency fluctuation have not prevented India's marine exports crossing the one-million-tonne mark in FY15, fetching earnings of \$5.5 billion.

Seafood exports, compared to the previous year, recorded a 6.86 growth per cent in quantity, 10.69 per cent in rupee terms and 10.05 per cent growth in dollar earnings. The exports aggregated to 10,51,243 tonnes valued at Rs. 33,441.61 crore and \$5511.12 million.

India could have achieved the \$6 billion target but the unit value realisation for shrimps and other fish dropped internationally, Leena Nair, Chairman, Marine Products Exports Development Authority (Mpeda), said.

She pointed out that the current growth should be viewed under the prevailing international market situations. The depreciation of the euro, rupee, weaker economic conditions in China, yen devaluation, improvement in supply conditions in South East Asian countries vis-a-vis last year have resulted in continuous drop in shrimp prices.

Frozen shrimp continued to be a major item in the export basket accounting for a share of 34 per cent in quantity and 67 per cent in dollar earnings. However, the unit value realisation decreased to \$10.38/kg from \$10.65 in FY14, a negative growth of 2.59 per cent, she said.

Vannamei (whiteleg) shrimp continued to be the flagship product in the export basket showing a positive growth of over two lakh tonnes. The export of black tiger shrimp also picked up from negative growth of 0.64 per cent. US has emerged as the largest market (1,12,702 tonnes) for frozen shrimp exports in quantity terms followed by European Union (81,952 tonnes), South East Asia (69,068 tonnes) and Japan (30,434 tonnes).

With the downward trend in unit value realisation for Vannamei in the US and other markets since December 2014, she said that the price has dropped from \$7.60/pound to \$6.95 and the trend continued till end of March this year.

It has recorded a lowest of \$5.90/pound in March. Though export of total shrimp increased by 18.61 per cent in quantity, the dollar realisation was only 15.55 per cent, she said.



Mpeda, she said, is focussing more on increased production of Vannamei shrimp, diversification of aquaculture species particularly Tilapia and Mangrove crab as well as value-addition to achieve the export target worth \$6.6 billion in the current fiscal.

To a question, the Chairman said that there is a kind of saturation in Vannamei production in Andhra Pradesh, which has come down to 20 per cent from 60 per cent. However, several other States such as Gujarat, Odisha, Maharashtra are doing well in shrimp production. Out of the total shrimp exports, she said 75 per cent comes from aquaculture and the remaining from sea catch.

Fish is the second largest export item in the export basket accounting for a share of about 29.44 per cent in quantity and 11.24 per cent in dollar earnings.

Dried items also showed a positive growth in terms of quantity and rupee terms. In value-added products, the EU emerged as the leading destination.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated July 3, 2015)

## **‘No threat to paddy despite less rainfall in July’**

### **New Delhi, July 2:**

The Centre has allayed fears of shortfall in the sowing of rice, the key Kharif crop, with officials from the Agriculture Ministry stating that sowing and production will not be affected negatively even if there is deficient rainfall in July.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) had forecast rainfall during July at 8 per cent below the Long Period Average (LPA) of 89 cm.

Private agency Skymet has, however, predicted normal rainfall this month with its CEO Jatin Singh stating in a note that: “Our initial April forecast was 104 per cent of normal for the month. And we are sticking to that. July has a standard rainfall deviation of  $\pm 16$  per cent, and we see the cumulative rainfall for the month remaining in the same limit (84 per cent to 116 per cent of the July LPA of 289mm is normal)”.

Singh, however, did warn of a risk of prolonged dry weather in north and south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and the Marathwada region.

“A long break is being feared in July. We disagree. We don’t think there is going to be a “typical” break, but we think monsoon will take a breather between the 2nd

and 6th of July...the Madden-Julian Oscillation helped rainfall in June. We think it will be back in the second half of July and enhance rain over India,” he added.

Agriculture Ministry data shows Kharif sowing to be at 16.56 million hectares (mh), up 23 per cent compared to last year, mainly due to the South-West monsoon delivering 189.5 mm of rainfall, 16 per cent more than the normal average of 163.6 mm.

