

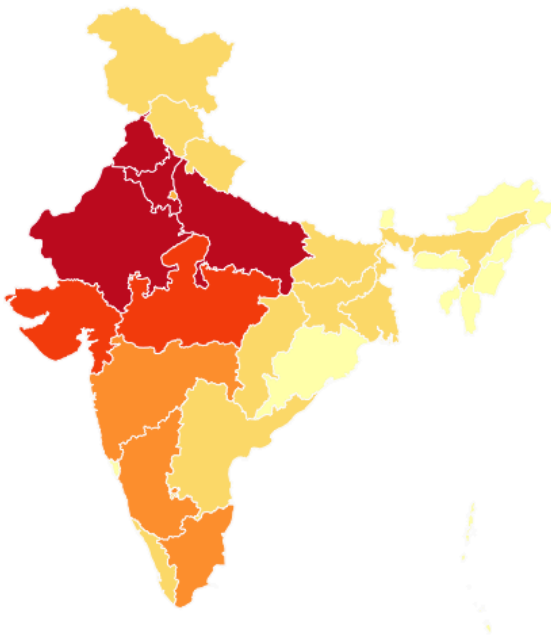
Date:04.07.2015

THE HINDU

8 Reality Checks from the SECC

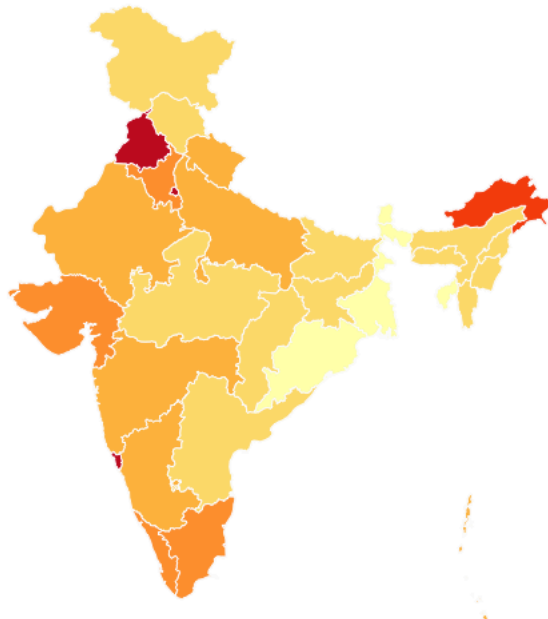
Over half of all rural households derive their household income mainly from casual manual labour. The Ministry of Rural Development released data from the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) on the standard of living of rural households in India on Friday. Landless households deriving major part of their income from manual casual labour

