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Agri Intex from July 17

Coimbatore District Small Industries' Association will organise Agri Intex, an agricultural trade fair, here from July 17 to 20 and will have over 300 participants.

The 15th edition of the exhibition will have the direct participation of companies from Israel and firms from Japan, France, Italy and Germany that have a presence in India.

There will be participants from nearly 10 States and one lakh visitors are expected.

The event will have a launch platform for companies to promote their products and services, an integrated model farm, and display of Aeroponics (soilless agriculture).

Some of the major products on display will be solar pumps, precision farming and micro irrigation systems, automation and farm mechanisation products, post harvest technologies.

The highlight will also be on agro marketing opportunities and animal husbandry. With focus on dairy farming, there will be a conference on July 18.

The event is supported by Indian Council for Agricultural Research, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Tamil Nadu Fisheries University, Sugarcane Breeding Institute, Progressive Dairy Farmers Association and All India Agricultural Implements Manufacturers' Association. R. Amalorpavanathan, Deputy Managing Director of National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development, will inaugurate the event on Friday. *The Hindu* is the media partner for Agri Intex 2015.

Special visiting

K. Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, told presspersons here on Tuesday that there is a need to bring technology to farmers.

Students will have a special visiting time for two hours every day.

‘Sensitive media drives good policy’



Alan Rusbridger, former Editor-in-Chief, The Guardian, and N. Ram, Chairman, Kasturi and Sons Ltd., at a public lecture organised by The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy in Chennai on Tuesday.

Politicians need public discussion to act on climate change: Alan Rusbridger.

Politicians would not be able to make hard choices on an issue such as climate change, if the media fails to build public opinion on this extraordinarily important challenge facing the world, said Alan Rusbridger, former Editor-in-Chief of Guardian News and Media on Tuesday.

Climate change is an issue on which politicians find it difficult to make decisions and journalism has to step in with even a campaign to make people

consider it, he said, delivering a lecture on “Climate change: Has journalism failed?” organised by The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy here.

Taking as an example his own decision in the last five months of his editorship of *The Guardian* to aggressively pursue climate change, Mr. Rusbridger said the newspaper launched a campaign to persuade investors in fossil fuel companies extracting resources such as oil and coal to “keep it in the ground.”

The media even in advanced countries such as the United States and the U.K. was either shrinking its coverage of climate change, or adopting a false sense of balance which did not bring out the horrific dimensions of the problem, more so for future generations.

The Guardian therefore chose to base its campaign to convince institutions such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Wellcome Trust to withdraw their investments in fossil fuel companies, on a set of assumptions: that man-made climate change was happening, a simple set of three numbers on the threshold of temperature rise that earth could survive and the buried reserve of carbon emissions, would drive home the message effectively.

The three critical campaign numbers framed by the activist Bill McKibben and used by *The Guardian* are: To stay under 2 degrees Celsius rise in earth’s temperature, only 565 gigatonnes (GT) of carbon dioxide can be emitted, but there is already 2,795 GT - five times more - ready to burn.

Through its mixed campaign and reporting that utilised interactive graphics, videos and involved top poets and actors, its website got 6.1 million views and 4.9 million visitors. The newspaper was able to get 2,20,000 persons to sign a petition urging the two organisations to disinvest from the fossil fuel companies.

During a questions session that followed the lecture, agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan said a rise in average temperature of 2 to 4 degrees Celsius would lead to enormous crop losses, since the duration of cultivation would be shortened.

The lecture was attended among others by leading citizens, including CPI(M) leader Prakash Karat, former Madras High Court judge Prabha Sridevan, and advocate Sriram Panchu.

The Chairman, Kasturi and Sons, N. Ram, who introduced Mr. Rusbridger to the audience, said the lecture, which was the third organised on climate change by The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy brought up the question of journalism's role in such serious global problems.

The Namakkal model

The problem of felling coconut trees to commission power transmission lines was a major issue confronting the farmers here too till a couple of months ago.

A solution was reached by a special committee formed by the District Collector that fixed a reasonable compensation. The coconut trees were felled mainly in the villages in Kabilarmalai union for the execution of the 110 KV Tuticorin – Dharmapuri project of the Tangedco.

P. Perumal, district secretary of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, in one of the grievances redress meetings complained that hundreds of coconut trees have been felled, and the compensation was not adequate. K. Sundaram, general secretary of the Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam, too raised the matter in these meetings.

The District Collector, V. Dakshinamoorthy, formed a special committee comprising officials of the agriculture, Tangedco, and representatives of farmers organisations to fix a reasonable compensation.

The committee finalised a compensation based on the age of the trees – trees up to five years, trees between 5 and 10 years, and trees between 10 and 35 years.

A maximum compensation of Rs. 18,000 was fixed for trees in the age group of 10 – 35 years, much to the satisfaction of the farming community. The proposal was forwarded to the managing director of the Power Grid, who too gave his nod for the same.

Except the farmers' associations affiliated to the Left, a majority of the farmers accepted the compensation package.