“There is no threat to paddy despite the below-normal forecast for July. If rainfall occurs in seven-eight day intervals, there will be no threat to the crop. There is a contingency plan in place for a weak monsoon,” said Siraj Hussain, Agriculture Secretary, on the sidelines of an Assocham event on the ‘National Agricultural Market’ here on Thursday.

While this boosted sowing of key crops such as pulses (1.1 mh) and oilseeds (2.79 mh). In percentage terms, the increases over last year are 80 per cent and 426.4 per cent, respectively. Rice acreage was down around 7 per cent at 2.33 mh.

### **Millers urge Centre not to levy import duty on wheat**

Imports only for blending to supplement protein deficiency



#### **Bengaluru, July 2:**

Flour millers in South India have urged the Government not to impose duty on wheat imports stating that such a move would hurt the consumers’ interest.

In representations to the Food Ministry, millers from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka said that imports are being done only for blending to supplement the protein deficiency in the Indian wheat.

Also, the imports were negligible at less than five lakh tonnes when compared to the domestic output of around 90 million tonnes.

### **Negligible imports**

It has been reported that the Government is contemplating levying a 10 per cent duty on wheat imports in view of high stocks with Food Corporation of India. As the wheat crop was affected this year, the quality has been impacted and the buying norms were relaxed to help the farmers.

“Poor quality affects the nutrients in wheat and those with lower protein content cannot be used for bakery products as their quality deteriorates,” the Karnataka Roller Flour Millers Federation said in a memorandum sent to the Food Ministry on Thursday.

“Small quantity of imported wheat, which contains higher protein content, is only blended with local wheat variety to get the required mix and hence full requirement will not be imported. Extraneous circumstances warrant the import after a decade. The import of around 5 lakh tonnes against 27.6 million tonnes procured by FCI should not pose any problem in its sales,” the Federation said.

Also, the cost of imported wheat is not lower as stronger foreign currency is making it costlier. “Despite this, we need to provide better quality products for pasta, bakery, etc and hence it has become a necessity to import,” it argued.

Similarly, the Tamil Nadu Roller Flour Millers Federation said that it will not be fair on the part of the Government to pass on the poor quality wheat to the millers.

“We would like to bring to the notice of the Government that there is no offtake of wheat whatsoever in Tamil Nadu in the open market sales this year started in April due to the high floor prices fixed by FCI,” it added.

### **Import duty**

Previously the import duty was used as a weapon to shut the doors for foreign wheat and liquidate the wheat procured in the country.

“If this weapon is used now then the millers will be forced to grind only the rain affected wheat available now and the sufferer will be the common man consuming wheat and wheat products. We would also like to inform that only about 15 per

cent of the requirements of the millers are now purchased from Australia. It may kindly be noted that not many northern millers opt for the import of wheat since wheat is grown there and the ports are not nearer whereas the Southern Millers has the viability to import wheat since the ports are nearer. The millers need indigenous wheat only for grinding and only 25 per cent of the imported Australian wheat will be used by our millers for blending purposes,” Tamil Nadu millers said.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated July 3, 2015)

### **National e-mandi, a great idea**

An electronically unified agriculture market will introduce transparency and reduce intermediation costs

The Union Cabinet’s nod to the setting up of the National Agriculture Market makes July 1 an important day in the history of agriculture marketing reforms in India.

The concept of electronic agricultural markets is not new to India. National and regional players have tested the waters by setting up electronic cash and derivatives markets for trading in agricultural commodities.

Spot exchanges have been offering online trading in various commodities with standardised contracts wherein farmers, traders, processors, exporters, importers, can buy/sell in a transparent manner, with the exchanges providing counter-party guarantee for the trades.

This has been a marked departure from the traditional *mandi* system and has helped facilitate efficient price discovery and transaction functions of the marketplace.

Two national-level spot exchanges have achieved relatively better success in creating an electronic seamless spot market mechanism, largely by way of support of the exchange ecosystem of their derivatives exchange counterparts. Moving a step forward, Rashtriya e-Market Services Pvt Ltd (ReMS) was established as a JVC between Karnataka and the NCDEX Spot Exchange Limited. This single market platform currently integrates 51 markets and aims at covering all main 155 market yards and 354 subyards as well.