Households with irrigation equipments



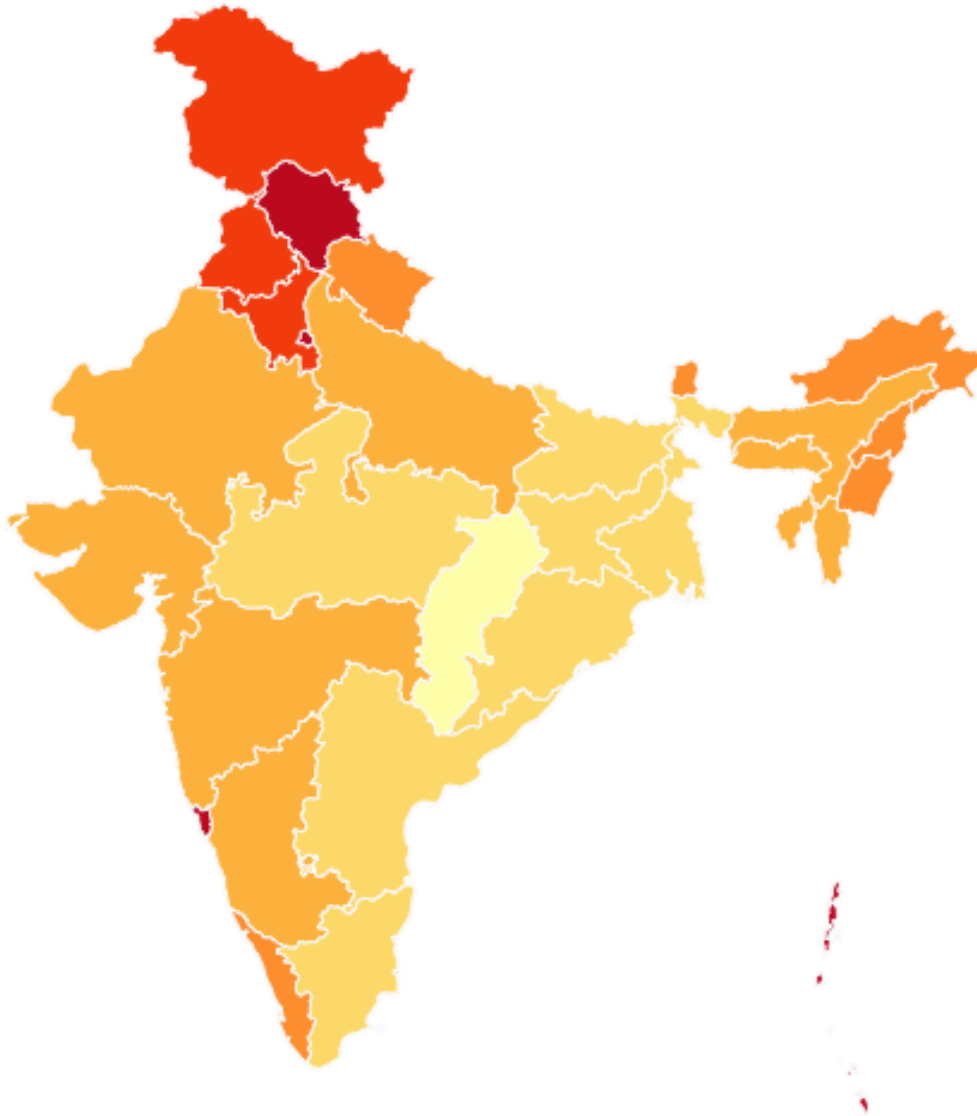
<3% 3-6% 6-9% 9-12% 12-15% >15%

Households having motorized two/three/four wheelers and fishing boats



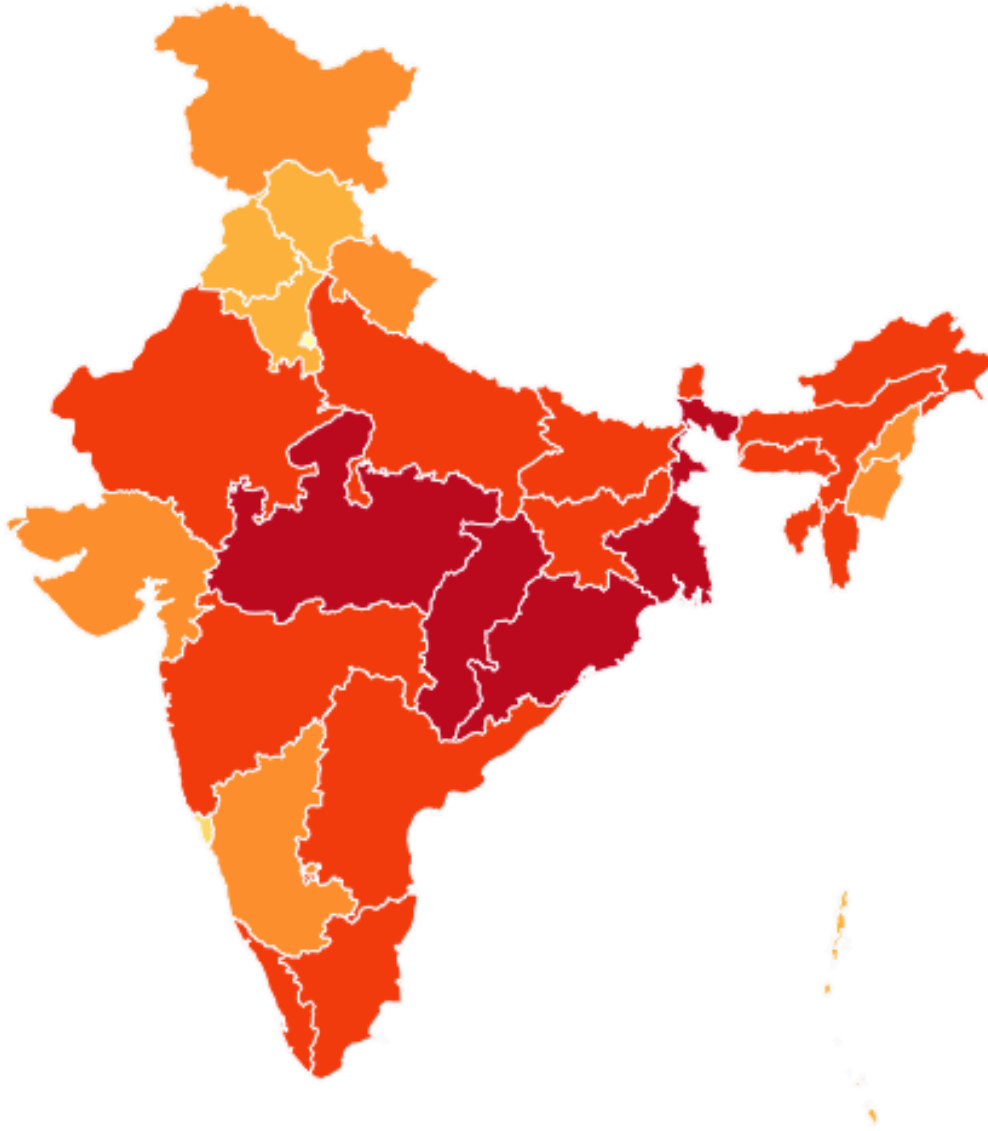
<10% 10-20% 20-30% 30-40% 40-50% >50%

Monthly income of highest earning household member is >
Rs. 10000



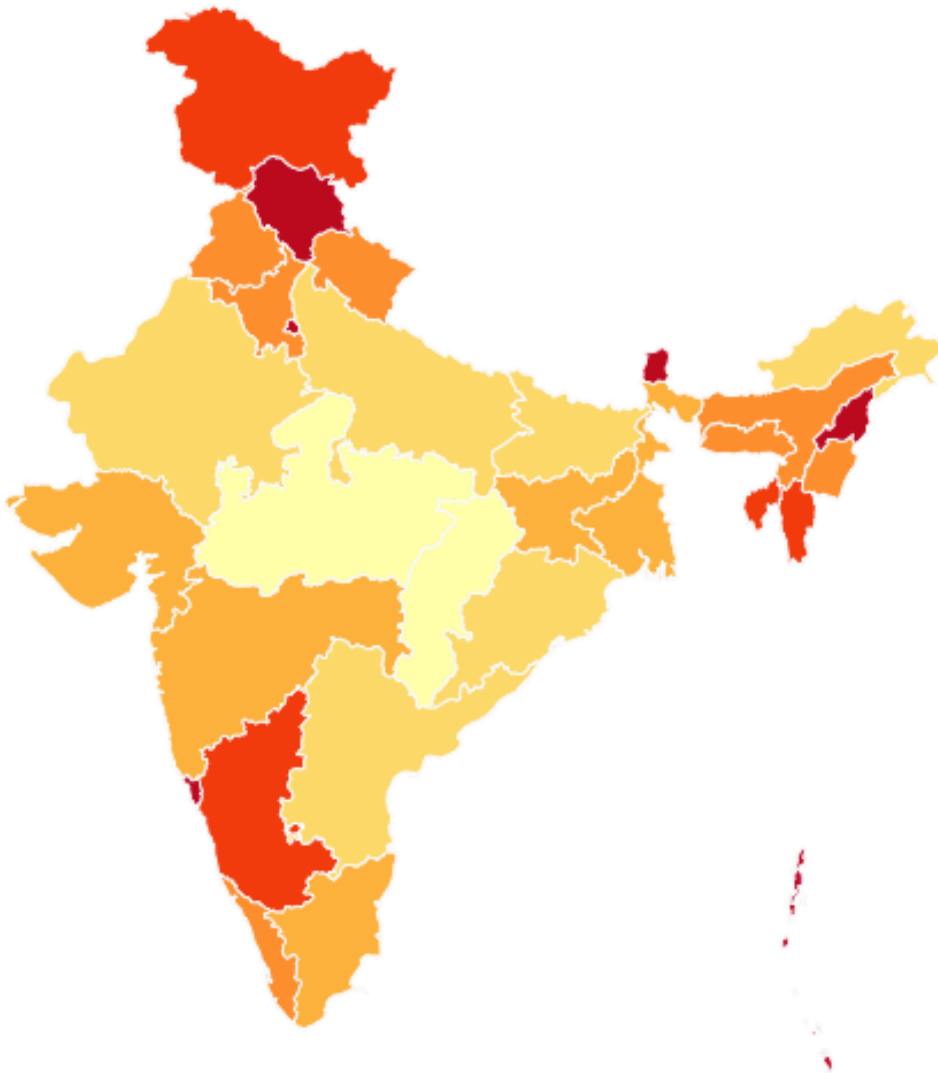
<4% 4-8% 8-12% 12-16% 16-20% >20%

Monthly income of highest earning household member is < Rs. 5000



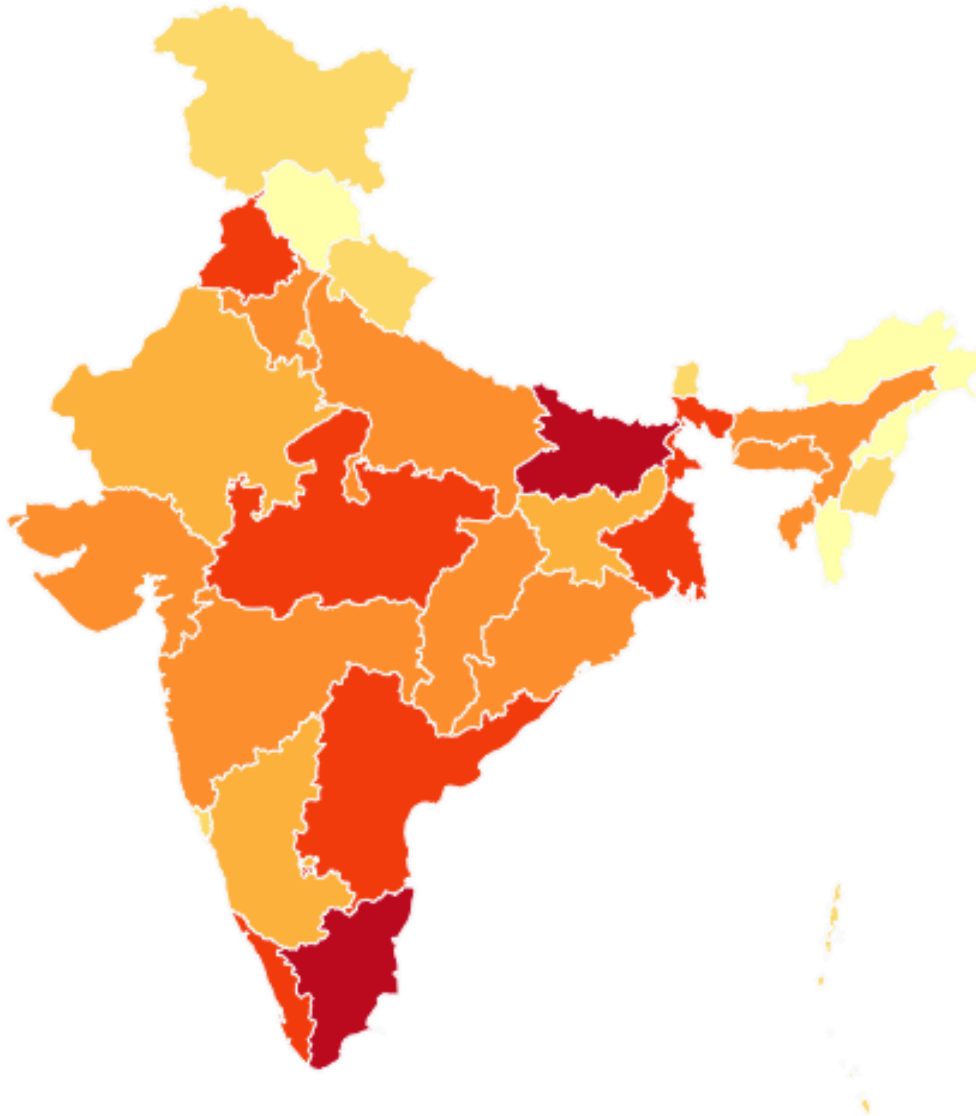
<40% 40-50% 50-60% 60-70% 70-80% >80%

Households paying income tax / professional tax



<2% 2-4% 4-6% 6-8% 8-10% >10%

Landless households deriving major part of their income from manual casual labour



<10% 10-20% 20-30% 30-40% 40-50% >50%

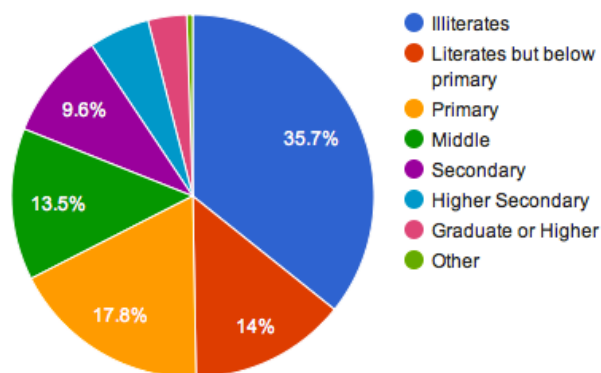
The numbers come from the SECC which was conducted in 2011 and is meant to provide data on various socio-economic indicators, and most importantly, on caste. Disappointingly, the socio-economic indicators of various caste groups have not yet been released – what we do have is socio-economic data for rural households by state, and for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe households among them. By identifying various parameters of deprivation, the numbers are now open for the centre and for state governments to decide how they want to define their poor.

Here are 8 big reality checks from the new numbers.

1. Fewer than five per cent of rural households pay income tax. Even among rich states, like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, this number hovers around the five per cent mark.
2. This is not surprising given a staggering fact – in nearly 75 per cent off rural households, the main earning family member makes less than Rs 5,000 per month (or Rs 60,000 annually). In just eight per cent of households does the main earning member make more than Rs 10,000 per month. The rural east of the country is significantly worse off, while the rural north is actually the most comfortably off financially.
3. Just 20 per cent of rural households own a vehicle, and only 11 per cent own a refrigerator, but 72 per cent own a phone of some sort.
4. These extremely low income numbers follow from the nature of employment that most of rural India is engaged in. The vast majority – over 90% - of rural India, does not have salaried jobs. Over half of all rural households derive their household income mainly from casual manual labour. Another 30 per cent derive it from cultivation.
5. The numbers also point to the subsistence level of farming that rural India currently practises. Over half of rural India owns no land at all. Among households who do own land, 40 per cent is not irrigated. Just four per cent own any sort of mechanised agricultural equipment, and just 10 per cent own any irrigation equipment. Fewer than four per cent have an agricultural credit card that entitles them to at least Rs 50,000 per month.
6. Working in anything other than agriculture will be a tough ask, given the level of education – fewer than 10 per cent make it to higher secondary or above and just 3.41 per cent of households have a family member who is at least a graduate.

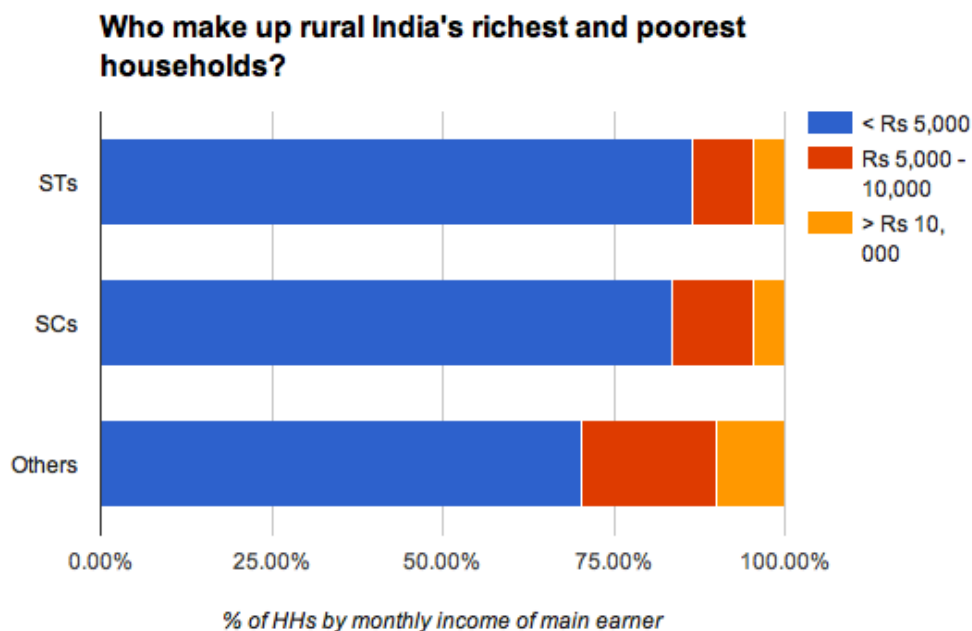
Highest level of education of a rural household

Highest level of education of a rural household



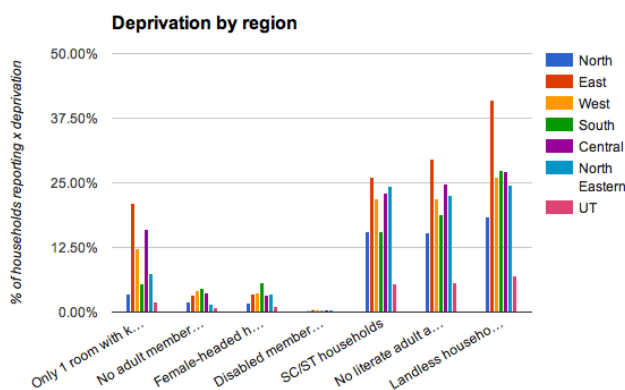
7. There is a substantial difference in the standard of living of India's Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and "others". Fewer than five per cent of SC and ST households have a main earner who makes more than Rs 10,000 per month – for "others", there are twice as many households.

Who make up rural India's richest and poorest Households?



8. When the north of India is split into multiple zones – north, east, central – its rural areas are more prosperous than even the south. India's east and central regions (including Uttar Pradesh) are the ones that do worst on the seven indicators identified by the SECC as measures of deprivation. Among the indicators, landlessness and a reliance on manual labour contributes the greatest to deprivation. In all, half of rural India is deprived on at least one of these indicators; what indicators to use to calculate poverty, though, is going to be a political choice.

Deprivation by region



Online channel for environment issues



The government is planning to launch an online green channel to sensitise people about environmental and forest issues. “We are thinking of launching internet green channel and also provide one hour programme on environment on ‘DD Kisan’ channel,” Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said. The government recently launched a television channel for farmers called ‘DD Kisan’ to provide information about best agri-practices.PTI

C-DAC launches mobile apps marking Digital India Week

The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) has launched four mobile apps as part of the Digital India Week, the first two pertaining to agriculture, and the other two for fishermen and environment education for children.

RiceVocs mobile app is a compendium of rice-related vocabulary, and comprises about 2,500 terms related to paddy crop, arranged in alphabetical order.

It works as a ready reckoner for the extension officers working with the knowledge about rice, a press release informed on Friday.

The Learnrice mobile app will provide users with a comprehensive list of courses specifically designed for paddy crop. Both the apps were developed in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Rice Research.

The Potential Fishing Zone Advisory mobile apps in Indian languages can be used to produce advisories to the fishermen on daily basis with specific references to the 586 fish landing centres along the Indian coast.

The app has been developed in collaboration with the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS).

The Joy of Learning mobile apps developed in association with Centre for Environment Education for classes III to V, VI to VIII, and IX to XI provide details of useful science experiments for schoolchildren, the note informed.

In another press release, the C-DAC informed that it has signed a MoU with the Kakatiya University to forge research and academic collaboration.

IFGTB signs pact with paper mill

The Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB) has entered into a licence agreement with The International Papers – APPM Limited at Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh.

The institute has been undertaking research work to increase wood production in plantations to meet the different end uses like timber, poles, pulpwood, fuel wood and other non-timber products. As part of this agreement, IFGTB will commercially propagate five clones of Casuarina (CJ 7, CJ9, CJ 10, CH 1 and CH 2) developed by the institute and supply to farmers.

Food Ministry for 10 per cent duty on import of cheap wheat

Meet with States on price rise next week, says Paswan

The Food Ministry has proposed a 10 per cent import duty on cheaper wheat shipments as the country has surplus stocks.

For now there is no import duty on wheat and wheat stocks are in surplus of requirement.

This and the issue of rising prices of pulses and onions will be discussed with State Food Ministers at a meeting being organised here next week, Union Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan told journalists here.

He said there is a concern about the rising prices of tur, moong and masur lentils and onions.

“We propose to ask State governments to impose stock holding limits on these commodities to check prices,” he said.

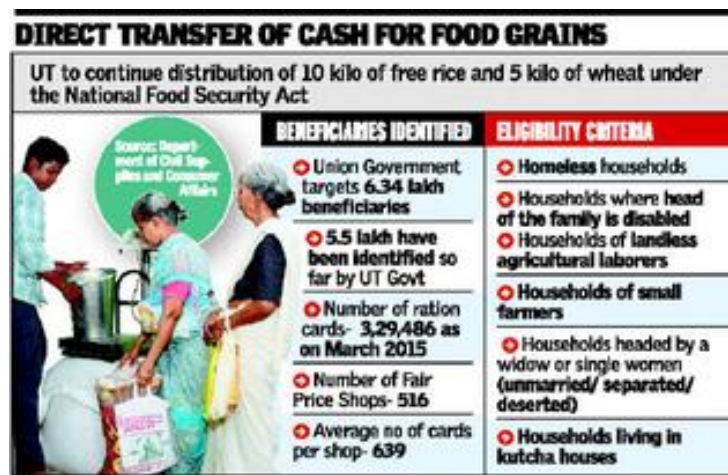
The Ministry also proposes to discuss the implementation of the distribution of cheap food grains to beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act. So far only 11 States have rolled out the Act.

Asked about the implication of the data under the socio-economic census released on Friday, Mr. Paswan said that it would have to be studied.

The meeting that is being convened is to ask States to take action against hoarders and implement the Food Security Act.

Double benefit in store for PDS families

Beneficiaries will get cash as well as grains



Beginning September, around six lakh beneficiaries in the Union Territory will receive direct cash for grains such as rice and wheat entitled under Food Security Act from the Central Government in addition to 10 kilo free rice and five kilo wheat from the Union Territory Government. At present, around 516 fair price shops are supplying subsidised essential commodities such as rice, wheat and sugar which were allotted by the Central Government under the Targeted Public Distribution System from the stock of Food Corporation of India.

These shops also supply 10 kilo single boiled rice and five kilo wheat at free of cost in Puducherry and Karaikal to the card holders under State Scheme of public distribution. To streamline the public distribution system and in order to ensure the right to food to everyone, the Centre has introduced the Food Security Act. A committee headed by Former Food Minister Shanta Kumar had recommended the introduction of Direct Cash Benefit Transfer (DBT) for food grain in order to save food subsidy bill to the tune of Rs.30,000 crore per year to the Central government.

P. Priytarshny, Director, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs told *The Hindu* , “The persons who are entitled to receive grains under the Food Safety Act will receive direct cash transfer benefits to their bank accounts. We are in the process the identifying and notifying the beneficiaries and working out certain technicalities. The DBT will be implemented over and above the State Scheme —10 kilo free rice and five kilo free wheat.”

Data cleansing process

The data cleansing process was completed and was given to the Central Government for further validation. The cash benefit will be calculated based on unit of grain to a person. There will be no hitch in the implementation of the DBT as 98 per cent of household have been linked to bank accounts already. Through the migration to DBT, Union government expects to save costs incurred to meet out expenses of food grain supply chain management and logistics. *A committee headed by Former Food Minister Shanta Kumar had recommended introduction of DBT*

VOC Park to be renovated



Coimbatore Corporation will renovate the VOC Park, and the Senior Citizens' Park with the assistance from the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

Mayor P. Rajkumar, Commissioner K. Vijayakarthiskeyan, and TNAU Vice-Chancellor K. Ramasamy inspected the places on Friday.

Mr. Rajkumar said that the visit followed a resolution passed by the corporation to renovate the parks.

The VOC Park was the face of Coimbatore, for which the civic body wanted the best of facilities. As it was also the most-visited entertainment spot of citizens, the corporation wanted to provide a good experience to them.

The corporation would look at improving the toy train, he added.

Mr. Ramasamy said that the university would prepare a project report for improving the two parks with the experts from the Floriculture Department.

Though the civic body had set no deadline, the university would submit the report at the earliest.

Floriculture experts M. Kannan and C. Subash said that the idea was to go in for flowering plants, trees in the VOC Park, and aromatic and herbal plants in the Senior Citizens' Park.

The challenge would be to grow the plants under tree shades.

To improve the landscaping, the corporation had sought the assistance of the Architecture Department of Karpagam University.

On dangers of plastic

Kerala Agricultural University's (KAU) communication centre organised awareness programmes on dangers of use of plastic carrybags. A training on use of nature-friendly materials such as wastepaper and banana fibre was also conducted.

The programme, conducted as part of world plastic carrybag free day, was inaugurated by Dr. Jose Mathew, Associate Director of Extension.

HC ruling on reclamation under wetland Act

The Kerala High Court on Thursday held that local bodies should not grant building permits if the paddy land or wetland on which the building was to be constructed had been reclaimed in violation of the provisions of the Kerala Conservation of Paddy Land and Wetland Act 2008.

Justice Dama Shashadri Naidu also ruled that if the conversion had been effected prior to August 12, 2008, the date on which the Act came into force, the Kerala Land Utilisation Order would apply to such land and the local bodies could entertain the application for building permits if the authorities under the KLU had allowed reclamation of the paddy land or wetland.

The court made the ruling while disposing of a batch of writ petitions filed by a person from various parts of the State challenging the refusal by the local authorities to grant them licence for building constructions on their reclaimed land.

The Kerala Conservation of Paddy Land and Wetland Act stipulated that the local-level committee could recommend to the district-level and State-level committee reclamation of paddy land or wetland for public purpose or for the construction of a residential building for the owner of the paddy land.

The Kerala Land Utilisation Order, which had empowered the State government to permit conversion of land for construction of houses for individuals up to 5 cents, held the ground before the wetland Act came into force.

The court turned down the contention of the petitioners that as their paddy land was not included in the land data bank, it could be treated as non-agriculture land and no further discretion was vested with the local authorities to refuse building permits.

No nod for projects that violate provisions of Act

Act stipulated that panel can recommend reclamation of land

Trailing butterflies



Madurai Nature Forum to document the population and diversity of butterflies in the city

After studying the avian visitors for six months, members of Madurai Nature Forum (MNF) have now turned towards butterflies following studies conducted in Chennai, Salem, Coimbatore and recently Rajapalayam. The first part of the butterfly study was conducted last week at Alagar hills, in which MNF members identified over 40 species of the colourful winged insects. “We expect to document around 150 species in the hills,” says N.Raveendran, who during his bird walks in various pockets around the city has already documented around 70 species.

In Tamil Nadu, there are nearly 300 species of butterflies, says Pavendhan Appavu, founder of Tamil Nadu Butterflies, a Coimbatore-based naturalists group, who headed a recent study at Srivilliputtur Grizzled Squirrel Sanctuary. “Butterflies are an important part of the food chain and they are crucial for pollination and production of fruits, thus sustaining the population of birds, small reptiles and mammals. Butterflies are called as ‘Bio-indicators’ as their population is an indication of how healthy the environment is,” he says. “In States like Kerala and Karnataka, there is much awareness and research on butterflies but in Tamil Nadu it is still evolving.”

Butterfly enthusiasts say that June to August is the breeding season for the insect during which they migrate to the plains and Eastern Ghats from their home, the Western Ghats. “Along the trekking routes in Alagar hills, many butterflies can now be seen mud-puddling. They take minerals from the soil that’s necessary for reproduction,” says C. Kumaresan, who took part in the study.

“Tamil Nadu is the only State that shares both the Western and Eastern Ghats and hence the possibility of a diverse butterfly population is high. We are trying to bring in some activity in butterfly research,” says Prakash Hari, member of the Coimbatore group. “Butterflies are simple beautiful creatures that are easy to observe. Their lifespan and habits are small and easy but very important to the environment.” He says that every species has its unique properties. The life span of butterfly species range from a week to a year. The female is generally bigger in size than the male. Certain butterflies only feed on nectar, while some feed on fermented fruit extracts, animal dung and tree resins. “Only in the caterpillar stage, a butterfly consumes leaves directly.”

Among the various issues that impact butterfly life are sand mining, human intrusion, water pollution and usage of chemical pesticides in agriculture. “There are certain species that feed on the weeds in paddy fields. They are in turn eaten by birds and reptiles. Chemical pesticides in the crops can affect this entire food link,” says Prakash. He suggests planting host crops/plants that support butterfly life. Wayside flowering shrubs such as Arali and Erukampoo, native grass (arukam pul), country karuvelam trees, Karuvepilai and Coriander plants are said to help butterflies in breeding.

“Through this study, we intend to bring out a detailed report or compilation of the various species we get to identify,” says Raveendran. “Butterfly count of a city or region depends on how good is the tree/plant cover there and how intense or bad is the pollution level.” Sholavandan, Alagar Hills, Vasimalai forests, Sirumalai and Thirumangalam are said to be the places in Madurai that nurture a good number of butterfly population. Some of the species identified at Alagar Hills are Common Emigrant, Mottled Emigrant, Common Albatros, Swat-tail, Lemon Pansy, Striped Tiger, Common Leopard and Painted Lady.

14 crops notified for insurance coverage

To encourage farmers adopt progressive farming practices without fear of crop damage due to natural disasters, pests and diseases, as many as 14 crops have been notified for insurance coverage in the district for the current kharif season.

Official 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. 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 were notified at the block levels, while paddy, maize, black gram, green gram, red gram, ground nut, cotton, sugarcane, turmeric, onion, tapioca and banana, have been notified at the select 31 ‘firkas’ level.