## **Proposed framework**

In the *mandi* system, farmers get a very low share of the rupee due to a long chain of intermediaries and cartelisation at the physical marketplace, which adds two major costs: the intermediaries' margins as well as multiple handling costs.

Further, there are various limitations under the current framework related to direct marketing legislation, multiple tax levies and licences, logistics and infrastructure. These challenges in the existing system and low returns to farmers prompted the Centre to visualise the creation of a unified National Agriculture Market (NAM). NAM has been proposed to induce transparency in the marketing system, leverage state of the art technology for a well-regulated market, and enable participation and benefits for the entire agri value chain, from farmer to consumer.

The proposed NAM framework envisages real-time electronic auctioning of the commodities along with integrated assaying, weighing, storage and payment systems. It proposes to issue a single licence for trading across the country in order to promote increased participation. Assaying, weighing and FIs will be integrated with auctioning in such a manner that the payments will be credited directly to the farmers' accounts. In this context, the Prime Minister's Jan Dhan Yojna can be a great enabler towards payment facilitation for marginal and small farmers.

Well-equipped warehouses will be created in the vicinity of major production clusters.

Details will be furnished on the electronic platform. It will provide a dual benefit to producers by averting the need to bring produce to the market physically and enabling them to avail funding against the commodities stored in the warehouses, thus strengthening the price risk management framework for the farmer.

The imposition of GST will further facilitate unification of the isolated markets by rationalising the tax regime. The framework of NAM shall go a long way in encouraging private sector participation in marketing reforms, both for the physical as well as soft infrastructure.

## **Way forward**

The respective Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs) will need to implement the tenets of the envisaged NAM in a phased manner, including enabling infrastructure for integrating pre- and post-auctioning activities.

Further, efficient extension activities will help create awareness among producers on grades standardisation, quality assaying and electronic auctioning systems. This

should induce the active participation of major stakeholders, enhance healthy competition and provide fair returns to farmers.

Existing spot exchanges should strive to create a national market for agricultural produce and bring the advantages of a transparent pan-India market to farmers and consumers alike. While exchanges can provide the knowhow and technology for creating a pan-India market, the Centre and the State governments should formulate a strong facilitating framework.

An efficient marketing system with high levels of transparency will encourage healthy competition, the active participation of genuine stakeholders, higher returns to the farming community, and a fair deal to consumers.

This will help actualise *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikaas* in the true spirit.

The writer is the MD and CEO of Yes Bank and president of Assocham

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated July 3, 2015)

# Business Standard

[Rain this week was 14% below normal](#)

**However, Met dept says things could get better, while Skymet sticks to its earlier optimism; rain in the June 1-July 1 period was 13% above normal**

The southwest monsoon was 14 per cent below normal during the week ended July 1, its first big weekly drop in the 2015 season.

Things could get better. India Meteorological Department (IMD) in its Thursday forecast said rainfall activity would be above normal over the northwest, central and some parts of eastern India during July 6-10. Also, that rain might remain above normal over western India during July 11-15 and over the northern plains on July 16-20, though it might remain subdued over interior parts of peninsular India for many days.

Private weather forecasting agency Skymet had been saying this. It had said there would be a break in the showers but not a long one. Its chief executive, Jatin Singh, in a blogpost last Monday said the monsoon might take a breather between Thursday and Monday but thereafter there would be rain in four distinct spells. The first one on July 6-8, then July 14-17, then July 23-26 and the fourth from July 30 to August 2.

The first spell, he'd said, would be concentrated in north, central and east India. Singh had said the winners in July would be the north, east, west and central India, while south or peninsular India could be deficit. Overall, Skymet said the rains would be normal, at 104 per cent of the long period average, with a model error of plus and minus 16 per cent. IMD has predicted eight per cent and 10 per cent deficient rainfall in July and August, respectively.

The met department data issued on Thursday showed the rain so far in the season, June 1 to July 1, was 13 per cent more than normal, with almost all the regions contributing, except east and northeast Indian

Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology has stuck to a low rain forecast. It says in the next 20 days, the southwest monsoon will be subdued over more parts of India and be confined to the Himalayan foothills.

## **Cotton price up on sudden spurt in export demand**

### **Unlikely to sustain on huge global surplus, slow demand from China**

Cotton prices have firmed up in the last two weeks on sudden spurt in [export demand](#) from overseas markets.