Crop loan

With crop loan disbursement projected at Rs. 1,538 crore in the district during 2015-16 fiscal, there would be corresponding large scale insurance coverage as farmers availing of crop loans for the cultivation of ‘notified crops’ would have to be compulsorily given the insurance coverage. “We have communicated to all banks in the district about the guidelines for compulsory insurance coverage to be given to farmers who opt for loans to raise notified crops and how premium should be collected,” said Lead District Manager V. Ganesan.

Mango fest at Dilli Haat

Mango, the king of fruits, has been in the market for over a month. Those looking to try new varieties and indulge in some mango mania can now head to the 27th Mango festival being held at Dilli Haat, Janakapuri, by Delhi Tourism in association with the Delhi government.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal inaugurated the event along with Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Kapil Mishra, Minister for Law, Tourism, Art, Culture, Languages and Water.

Mr. Kejriwal appreciated the initiative that offers a magnificent display of different varieties of mangoes in one festival.

Mango lovers visiting Dilli Haat will have over 500 varieties to choose from, among which are Langra, Chausa, Amrapali, Rataul, Hussainara, Ramkela, Kesar, Fazri and Mallika. Children, meanwhile, can get acquainted with varieties that are as small as a grape and some that are as large as a papaya.

Various States have set up counters here while 13 farmers have on display traditional, hybrid and other unique varieties of the fruit.

Government institutions like Rajya Krishi Utpadan Mandi Parishad in Lucknow, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in Delhi, Directorate of Horticulture and Food Processing in Uttar Pradesh and Mother Dairy, too, have set up stalls selling processed mango items such as pickles, jam, chutney, mango pulp, mango juice, jelly, aam papad and aam panna.

Saturday evening will have a mango eating competition in store for women, as part of which participants will be given 3 kilograms of mangoes to eat within 3 minutes.

The festival will continue till July 5.

Water released into Kalingarayan canal



Water was released into Kalingarayan canal on Friday for raising first crop in its ayacut of 15,743 acres.

State Environment Minister Thoppu N.D. Venkatachalam initiated the water release in the presence of District Collector S. Prabakar; MPs S. Selvakumara Chinnaiyan and V. Sathyabama; MLAs K.V. Ramalingam, R.N. Kittusamy, and B.G. Narayanan; and Erode Mayor P. Malliga Paramasivam.

On the first day, water release of 200 cusecs was recorded. A full-level flow to the extent of 584 cusecs has been envisaged.

Subject to availability, a total of 6,484 million cubic feet water is expected to be utilised for irrigating the first crop. Water level in Bhavani Sagar Dam was 18.28 tmc, with an inflow of 2,163 cusecs on Friday, the Environment Minister said.

Adequate stock

There was adequate stock of seeds of various paddy varieties: 365 metric tonnes with the Agriculture Department and 85 tonnes with the Cooperative Department. Likewise, there was enough stock of fertilizers as well, the Minister said.

B.Sc. agriculture rank list

E. Vallavan, District Collector, released the rank list of candidates for admission to B.Sc (Agriculture) course in 2015-16 in Pandit Jawharlal Nehru College of Agriculture and Research Institute. In a press release here on Friday, Mr. Vallavan, who is principal of the college, said that 1,610 applications were received this year, registering an increase by 23 per cent.

Delta ryots in jitters as Krishna inflows go down

Farmers in the Krishna Delta are a worried lot, with the inflows into the Almatti reservoir in North Karnataka reducing to almost zero as the monsoon has petered down after being active for about a week.

The reduced inflows into the Almatti dam, the main entry point to the Krishna River system, has a direct impact on the water availability at all the downstream reservoirs in Telangana such as Srisailem, Narayanapur and Jurala from which Krishna water flows into the delta region.

What is giving the delta farmers here the jitters is that the inflows into the Prakasam Barrage from Wyra and Munneru rivulets have also fallen considerably. From a peak of 44,403 cusecs on June 23 the inflows have fallen to 2,330 cusecs on Friday.

The inflows to Almatti reservoir which went up to 1 lakh cusecs on June 27 has dropped to almost zero a few days ago. Similarly the inflows through the biggest tributary of the Krishna River, the Tungabhadra, peaked to 40,000 cusecs on June 28 and have petered down to 14,000 cusecs on Friday.

A little less than 70 tmcft of water is now required to fill the Almatti reservoir for the water to flow down to the Srisailem and subsequently to Krishna delta. Since Narayanapur and Jurala are relatively small reservoirs, much time may not be required to fill them.

With the delay almost certain in getting the water in the Krishna district, farmers, who have bore wells have gone ahead and raised seed beds in the Delta. Paddy farmers in Kankipadu, Gudiwada, Moovva, Kanuru, Vuyyuru and Penamaluru have raised seed beds at the cost of Rs 2,000 an acre.

Farmers associations said that the farmers with bore wells are hoping that the government would provide them power for seven hours at a stretch without interruption. Giving power in two spells of four hours and three hours as in the past would spell doom for them, the Associations said. Farmers in about 20 per cent of the area under cultivation in the district were raising seed beds, Agriculture Department sources said.

Inflows at Almatti, entry point to the Krishna River system, reduces to almost zero

The same at Prakasam Barrage has fallen from 44,403 cusecs to 2,330 cusecs

Norms for rubber incentive scheme

The government has published the guidelines for the Rubber Production Incentive Scheme implemented to support rubber growers in the State.

As per the guidelines, farmers with a total area of not more than 5 ha of land can register for the scheme. The tapped area eligible for financial assistance would be limited to 2 ha of rubber for each applicant and it would be limited to 1,800 kg per ha a year.

This is the estimated average productivity of rubber in the State. This will be worked out using an online system and would be computed on a fortnightly basis.

For first-time sale, the quantity eligible for assistance would be limited to the total for two fortnights. Assistance will be given to RSS IV and RSS V varieties of rubber sheets.

The online system can be accessed on the website www.ebt.kerala.gov.in. Rubber Board will provide hard copies of application forms. It has been posted on the website too. The applications should be endorsed by the president of the Rubber Producers Society on the hard copy and submitted to the field officers for verification. The society president should upload the photograph, scanned copies of land tax receipts, first page of the bank passbook and ID proof such as Aadhar card, driving licence, etc.

The Rubber Board officials will scrutinise the applications and conduct at least physical verification of 10 per cent of them to ensure the veracity of the details furnished by the growers.

In the case of undivided holdings, the RPS president should certify the details in the application and would be verified by an officer in the rank of Deputy Rubber Production Commissioner of the Rubber Board for disbursing the incentive. It would not be valid for any other purpose.

Reference price of RSS-IV would be updated by the board through online system.

Late blight attack worries farmers

Traces of the pest were found in Salagame hobli of Hassan taluk



The Horticulture Department has appealed to farmers to take remedial measures to avoid spread of the disease.— Photo: Prakash Hassan

Traces of late blight attacking potato crop have been found in Salagame hobli of Hassan taluk.

In some pockets of Halasanahalli, Somanahalli and other villages, the crop has been affected, warranting immediate remedial action by the growers.

For many years, potato growers have not got good returns because of late blight, a fungal infection, which reduces yield substantially.

Horticulture Department officers visited the affected farms and guided farmers on remedial measures.

B. Suma, Deputy Director of Horticulture Department, on Friday told *The Hindu* that recently the staff visited the farms and sprayed fungicides.

Spreads in rain

“At present, late blight has been traced only in small pockets.

The disease spreads during rain and high speed wind. As the rains receded in the past one week, it has not spread to vast areas,” the officer said.

Medicine sprayed

The Horticulture Department staff sprayed medicine in the potato farm belonging to Jayanna of Halasinahalli in Hassan taluk. The department also conducted a demonstration on protecting the crop from the disease for the benefit of potato growers. The officers have appealed to the farmers to consult officers of the department in case they notice symptoms of late blight in their crop and apply fungicides immediately, so that they could avoid the spread of the disease to neighbouring farms.

Cube, heart or pyramid: what shape do you choose?

Odd shaped watermelons herald Japan summer



Winning Japanese heartsA heart-shaped watermelon.File Photo: AFP

Japanese consumers are used to paying through the nose for fruit, and now the summer's here there's another way for them to empty their wallets: cube and heart-shaped watermelons.

But this pricey produce is not intended to tempt your taste buds — it's more ornament than the perfect picnic food.

Over at the Shibuya Nishimura luxury fruit shop in downtown Tokyo, a cube-shaped watermelon, about the size of a baby's head, sells for 12,960 yen (\$105).

Not to your liking? Well, how about a heart- or pyramid-shaped melon to sit on that chic coffee table in your living room.

"This fruit is meant to be a feast for your eyes, but they don't taste very good," admitted the shop's senior managing director Mototaka Nishimura.

"They should be displayed as ornaments, maybe mixed with flowers."

Farmers plant young watermelons inside acrylic containers to get the desired shape.

While the price may sound high, it's actually something of a bargain in Japan where people traditionally exchange gifts, including expensive fruit, with clients and relatives a couple of times a year.

A deep-pocketed Japanese department store in April shelled out an eye-watering 300,000 yen for a pair of mangoes, a record price for the second year in a row.

This year's must-have luxury fruit is a particular brand of strawberry, with a single berry currently selling for around \$415.

However, all pale in comparison with the tear-inducing \$25,000 price tag for a pair of cantaloupe melons auctioned in 2008.AFP

Canada regulator finds Maggi safe

Close on the heels of UK giving clean chit to Maggi produced in India, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency said the noodles are safe for consumption.

"The Canadian Food Inspection Agency food safety investigation did not find any health risk associated with the consumption of Maggi brand noodle products sold in Canada," the food regulator said.

It added, "We are continuing to monitor the situation in India and are working with our international regulatory partners. The CFIA will advise the Canadian public should any food safety risk be identified.

It is safe, says Singapore

Earlier in June, Singapore's food regulator had also declared Maggi noodles imported from India to be safe for consumption.

The popular instant noodle was banned by India's food regulator on June 5 after a high amount of lead and monosodium glutamate was found in samples of the popular noodles.

Nestle withdrew all varieties of Maggi noodles hours before the ban that ruled it "unsafe and hazardous".

HC allows export

However, a recent Bombay High Court order has allowed Nestle to export Maggi from India.

'We are continuing to monitor the situation in India and working with our global regulatory partners'

Loss of polar bear habitat is imminent, warns study

Greenhouse gases are reducing the bears' summer ice habitat, making them shift to land

: About a third of the world's polar bears could be in imminent danger from greenhouse gas emissions in as soon as a decade, a U.S. government report shows.

U.S. Geological Survey said scientific models don't bode well for polar bear populations across the world. Greenhouse gases are blamed for the climate warming that's reducing polar bears' summer sea ice habitat.

Scientists saw no rebound in population in the projections that stretched to the year 2100.

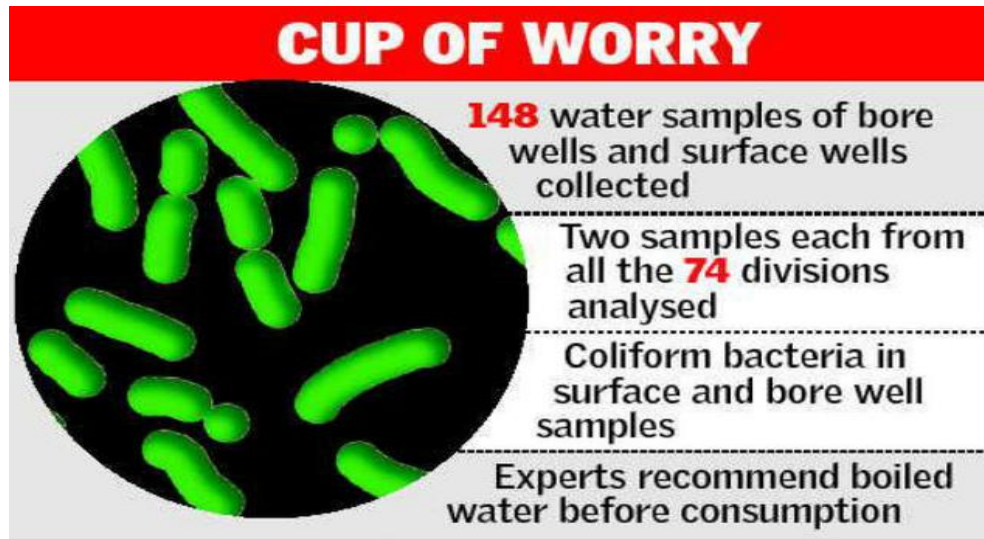
The scientific models attempted to predict the effects on polar bear populations under two scenarios — one in which greenhouse gas emissions stabilised, and the other in which they continued unabated.

Under either scenario, the bears in the Alaska, Russia and Norway group with an estimated population of about 8,500 would start to be affected in either 2025 or 2030, said lead author Todd Atwood, an Alaska-based USGS research wildlife biologist. Polar bears use sea ice for feeding, mating and giving birth. When the ice retreats in the summer, polar bears are forced to the land.

A study found the land-based food would not help it adapt to the loss of sea ice. USGS didn't predict specific number declines and instead projected whether a population would see a decrease.

"That's not to say we'll lose polar bears completely, but we think that they'll be at a greatly decreased distribution," Atwood said. — AP

Coliform bacteria high in city water samples



Presence of coliform bacteria, an indication of faecal contamination, has been found in drinking water samples collected from bore wells and surface wells of the city.

It was during a water quality analysis that the presence of harmful organisms was detected. The analysis was carried out by the Water Institute of the School of Communication and Management Studies as part of a project for preparing water policy for the city.

Trained volunteers of the Kudumbashree collected water samples from 148 bore wells and surface wells from the city areas. Two samples each were collected from the 74 divisions of the local body for analysis, said Sunny George, Head of the Water Institute.

Water from the surface wells was rarely used for drinking. The piped water supplied by the Kerala Water Authority, water drawn from bore wells and supplied by tanker lorries were used for drinking needs. Coliform bacteria were found in all well water samples. Since presence of coliform bacteria was reported from water samples collected from bore wells too, experts suggested use of boiled water.

Presence of iron in drinking water from bore wells, which is considered an irritant, was also confirmed in more than half of the water samples analysed. While the permissible limit of iron in drinking water is 0.3mg/litre, it was found up to 15mg/litre in some samples, he said. Nitrates too were found in increased level. It was found in 24 per cent of the bore well water samples. While the permissible level of nitrates is 0.5 mg/litre, there were instances when nitrate was detected to 9mg/litre. The mixing of sewage with ground water is attributed to the increased nitrate level in water samples.

Saline incursion has also been a cause of concern in the city as 20 per cent of the bore well water had excess salt. Creation of fresh water zone by rain water harvesting in open wells is one way of addressing the issue. The formation of such zones would resist saline incursion, Dr. George said.

Socio Economic and Caste census: Landlessness high in Kerala, West Bengal despite land reforms

Of the country's total 17.92 crore rural households, 10.08 crore or 56 per cent do not own any agricultural land.



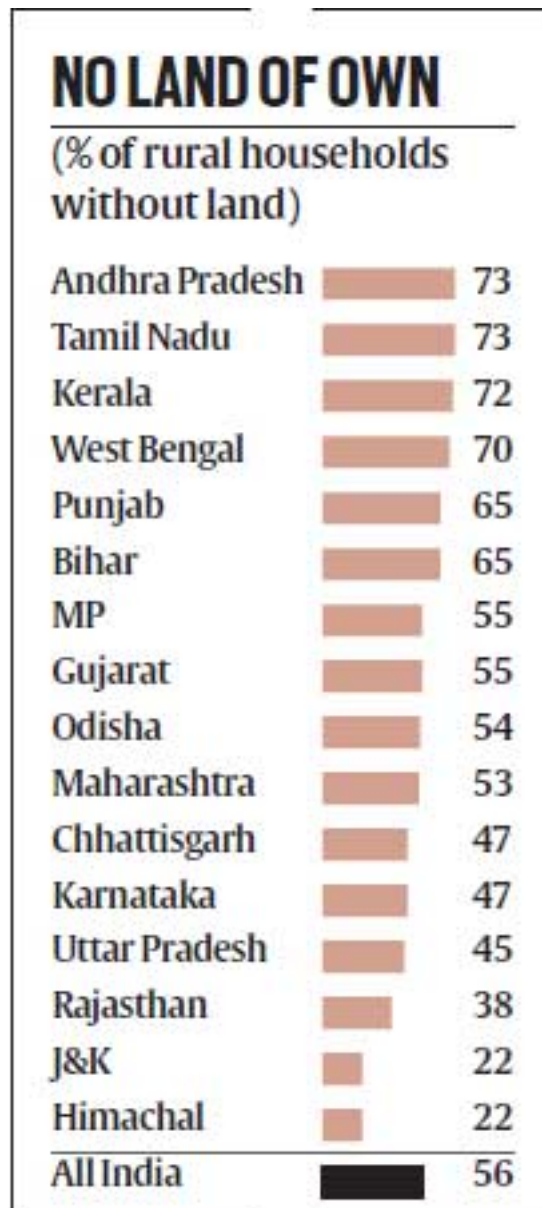
In West Bengal, too, the proportion of rural households mainly dependent on cultivation as a source of revenue is comparatively low at 18.87 per cent.

States that have implemented land reforms have higher rates of landlessness than the national average, according to data from the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC).

Of the country's total 17.92 crore rural households, 10.08 crore or 56 per cent do not own any agricultural land. What is surprising, though, is that the incidence of landlessness is higher in Kerala (72 per cent) and West Bengal (70 per cent).

The percentage of rural households with no land in the two states — both known to have undertaken radical land reforms under Left-ruled governments in the past — is higher than even for the likes of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra or Odisha that have no record of carrying out any sustained land redistribution programme.

One reason for this seeming discrepancy could be that the SECC data looks only at agricultural land and not homestead land, said Abhijit Sen, former member of the Planning Commission. Kerala, for one, has seen significant reduction in land under cultivation. Quite a bit of farmlands redistributed to erstwhile tenant-cultivators after imposition of land ceilings would, over time, have got converted to pure homesteads. Many agricultural households would have exited farming altogether.



This is partly also borne out by the SECC data on sources of household income. While “cultivation” formed the main source of income for 30.1 per cent of all rural households in India, the figure for Kerala was as low as 10.25 per cent.

However, K P Kannan, former director of the Thiruvananthapuram-based Centre for Development Studies, felt that the 72 per cent landlessness figure “needs further confirmation”. While the gross cropped area in Kerala has fallen, it “has not dipped to the extent the SECC data would suggest”.

In West Bengal, the high landlessness is seen to be related to the fact that land reforms in the state were focused more on providing sharecroppers legal security of tenure and protection against eviction — through the Left Front government’s Operation Barga during the 1980s — than conferring ownership per se.

In West Bengal, too, the proportion of rural households mainly dependent on cultivation as a source of revenue is comparatively low at 18.87 per cent.

The states with the lowest rates of landlessness — defined by agricultural land — are Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh.

A game changer

Move to create a pan-Indian electronic trading portal for primary agricultural produce can end APMC monopoly



The Narendra Modi government has taken a significant step towards ending the monopoly of APMCs through the proposed creation of an online National Agriculture Market (NAM) platform. In China, economic reforms started with agriculture, industry came later, while financial sector liberalisation is still a work in progress. It's been quite the opposite in India, where the best proof of reforms completely bypassing the farm sector are the agricultural produce marketing committees or APMCs. Most crops produced by farmers today, barring milk and sugarcane, can be sold only in market yards (mandis) controlled by these institutions. Moreover, food processors or retailers cannot buy directly from the mandis; for that, one needs a licence from the APMC that is seldom granted or itself sells at a premium. Also, the licence for one mandi does not entitle the holder to trade in another mandi, even if both are in the same state. And every purchase compulsorily made through the mandis attracts fees payable both to the APMC and the authorised commission agent, or arhatiya, facilitating the transaction.

The [Narendra Modi](#) government has taken a significant step towards ending the monopoly of APMCs through the proposed creation of an online National Agriculture Market (NAM) platform. This would be a virtual marketplace allowing farmers to offer their crop to buyers anywhere in the country, as opposed to only traders and arhatiyas at the local mandi. Millers, retailers or traders sitting in other states can, likewise, use the platform to bid for produce normally brought to mandis where they have no operating licence. The NAM trading portal thus expands the universe of buyers for farmers, while giving processors the option of sourcing produce directly, rather than going through licensed traders in the particular APMC jurisdictions. Interestingly, the APMC will continue to collect fees on each transaction, even when it is online. The only justification for such a levy — in return for providing a trading platform and facilities for loading, unloading, grading or weighing — does not exist in this case. If despite that, the requirement of buyers having to pay APMC charges is being retained, it only points to the Centre not wanting to excessively ruffle feathers. Market fees are ultimately also a revenue source for state governments, though technically the proceeds are supposed to meet the operational and infrastructure development needs of the mandis concerned.

Yet, the very move to create an alternative, pan-Indian electronic trading portal for primary agricultural produce can be a potential gamechanger. As farmers and producers organisations start to realise the benefits of supplying directly to large processors or retailers — including new-age online grocers — state governments are bound to come under political pressure to dismantle the monopoly enjoyed by APMCs. The latter will then have to shape up to survive — by offering superior infrastructure and services that will attract farmers and buyers. And that's what competition is all about.

Soursop – an adjunct to chemotherapy from tropics

Prickly fruit contains actogenins that scientists say demonstrates selective toxicity to tumour cells.



Soursops or prickly custard [apple](#) have dark green skin, are pear-shaped and have a white juicy flesh with tangy flavour. Also called Graviola at local markets, the tree bearing the fruit is prized in the tropics for its medicinal properties.

All parts of the Soursop tree are used in natural medicine in the tropics. The fruit and its juice are taken to expel parasites and to increase mother's milk after child birth while the leaves are known to have powerful anti-inflammatory effects. Soursop tea is used in traditional medicine to heal wounds, for soothing knee pain and for reducing mucous in colds and in sinuses.

The roots are known for their sedative effects. In the United States and Europe, sour sop is increasingly sold as a popular adjunct to chemotherapy for cancer patients. This use has stemmed from scientific studies and published research on its naturally occurring compounds and anticancer action, rather than folk medicine.

Scientists who have been studying its properties since 1940's have found a compound called acetogenins in the leaf stem, bark and seeds. They demonstrate selective toxicity to tumour cells at very low dosages, without harming healthy cells.

So encouraging were the results that in 1997, Purdue University published news that several acitogenins are not only effective in killing tumours that have proven resistant to anticancer agents, but also have special affinity for cells which are resistant to conventional therapy. Studies on Soursop shows benefits in 12 types of cancers including pancreatic cancer.

According to the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSAs), Soursop is 10,000 times stronger in slowing growth of cancer cells compared to chemotherapy without the side effects of the latter. The association, however, makes it clear that the fruit is not a substitute for medical advice.

Cancer patients and health care practioners are adding the natural leaf and stem of Soursop as a

complimentary therapy to the cancer treatments. After all Soursop has been a long history of safe use as a herbal remedy for many other conditions.