While prices of the benchmark Shankar 6 variety jumped three per cent to Rs 9,617 a quintal from Rs 9,336 a quintal around two weeks ago, cotton futures for the near-month delivery on the Multi Commodity Exchange recorded a gain of 1.3 per cent to Rs 9,665 a quintal.

After hitting the lowest level of this season at Rs 8,380 a quintal on January 27, Shankar 6 rebounded to hit the highest of Rs 9,983 a quintal on May 6.

As against the current price of 69 cents per lb on the InterContinental Exchange, fob (free on board) price of Shankar 6 works out to 69.30–70.10 cents per lb. Considering other expenses, India's cotton stands competitive in Bangladesh.

“For the first time in four years, the parity has become favourable for Indian cotton exporters due to steep fall in its prices in India and surge globally. This was reflected in the latest auction by the Cotton Corporation of India as of the 350,000 bales (1 bale = 170 kg) quantity of auction, around 90,000 were meant for exports. Future price movement, however, is unlikely to sustain due to huge quantity of global stock,” said Prerana Desai, an analyst with Edelweiss Integrated Commodity Management Ltd.

China’s tepid purchase, coupled with huge quantity of carryover stock, might keep cotton price under pressure. India remains surplus with cotton, with around 4.5 million bales of carryover stock from the last year, and above 39.8 million bales of estimated output as per the Cotton Advisory Board, offloading in Indian markets is impossible. That is why, CCI is looking at exporting cotton.

Domestic textile producers, however, are operating on stock-to-consumption basis in which buyers prefer to buy cotton according to need to avoid unnecessary blockage of working capital in building of inventory.

“Domestic textile mills are facing working capital squeeze. Hence, they buy cotton as per need. Price movement of cotton is controlled by CCI,” said R K Dalmia, president, Century Textiles Ltd, and chairman, Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council (Texprocil). Washington-based International Cotton Advisory Committee forecasts global cotton price to average at 71 cents per lb in 2014-15 and move in a narrow range of 70-73 cents per lb. In 2015-16, international cotton prices might remain stable.

As against 23.9 million tonnes of production (nine per cent lower from last year), International Cotton Advisory Committee global consumption to 24.9 million tonnes (up two per cent). S K Das of CCI, said selling of cotton is fully dependent on demand and supply.

Under the “Make in India” initiative, the government is planning to establish a modern apparel/garment manufacturing centre in each northeast state as announced by S K Panda, textile secretary at the National Garment Fair, organised by the Clothing Manufacturers Association of India (CMAI) here last week.

Focus on domestic manufacturing is set to raise local demand of cotton as well.



## **No threat to paddy crop despite deficient rain forecast: Govt**

### **The country got 28 per cent more than normal rainfall last month**

The government on Thursday tried to allay concerns on paddy crop, saying there's no threat to it despite India Meteorological Department (IMD)'s projection of [deficient rains](#) in July and August. The sowing is under way in most parts of the country. [IMD](#) has forecast eight per cent and 10 per cent deficient rains for July and August, respectively. The country got 28 per cent more than normal rainfall last month.

“IMD has projected eight per cent less rains for this month. If there are rains in an interval of seven-eight days, we can save our crops despite deficient rains. So, there is no threat to paddy crop,” Agriculture Secretary [Siraj Hussain](#) told reporters here.

The sowing of paddy, the main kharif (summer) crop, has started picking up in major growing areas. The area under paddy has so far improved in states such as Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Punjab due to the pick-up in rains in June.

In Punjab, transplanting of paddy so far has been done in 12.45 lakh hectares, against the target of 28 lakh hectares. Farmers in Andhra Pradesh have sown the crop in 78 per cent of the average normal area. Telangana has seen similar progress, according to government data.

As of June 26, paddy in India was sown in only 23.28 lakh hectares, slightly lower than the 25.04 lakh hectares in the year- ago period, the data showed.

Sowing of paddy and other paddy kharif crops begins with the onset of southwest monsoon.

## **Pulses import: Price trend issue for traders**

### **Huge quantity booked for forward delivery but monsoon's progress and govt action have pulled down prices; trade closely watching crop scenario**

Importers of [pulses](#) have a problem, as prices have fallen due to higher sowing and they have entered into [forward contracts](#) for importing a high quantity, with delivery between October and December.