There is, however, a word of caution. A study published in 2006 in the journal of neural transmission showed that it contains compound that may also damage the neurons (brain cells) that control movements. The study linked their discovery to the high occurrence of Parkinson's-like disease in the Carribean Islands where the fruit is commonly consumed. Other contra indications and precautions include its interaction with other drugs in pregnancy, in low blood pressure and its effect on gut flora.

So Soursop certainly exhibits anti-cancer activity but consult a medical professional before you add it to your daily diet.

Author is a clinical nutritionist and founder of <http://www.theweightmonitor.com> and Whole Foods India

Maharashtra: State to study early warning system in Kerala

The Kerala model will have to be adapted for Maharashtra where rocks and soil are different.

Apart from landslides, the system can also have broad applications in monitoring floods, avalanches, forest fires, water contamination and others.

A year after the July 30 Malin landslide that left 151 people dead, the Maharashtra government is set to test an early warning system in the state that has nearly 111 sites prone to landslides, 14 of them in Pune alone.

The system, which is actually a wireless sensor network for landslide detection, has already been tested in Kerala under the national landslide mitigation programme supported by the Centre.

“The state will look at the model being tested in Kerala where geological sensors interconnected with multiple wireless communication links help give advanced warnings on landslides so that people can be evacuated in time to prevent loss of lives. We are thinking of trying out the same in Khandala or Malshej ghats, which are the most vulnerable,” said Suhas Diwase, director of state disaster management cell who is currently in Pune for a landslide workshop.

The Kerala model will have to be adapted for Maharashtra where rocks and soil are different.

The model, prepared by Amrita University, consists of a complex network of 50 geological sensors, interconnected by multiple wireless communication links, including WiFi and VSAT. Last July, this system successfully issued a warning of a possible landslide during the torrential rains that lashed the state and has since proved to be a lifeline for Munnar region.

For Pune, the Geological Survey of India has identified 13-14 landslide-prone spots. The disaster management office has directed authorities to talk to the villagers in these areas ahead of heavy rains, especially in the Malin area. “There are houses in the wadis in the Malin village. There is a risk and we have told them to be careful and shift to the nearest school in case of heavy rains,” district officials said.

District collectors have been asked to conduct a detailed survey to identify areas prone to landslides or mudslides in their jurisdictions and categorise them as highly risky or vulnerable. State's Revenue Minister Eknath Khadse has issued directions to alert the villagers in advance.

Diwase said select sites would be taken up for a detailed project report where the Kerala model can be tested.

Apart from landslides, the system can also have broad applications in monitoring floods, avalanches, forest fires, water contamination and others.

Drones and doves

In the long run, India will have to invest more in irrigation and better water management. But for the short term, our crop insurance system needs an overhaul.



The lessons for India are clear: without significant subsidy from the government, crop insurance is a non-starter.

Policymakers and farmers heaved a sigh of relief as the rains in June were 16 per cent above normal. But the IMD is still cautioning that July and August could be deficient, and India could still face a drought. Whichever way it unfolds, the real challenge is: How can we insure our farmers from extreme weather risks?

In the long run, India will have to invest more in irrigation and better water management. But for the short term, our crop insurance system needs an overhaul. Two issues have to be sorted out: One, the appropriate level of coverage in terms of area, insurance per hectare (ha), and subsidy on premiums; and two, how new technologies like drones, doves and low earth orbiters (LEOs) can be used to monitor crops and assess damage.

Currently, there are basically three schemes in this field: the National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS), the Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS) and the Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS). These schemes have low penetration — based on a three-year average, 2011-12 to 2013-14, the area insured under them was 14 million ha (mha) in the rabi season and 28 mha in the kharif. The premium rates in the NAIS are administered — between 1.5 and 3.5 per cent — and have no actuarial basis. However, the MNAIS and WBCIS are based on actuarial premium rates, varying between 8 and 10 per cent. But the sum insured in these schemes covers only the cost of cultivation, not the farmer's prospective income. Further, claim settlements take as long as six to 12 months. The challenge is to increase the area insured to, say, 100 mha, raise the sum insured, reduce actuarially sound premiums and quicken the process of damage-assessment and settlement of claims. By the basic principles of insurance, premiums reduce drastically with an increase in acreage and geographical spread. Hence, it is a myth that the government's subsidy burden would increase 15-20 fold if the sum insured and area under coverage is increased.

The US and China are the biggest crop insurers in the world — they insured about 120 and 73 mha in 2013, respectively. Both subsidise crop insurance — the US by 70 per cent (including administrative charges), and China by 80 per cent (up from 50-65 per cent till 2013). With this

increase in subsidy in China, the area covered rose from 10 to 73 mha between 2007 and 2013.

Another interesting case is Kenya, where Kilimo Salama, a weather-based insurance product, is being sold by input companies, which share the premium with farmers. Claims are settled in four days.

The lessons for India are clear: without significant subsidy from the government, crop insurance is a non-starter. India already bears more than Rs 4,000 crore per year as premium subsidy (average of the triennium ending 2013-14), in addition to the various compensation packages. With some additional resources, India could enlarge the area covered to 100 mha, build an insurance system that is science-based, transparent, as well as free from the patwari system and ad hoc political interference. Drone technology is experiencing explosive growth. Drones are low-cost, can fly at low heights and capture images in all resolutions needed to assess crop damage. They are even better than satellites and remote sensing when it comes to avoiding cloud cover and have higher frequency images. According to some projections, 80 per cent of the commercial market for drones will eventually be for agriculture. The law will have to be tweaked to let them fly. Planet Labs, a private US venture, has designed low-cost satellites called doves, which could be useful in crop monitoring. They have resolution of about three-five metres, fly on low orbit and are able to collect data from anywhere on earth. With these technologies, it has become much easier, faster and more cost effective to monitor and assess crop damage. If India can be proud of the Mars Orbiter Mission, which cost Rs 450 crore, it would feel doubly proud of insuring its farmers through drones and doves supplemented by all-weather stations (AWS, five in each block) that would cost less than Rs 500 crore. Handheld devices that cost just Rs 8,000 could be used to verify the GPS coordinates of a farmer's field to digitise land records. Digitised records would need to be linked to farmers' bank accounts and Aadhaar numbers to electronically transfer the claims in two-three weeks, if not in four days. Thus, a three-layer system for assessing crop damage, including AWS, satellite/ drone images and mobile-based technology, can ground the system in science and control corruption. The absence of rural agents to distribute agricultural insurance has been a major hindrance to penetration in India. This has resulted in only loanee-farmers being forced to take insurance. This "forcible method" is bound to fail. Agricultural insurance must be spread on mission mode. For this, we need entrepreneurs — rural agents to digitise land records and sell insurance, crop-loss surveyors, weather-station providers — in order to cover every farmer in the country. The real cost to the government depends on the subsidy on premiums it is ready to bear. A 75 per cent subsidy (50 per cent borne by the Centre and 25 per cent by the states) can revolutionise crop insurance, making it demand-based like the various social security schemes announced recently. According to a back-of-the-envelope calculation, insuring a sum of Rs 40,000 per ha is feasible. With coverage of 100 mha, premiums could come down to about 3 per cent, or Rs 1,200 per ha. This implies that the cost to the farmer, Centre and state would be around Rs 300, 600 and 300 per ha, respectively. The total expenditure would be Rs 6,000 crore for the Centre (an addition of Rs 2,000 crore). With this, India could leapfrog in risk coverage for farmers. Public- and private-sector insurance companies, along with banks, could be roped in to put the infrastructure in place quickly — it could probably be done in six to 12 months. Competition among companies can keep premiums low. If the Narendra Modi government can rise to this challenge, it would be giving a bigger gift to millions of farmers than the Mars Orbiter Mission gave this nation. Co-written by Perna Terway. Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture and Terway is a research assistant at Icrier



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Powered by Indiatimes

Top 6 health benefits of carrots

Carrots are considered superfoods for fertility and help boost the quality and quantity of sperm. But there are far more health benefits of eating carrots. We list out the top six health benefits of eating carrots.

Ageing: Carrots are considered anti-ageing foods as they are rich in beta-carotene, an antioxidant that fights free radicals.

Boost beauty: Carrots are rich in antioxidants and vitamin A, both responsible for healthy skin, hair and nails.

Fight cardiovascular diseases: Carrots consists of beta-carotene, alpha-carotene and lutein are antioxidants that fight cholesterol. Carrots are also fibrous; hence it helps soak out bad cholesterol.

Dental health: Consumption of carrots improves the dental health by clearing plaque. Biting on carrots increases the production of saliva, hence balances the acid level which fight cavity-causing bacteria.

Improves liver health: Carrots are considered detox food, as it cleanses the liver. Carrots help reduce bile and fat storage in the liver.

Prevent infection: Raw carrot or boiled are applied on cuts and wounds as an antiseptic.

Did you know there are 100 species of carrots? Choose bright colour carrots, smooth ones and medium size carrots as these are fresh. Carrots also contain minerals and vitamins like thiamin, niacin, vitamin B6, folate and manganese. Carrots are also a good source of fibre, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin K and potassium.

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


THE HINDU BusinessLine

Census reveals grim picture of Bharat

How rural India ticks		
Total households (rural+urban) in the country: 24.39 crore		Total rural households : 17.91 crore
Good (% of total rural households)	Bad (% of total rural households)	Ugly (Number of households)
Mobile phone: 68.35	No phone: 27.93	Considered for deprivation: 10.69 crore
Refrigerator: 11.04	Monthly income of highest earning household member less than ₹5,000: 74.49	Living in one room, kuccha walls & roof: 2.37 crore
Two-wheelers: 17.43	Without owning land: 56	No adult member between age of 18-59: 65.15 lakh
Irrigated land: 25.63	Manual casual labour: 51.14	With differently-abled member with no other able bodied adult member: 7.16 lakh
Paying income tax: 4.56	Un-irrigated land: 29.7	Landless deriving a major part of their income from manual labour: 5.37 crore

"The report will help assess who are the ones who have moved up in terms of quality of life and which are the social groupings that need to be targeted."

Arun Jaitley



One out of three families landless, less than 5% rural households pay income tax

NEW DELHI, JULY 3:

Reiterating the lopsided India story, the Socio Economic and Caste Census on rural areas revealed that one out of three families is landless, less than 5 per cent of the rural households pay income tax, but over 68 per cent have mobile phones.

Released on Friday, the result of the first such Census in independent India — the last one was conducted in 1932 — did not include caste-specific data despite the title saying so.

“I am sure that with the enormity of schemes and the reach that all governments have, this document will form the basis of helping us to target groups to support in terms of policy planning,” said Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, while releasing the report in the presence of Rural Development Minister Chaudhry Birender Singh. The paperless Census was carried out in all the 640 districts of the country with the help of a handheld device.

It said that of the total 24.39 crore households in the country, 17.91 crore are in rural areas. Of the rural households, 18.46 per cent belong to a Scheduled Caste and 10.97 per cent to a Schedule Tribe while 68.5 per cent belong to ‘other categories’. Interestingly, over 36.5 lakh families (a little over 2 per cent) belong to no caste or tribe category.

Five States with a high percentage of rural SC households are Punjab, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. On sources of income, the Census says 5 per cent of the households draw government salaries, over 3.57 per cent relied on the private sector, and little over 1 per cent of households on public sector enterprises.

However, the bad news is that over 6.85 crore households (38.27 per cent) hold no land, deriving a major part of their income from casual manual labour. Also, the number of households with destitutes or those living on alms is over 6.68 lakh; as many as 4.08 lakh households rely on rag-picking.

Earning members While for almost two-thirds of the rural households the top earning member got less than ₹5,000 a month, in over 1.48 crore (8.29 per cent) households, the top earner brought home more than ₹10,000 a month.

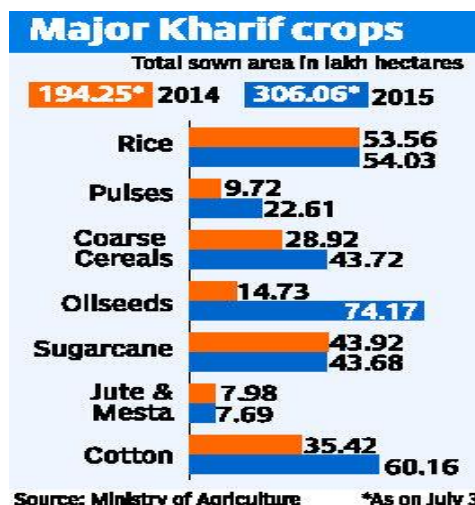
The Census also gave a glimpse of the rural market, with one out of every five families owning a motorised vehicle (two/three/four-wheeler or a fishing boat).

On the use of the report, Jaitley said it will help assess “who are the ones who have qualitatively moved up in terms of quality of life and who are the ones in terms of geographical regions, social groupings which need to be targeted.”

Rural Development Minister Birender Singh said: “The data are an opportunity to make evidence-based selection, prioritisation and targeting of beneficiaries in different programmes.”

The Rural Development Ministry has decided to use the SECC data in all its programmes.

Heavy June showers see 58% rise in Kharif sowing



New Delhi, July 3:

Kharif crops have been sown on 306.06 lakh hectares (lha), according to data released by the Agriculture Ministry on Friday. The sowing took place on the back of 16 per cent above normal rainfall in June.

The latest acreage data represent a 57.6 per cent increase in sowing over the corresponding period last year and an almost 85 per cent surge over the previous week, when acreage stood at 165.6 lha.

The key Kharif crops include rice (paddy), oilseeds such as soyabean and groundnut, cotton, pulses, sugarcane and a range of coarse cereals, including jowar and bajra.

Rice up marginally

Rice, the main crop of the season, registered a marginal uptick of about 0.9 per cent from the previous year and stood at 54.03 lha from 53.56 lha in 2014-15.

The data recorded higher area under paddy in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, while it is down nearly 5.23 lha in basmati-growing Punjab. Lower acreage was also reported in Assam, Odisha and West Bengal, among other States.

Sugarcane acreage has also risen slightly to 43.68 lha from 43.92 lha during the same time last year.

Sowing of pulses such as arhar (tur), moong and urad has taken place across 22.61 lha, a massive 133 per cent increase over the previous year, led by Maharashtra (3.38 lha), Madhya Pradesh (2.97 lha) and Karnataka (1.67 lha).

Stock limits for pulses

The Food Ministry is mulling over introduction of stock limits for Kharif pulses to dissuade hoarding and to ease pressure on retail prices, which are up 33 per cent (urad) and 38 per cent (arhar) in the Capital, over last year.

The subject is likely to be taken up during a meeting with State Food Ministers on July 7.

“We want States to impose stock limits only on arhar, urad and moong, not on chana, matar and masoor. They need to ensure there is no hoarding,” said Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan.

More crop per drop

Water reforms in agriculture cannot be put off any longer

The recommendation by the Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices that States fix ceilings on per hectare use of water deserves to be taken up seriously. Paddy is a water guzzler; a kg of paddy requires 3,000-5,000 litres of water. Providing for this across the length and breadth of India has created ecological and livelihood imbalances. The same holds true for sugarcane, another water-intensive crop. Punjab, a State that is almost entirely irrigated and has the highest per hectare yields, uses over 5,300 litres of water to produce a kg of rice. Free electricity since 1997 led to a shift away from canal irrigation to groundwater irrigation. This shift — thanks to groundwater being available on demand right through the year — coincided with a huge increase in acreage under rice in the

State, at the expense of coarse grains and pulses. Even as water tables have fallen precipitously in many districts, farmers stick to a paddy-wheat cycle. The combination of free electricity and assured price still works in paddy's favour. If the State government cannot levy a price on electricity, the least it can do is ration its supply.

This is not to argue that paddy, essential for food security, should be discouraged. By levying a price on water in command areas or curbing its supply, farmers may be persuaded to adopt efficient methods, developed by the ICAR, that use 30 per cent less water. However, raising water rates — command area farmers are heavily subsidised — may not lead to efficient cropping practices, unless water accounts for a significant share of the costs. Therefore, a lot depends on whether the irrigation system can regulate supply in keeping with efficient cropping practices, rather than flood the fields without warning and then not supply water for days on end. The government, besides raising water rates in command areas, should focus on 'irrigation extension' activities such as developing decentralised, well-informed water user associations, as in Gujarat and Maharashtra. As for sugarcane, it is a case of political forces not paying heed to market realities — a crop favoured by growers because of assured prices and buyers is in crisis because of a sugar glut.

While taking a serious view of water use, it must be kept in mind that the economics of rainfed farming is a pretty grim affair. Farmers desperate for water invest over a lakh in a pumpset only to find it becoming useless after two years because of a declining water table, in effect paying a high price for water. For them to shift to horticultural products that are amenable to drip irrigation, they need to be assured of market linkages and better extension support. Reforms in warehousing and distribution practices must be pursued at the earliest. This will leave not just the water table, but also farmers and consumers better off.

'We want to connect 50 m women by Oct'

Mumbai, July 3:

Helping Women Get Online is an initiative launched by Google in India way back in 2013. Why the delay in tie-up with Tata Trusts?

Yes, we started Helping Women Get Online in 2013. This is a different phase. When we started, it was an overarching campaign and an initiative to empower women by enabling them to use the Internet. We tried to solve the issue. In everything that we did, we found it was moving the needle in urban India, but it was not moving the needle in rural areas.

The growth rate among internet users in urban India clearly shows that women are growing 50 per cent faster, while in rural India, men are growing five times faster. While the growth of female internet users is 27 per cent in rural India, in the case of males it is 57 per cent.

We learnt that later. We didn't know that in 2013. We wanted to understand why the divide was increasing, and that is when we realised there were a different set of issues in rural India than in urban India.

The way Google works is, we always experiment with things. If it works, then we scale it. And in order to scale, is when we started looking for partners.

What necessitated bringing partners on board?

Tata Trusts is a very large network of non government organisations (NGOs). As Google, we don't understand rural villages.

Tata Trusts have been working in these rural villages for decades. They bring understanding of rural India, as well as on-the-ground experience and capability.

The exciting thing about Intel is they actually understand computer literacy. How does one make sure a woman in rural India has the right experience, in terms of the Internet? Intel understands that. While Tata Trusts have the feet on the street, and they are the experts, Intel understands computer literacy. And we understand the Internet.

The whole thing is our initiative and it involves a massive investment on our part. There is money and then there is execution capacity. All partners will be investing money and helping us execute. We don't reveal how much we invest in any project.

Specially-designed internet cycle carts are to be used to visit areas in villages where women can easily access and learn about and from the web. What did you have before the internet cart?

We did massive ATL (above the line) activities to build awareness as well as several on-the-ground activations. We have been using schools and using internet kiosks. We brought many women into such schools. After the school ends we used the computer labs to bring women in and help them.

Over the last 18 months, we trained 1.5 million women and we want to reach 50 million women by October.

Are you looking to bring in more such partners?

Over time we might bring in more partners. Right now, we are focussed on deploying 1,000 carts across 4,500 villages. Over the next 18 months, ideally less than that, we would like to impact the lives of half a million women and then scale it. This (Internet cycle) can easily be scaled up. It is not a complicated device, and can be driven by a woman, who can reach across and teach other women all about the Internet.

e-Kisan Mandi to connect farmers directly with buyers

Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium to operate the online platform



Modus operandi The e-platform will allow large buyers — including exporters, caterers, hotels, and offline and online retail chains — to buy vegetables and fruits directly from farmer producer organisations

New Delhi, July 3:

Bulk buyers of perishable commodities, such as fruits and vegetables, in New Delhi can sidestep middlemen while procuring fresh produce by the end of this month through the ‘e-Kisan Mandi’ portal, an exchange platform to be operated by the Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC).

The portal will be formally launched on July 27 and is part of an overall project to establish a ‘direct purchase system’ linking farmers with buyers.

The agency – under the Agriculture Ministry – was looking to construct an exemplary mandi with grading and cold storage facilities at a 1.6 acre plot in Alipur, close to the Haryana border. It was launched by the Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh last September, but problems cropped up with regard to land titles that prevented land transfer to the SFAC.

“The physical facility is yet to be constructed. There have been issues with land titles due to which building permissions have been held back. The e-Kisan Mandi platform will obviate, in some ways, the necessity of having that facility,” said Pravesh Sharma, Managing Director, SFAC.

How it works

The e-platform will allow large buyers — including exporters, caterers, hotels, and offline and online retail chains such as Big Bazaar, More, Grofers, etc — to procure vegetables and fruits directly from farmer producer organisations (FPOs) operating in specialised growing hubs like Nashik (onions) and western Uttar Pradesh (potatoes) through ‘local franchisees’.

“We have created this facility for farmers and FPOs to bring the perishables to a local franchisee where the produce will be quality graded and sorted before being connected to an electronic platform. A large buyer in Delhi can simply go online to see the quality and grade of the produce on offer and participate in the auction,” said Pravesh Sharma, Managing Director, SFAC.

More than 200 buyers and sellers have already registered with SFAC to use the ‘e-Kisan Mandi’ portal.

The software, which was developed by commodities bourse NCDEX, was funded by the Centre.

Delhi was picked for the launch since it was one of seven States/Union Territories that had delisted fruits and vegetables from the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act, allowing farmers to sell their produce to wholesale markets beyond designated mandis.

The platform is likely to be extended to States such as Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh soon. “The franchisee can be a private player, an entrepreneur or a mandi trader, registered with us. They require only a terminal and access to the platform through the software. Farmers can go to them directly with their produce and it’s the franchisees’ job to verify the quality and quantity before sourcing them for auctions,” Sharma said.

Though no official target has been set, the agency is aiming to transact 1,000 tonnes per day and it estimates that 2,500 tonnes per day would make it financially viable.

Targets & commodities

Potato, onion, tomato, mango and banana, are the fruits and vegetables that will be traded to begin with.

“These commodities account for 40 per cent of the total sales of fresh produce in Delhi. We have developed protocols for these and it can be extended to other perishables over time. Other seasonal fruits and vegetables, specialised produce like mushroom, and organic goods can be sold through the platform as well,” he added.

Currently, there are about 800 registered FPOs in India, of which 450 have been promoted by the SFAC. It is targeting the promotion of another 350 FPOs by the end of this year.

Around 8,000-10,000 tonnes of fruits and vegetables are supplied in New Delhi each day.

Coconut growers told not to sell produce at lower prices

Kochi, July 3:

The Coconut Development Board has urged farmers not to sell off their produce at throwaway prices, saying the recent downward trend in prices of coconut products is temporary.

The market has been sluggish movement as a result of the start of monsoon season and the end of the main harvesting season in Kerala.

It is expected the market will overcome this temporary price fall and the prices will be stable by the arrival of the festival season, the Board said in a statement issued here.

The Farmer Producers Organisations should concentrate on procurement of produce and primary processing to tap the opportunities the festival season would bring.

The Board termed “baseless” the reports making the rounds that increase in production in Tamil Nadu was the reason behind the price fall.

The production in the country’s main coconut producer States such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have decreased compared to the previous year, it said.

As compared to May this year, export of coconut and coconut value-added products registered 11 per cent growth in June.

Apart from this, the import of copra and coconut oil to India was comparatively very low.

Mixed trend in Kochi tea auction

Kochi, July 3:

Kochi tea auctions witnessed a mixed trend this week with prices of some varieties showing a decline amid improved arrivals.