A leading importer said with the high [prices of pulses](#) a month earlier, due to the earlier projection of the monsoon as below-normal, many small and mid-size traders had contracted for a combined \$900 million to \$1 billion worth (Rs 5,720-6,300 crore) in forward delivery. India's average quarterly import is only around \$600 mn. In 2014-15, the import bill was \$2.35 bn (Rs 15,000 crore).

In the past month, prices of various pulses in the domestic market have fallen by five to 10 per cent. If prices fall below the cost of imports, forward deals could face defaults. Last year, the source said, good money was made by importing and the idea was to repeat it this year. However, in recent weeks, the monsoon has spread well through the country and sowing has increased. The government has also increased the minimum support prices.

“Sowing for pulses is still on and I believe the acreage will go up, as farmers are choosing pulses. There is a thaw in forward contract deals of late, as most traders are looking at the crop scenario before booking a deal,” said Neeraj Dhawan, a Delhi-based importer.

As the monsoon advanced into key pulses' growing states, sowing had almost doubled to 1.1 million hectares by June 26, up from 0.6 mn ha sown till the same period last year. In June, rainfall was 24 per cent above normal. India Meteorological Department has predicted deficit rain in July and August but private weather information provider Skymet has forecast a normal monsoon in the coming two months. The uncertainty has kept the market tight.

“There is so much apprehension about crop growth that any adverse weather condition will stoke pulses prices, as the fundamentals are so tight. It all depends upon how the monsoon rainfall is going to be in the next two months, as it will give us indications about the crop size,” said Purna Desai, head of commodity research with Edelweiss, the online share trading portal. Due to shortage of the commodity, many state governments have imposed stock limits on the storage and the Union government has asked state-run trading firms to import in order to contain the rates.

It has also, as stated, increased the minimum support price to encourage sowing, beside extending the zero import duty period till end-September. India imports about three million tonnes a year from Canada, Australia, Myanmar and African countries, to meet an annual demand of about 18 mt. Last year, imports shot up to around four mt because of crop damage and lower output.

## Spices Park likely in Kodagu district

### **If the Karnataka govt provides 50 acres, there is possibility of the park in Kodagu**

A Spices Park may be set up in Kodagu district, famous for spices and coffee. To a proposal by Mysuru-Kodagu MP Pratap Simha, the Spices Board under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, its Chairman A Jayathilake has promised to look into the MP's suggestion. Speaking at the board's 80th trimonthly meeting at Srinagar, Simha had asked the board to set up a Spices Park in Kodagu as it was famous not only for coffee but also for black pepper.

Neighbouring Sakaleshpur in Shimoga district produced world grade cardamom, while in Mysuru district, huge quantities of ginger was available. Hence, setting up of a Spices Park in Kodagu district would be ideal. If the state government provided a 50-acre land, there was every possibility of the park coming up in Kodagu, he said. Another Spices Park would be established in Haveri district which is famous for the 'Byadagi' chillies, after 50 acres is handed over to the board, Pratap Simha added.

Meanwhile, a ginger training and exhibition was organised here at the College of Horticulture at Yelachanahlli, Yelwal, on June 30 by the College Extension Education Unit for farmers from Chamarajanagar, Hunsur and Hassan districts. Farmers around this region have been growing these crops for five-eight years, after being introduced by the traders of Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the border areas of Chamarajanagar district. Although farmers have accepted this new crop as a lucrative and remunerative one, the package of practices was not well known. Hence, the extension unit had come forward to organise a training programme on ginger. About 100 farmers attended the training programme where farm scientists from Suttur, Gonikoppa, Mysuru University and Department of Horticulture gave them the inputs.

Inaugurating the training programme, Bengaluru's University of Agricultural Science retired dean K T Shivashankar asked the farmers to follow the advanced technologies in ginger cultivation, to harvest rich dividends. He also cautioned them that after harvesting a ginger crop it was very difficult to raise any other crop. He suggested that they form an association of growers to discuss their problems. An exhibition was also organised with the objective of displaying products of ginger, disease symptoms, portrays, diseased and infected specimens of ginger crop.