The market for select best and teas which came under the selection of AVT was steady to firm and sometimes dearer, while others were irregular and lower.

Better demand

However, blacker medium and plainer grainier varieties was firm to dearer, while browner teas were lower and witnessed heavy withdrawals.

The quantity on offer in CTC dust grades was 13,68,500 kg in sale no 27.

There was a better export enquiry and upcountry demand, the auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said.

The arrival in Orthodox grades was also up at 22,500 kg and the market for primary grades was dearer. A small quantity sold was absorbed by exporters.

In Cochin CTC dust quotation, good grades quoted Rs. 90-126 a kg, mediums fetched Rs. 64-92 and plain varieties stood at Rs. 56-67.

Leaf auctions

In leaf sales, the quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 215,000 kg. Nilgiri brokens, Fannings were barely steady and tended to ease. Good medium tippy grades were steady to firm and sometimes dearer.

In CTC leaf, the market for Good Liquoring Brokens was steady to firm.

The quantity on offer was 71,000 kg, registering an increase compared to last week.

In dust category, Sholayar SFD quoted the best prices of Rs. 131 followed by Kallyar at Rs. 129.

In leaf grades, Chamraj FOP-Sup Green Tea fetched the best prices of Rs. 316 followed by P's Woodlands Hyson Green Tea at Rs. 281 a kg.

Food Ministry proposes 10% duty to curb cheap wheat imports

New Delhi, July 3:

After reports that private traders in South India had begun importing wheat, the Food Ministry has forwarded a proposal to the Commerce Ministry seeking a 10 per cent import duty on the foodgrain to curb cheaper imports.

Wheat is available in the domestic market for Rs. 18.50/kg, while the imports, mainly from Australia, are pegged at Rs. 17/kg. There is no import duty on wheat at present.

“We have suggested that a 10 per cent duty be imposed on wheat imports since there is surplus stock. The proposal has been sent to the Commerce Ministry,” Union Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan told reporters here on Friday.

The Minister said there was no quality issue with the wheat procured by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and it was wrong to believe that it was unfit for consumption. Quality norms had been relaxed after standing crop had been damaged by unseasonal rain and hailstorms between February and early April. “There is no problem with the quality of wheat in terms of consumption even if the grain is shrivelled, broken or has lost lustre,” he said.

The FCI, the nodal agency for procurement and distribution of the foodgrain through the public distribution system, has a stock of 40.35 million tonnes (mt) as of early June. The agency has procured nearly 28 mt of wheat in the current marketing year.

An import duty is likely to help the Centre get rid of the inferior quality that has been procured although flour millers and traders have been looking to take advantage of lower global prices. Around 0.5 mt of Australian wheat is believed to have been contracted so far. “We received reports that traders have contracts for at least 3 lakh tonnes of wheat, largely from Australia. The proposal has the backing of the Agriculture Ministry and we should hear from the Commerce Ministry next week,” said a Ministry official.

India produced 90.78 mt of wheat in 2014-15, down from a record 95.85 mt last year.

Cane arrears

The dues owed by mills to sugarcane farmers are being cleared at a slow pace, said the official. Arrears of Rs. 21,000 crore at the end of April have only reduced to about Rs. 18,000 crore as of this week.

Mills in Uttar Pradesh account for more than half the outstanding amount and owe the State's cane growers Rs. 9,154 crore. Maharashtra's farmers are owed Rs. 3,316 crore, while mills in Karnataka need to make payments worth Rs. 2,112 crore.

"The issue will be discussed further when we meet with State Food Ministers on July 7," said Paswan.

Tata welcomes Google's 'Internet Saathi'

Mumbai, July 3:

The empowerment of India's disadvantaged women has been at the core of Tata Trusts' many activities. A "special tie with a company (Google) that has digitalised the world and brought connectivity and knowledge to millions of people" is what brought Tata Trusts, chaired by Ratan Tata, to 'Internet Saathi', a Google India initiative.

With this programme, the trust has been able to join hands and help in the quest to digitise India, said Ratan Tata, who was present at the event in Mumbai.

"I don't think we understand enough the impact of what we are doing today, and the start of what it can mean in the future. It is a great moment," he said, referring to the need to get involved.

Tata Trusts decided to play a role in supporting Google to help reach out to rural women.

Business Standard

Google, Tata Trusts roll out bicycles to teach internet to rural women

Target is to train about five lakh Indian women in next 18 months



Tata Trusts chairman Ratan Tata speaks at the launch of a special programme 'Internet Saathi'

Google India has joined hands with Tata Trusts, the charity arm of Tata Group, to educate rural women about internet by sending 1,000 specially- designed bicycles equipped with internet devices into remote villages.

Each of these bicycles will be operated by “Internet Saathis” trained by Google and the target is to train about 500,000 Indian women in the next 18 months. The internet mogul is terming the initiative a step towards the Digital India vision of the country.

“While women are making rapid progress on adoption of internet in urban areas, women in rural areas are getting left behind. Today, only 12 per cent of Internet users in rural India are women while in urban areas it is 50 per cent. We need to come together to address this challenge and empower women in rural India through trainings and programmes that can transform their lives,” said Rajan Anandan, managing director of Google Southeast Asia and India.

The initiative will kick off from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Jharkhand and will be rolled out across the country eventually reaching out to over 4,500 villages and five lakh women across rural India over the next eighteen months.

The internet cart would be available in a village for a minimum of two days every week for over a period of four to six months. Once the cart has completed the training in a cluster of three villages, it will be moved to the adjoining cluster for completion of a similar cycle.

Tata Trusts chairman Ratan Tata said it is a privilege to associate with Google.

“In addition to access, the internet has brought dignity and self respect to poor people. I am delighted that the Prime Minister of India is putting on that India needs to be digitised. Google as a company has digitised the world and it’s a privilege to work with them towards bringing women online,” Tata said.

Google had launched a similar programme last year through a tricycle cart. However, since it faced difficulties in steering the cart, it turned to bicycles and teamed up with Tata Trusts, which will manage the on ground rollout with its partners whereas Google will invest in providing bicycles and training content.

Food ministry against blanket stock limit on all pulses varieties

The food ministry is against a blanket limit on stocking of all varieties of pulses and favours lifting them for chana and masur, but retaining it for moong, arhar and urad. It also has proposed a 10 per cent import duty on wheat to curb cheaper shipments as the country already has surplus stock.

"There are reports that private traders are importing wheat. We have proposed 10 per cent duty to check cheap imports and ensure that surplus wheat is consumed," Food Minister Ramvilas Paswan told reporters. He was briefing media on the issues that would be discussed at a day-long meeting with state food ministers next week, on price of essential commodities.

The minister also said that Centre was in favour of devising a long-term policy related to sugar sector based on boosting ethanol production as a piecemeal approach is neither in the interest of growers nor the sugar mills.

He also ruled out any quality issue on wheat procured this year by the Food Corporation of India (FCI), the nodal agency for procurement and distribution of foodgrains.

Wheat is being imported at Rs 17 per kg, while it is available in the domestic market at Rs 18.50 per kg, he added.

"There is sufficient supply in the country. The wheat being procured by FCI this year is of good quality and is fit for human consumption," he said.

India's per capita income up 10%

However, the country could not cross the low-middle income trap, says World Bank

India’s per capita income rose 9.7 per cent to \$1,631 in 2014 from \$1,487 in the previous year, but it remained a low-middle income economy, according to the World Bank’s latest estimates on per

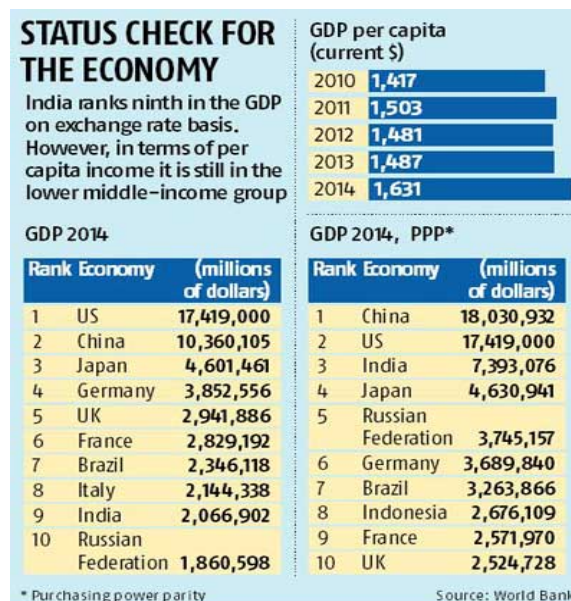
capita income and GDP. The growth rate in per capita income in 2014 was higher than the 0.4 per cent rise in 2013 over \$1,481 in 2012.

Also, it was for the first time in three years that the per capita income increased beyond the level of 2011, when it was \$1,503. India's per capita income has been rising in rupee terms, but the depreciation of the country's currency against the dollar made it look smaller than that in 2012 and 2013. Despite the depreciation, the country's per capita income rose significantly in 2014 compared with 2013. India was too away from crossing the low-middle income trap as the per capita income has to cross \$4,125 a year to achieve that slot. The lower range of this category is \$1,046 a year, which the country crossed in 2009.

India was 169th in terms of per capita income in the world. In terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), the country's per capita income grew 7.65 per cent to \$5,833 in 2014, against \$5,418 in the previous year. In 2013, the growth rate was 7.15 per cent over \$5,056 in the previous year. India ranked 147th in terms of per capita income in PPP terms.

The country's GDP crossed \$2 trillion in 2014, compared to \$1.86 trillion in the previous year. India crossed the \$2-trillion mark in seven years after crossing \$1 trillion in 60 years.

In terms of official dollar-rupee rate, the economy was ninth in terms of GDP size.



However, in terms of PPP, India's GDP stood at \$6.78 trillion in 2014, maintaining its third slot in the world, after China and the US. It took the economy three years to cross the \$4-trillion mark after it surpassed \$3 trillion in 2007 and two more years to cross the \$5-trillion mark.

Groundnut exports rise by 40% in 2014-15

Lower price in domestic market and good demand for the Indian product mainly pushed exports from the country

Groundnut export from India has increased sharply by 39 per cent to over 700,000 tonnes during year 2014-15 as against 509,000 tonnes in 2013-14. Lower price in domestic market and good demand for the Indian product mainly pushed exports from the country.

As per Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) data, India has exported 708,386 tonnes groundnut during the year 2014-15 as against 509,664 tonnes in the previous year.

Much of it saw being exported to countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand which were some of the highest groundnut exporting regions for India. For instance, export to Vietnam has registered 183,771 tonnes as against 40,660 tonnes.

"Groundnut crop size was lower in last kharif season but demand for Indian groundnut got better in international market in recent times. Moreover, groundnut price was also competitive since domestic market was not so high," said Vikram Duvani, managing director of Rachna Seeds from Junagadh.

According to exporters, average price of Indian groundnut in international market stood between \$ 1,000 and \$ 1,100 per tonne, whereas in domestic market groundnut prices ranged between Rs 850 and Rs 1,050 per 20 kg during November 2014 and March 2015.

Usually, India exports two types of groundnut, namely Java and bold. "Generally, we export Java quality of groundnut mostly. However, this year demand for bold quality turned out to be good especially from China," said Duvani.

While direct exports to China stood at 33,677 tonnes, traders and exporters believe the real number could be almost doubled than the figure.

Meanwhile, according to the Indian Oilseeds & Produce Export Promotion Council (IOPEPC), there has been good demand for groundnut from India from West Asian countries as well. This, in addition to huge production of good quality groundnut, has helped in controlling groundnut price in domestic market as well as boosting exports especially during April to November 2014-15.