A majority of the farmers agreed to the compensation package

Health scheme for farmers

The last date for registration of farmers for the Yeshaswini Health Scheme has been extended till July 31. Members of cooperative milk societies, fishermen's cooperative unions, Pattana Banks and other cooperatives have been asked to renew their membership and also become members these cooperatives to take advantage of the health scheme. For details, contact the Deputy Registrar of Cooperatives.

Wholesale prices continue to fall



Wholesale inflation in manufactured goods fell to -0.8 per cent in June from -0.6 per cent in May.

Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation dipped marginally in June 2015 to -2.4 per cent from -2.36 per cent in May, and 5.66 per cent in June 2014.

This marks the eighth consecutive month of wholesale price inflation being negative.

“Coming close on the heels of a moderate rise in retail prices, the inching down of WPI inflation is sure to lift market sentiment. The decline in wholesale price inflation is attributed to the deceleration in food prices even

as there is a marginal uptick in fuel and power inflation,” said Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII.

Primary articles inflation remained the same in June as its level in May, at -0.7 per cent. However, within this category, food articles inflation fell to 2.9 per cent compared to 3.8 per cent in May.

Wholesale inflation in manufactured goods fell to -0.8 per cent in June from -0.6 per cent in May. “The fall in manufacturing prices point to demand conditions which are yet to become robust,” said Mr. Banerjee.

Even the Index of Industrial Production figures show that manufacturing output is slowing, with May growth at 2.2 per cent. This is slower than the provisional figures for April, at 5.1 per cent, and even the revised figures for that month of 4.2 per cent.

“IIP numbers remain volatile and there is a critical need to firm up industrial growth. The demand situation in the economy is still weak and industries across sectors are operating at sub-optimal capacity. We hope that the Reserve Bank would maintain its accommodative stance in the third bi-monthly statement for 2015-16 to be announced next month,” said Jyotsna Suri, President, FICCI.

Going forward, Dr. Suri said that “the pickup in monsoons in June augurs well for agri-production in the coming months. Inflation is expected to remain range bound and within Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) indicative trajectory this fiscal year.”

Mr. Banerjee feels that the near static price line and benign inflation outlook should propel the RBI to continue with its rate easing cycle in its forthcoming monetary policy to support investment and consumption demand, especially as industrial production has remained muted and the consumer goods sector has moved into the negative terrain in May.

Oil prices tumble

The landmark nuclear deal would see an easing of sanctions against Tehran and a gradual increase in its oil exports.

Oil prices dropped on Tuesday after Iran and six global powers reached a landmark nuclear deal that would see an easing of sanctions against Tehran and a gradual increase in its oil exports.

The agreement, which capped more than a decade of on-off talks, was hailed by U.S. President Barack Obama as an opportunity worth seizing while Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said it marked a new phase in international relations.

Under the deal, sanctions imposed by the U.S., European Union and United Nations would be lifted in exchange for curbs on Iran's nuclear programme.

There were no immediate details on how sanctions would be eased on oil.

Front-month Brent crude futures had dropped 55 cents to \$57.30 a barrel by 1137 GMT, paring some of their losses after earlier hitting a session low of \$56.43 a barrel. The U.S. crude was trading down 60 cents at \$51.60 a barrel.

Analysts say it would take Iran many months to fully ramp up its export capacity following any easing of sanctions. But even a modest initial increase would be enough to pull international oil prices down further as the market is already producing around 2.5 million barrels per day above demand.

“Even with a historic deal, oil from Iran will take time to return, and will not be before next year, most likely the second half of 2016,” Amrita Sen, Chief Oil Analyst at London-based consultancy Energy Aspects, told *Reuters*.

“But given how oversupplied the market is with Saudi output at record highs, the mere prospect of new oil will be bearish for sentiment.”

Aavin products to be sold soon at malls

Utility in the process of opening more parlours across the city



The new Aavin parlour at the Express Avenue mall in the city.

Along with increasing its processing capacity, the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Producers Federation, popularly known by its brand name Aavin, is also working to reach out to the gen-next.

Recently it opened a parlour at the Express Avenue (EA) mall and will soon open one at Phoenix Market city mall in Velachery. “The parlour at EA is located at the Big Bazaar store. At Velachery too, it will be situated inside the supermarket. We have also started retailing ghee and butter through Reliance supermarkets. They have 46 outlets in the city,” a source said, adding that talks were on with other supermarket chains as well.

Youth connect

“It is in supermarkets that youngsters shop. We want to connect with the working class segment too. We are already a household brand as far as milk goes,” the source added.

Aavin is currently in the process of adding to the number of parlours. Construction is on at Virugambakkam, Besant Nagar, Palavakkam, Vepery, Thiruvanmiyur and Vannandurai, and land has been identified at Mylapore and Teynampet. “One parlour on Arcot Road in Virugambakkam will have a drive-in facility,” the source said.

Farmers called upon to promote sustainable farming

sciences and faculty members should popularise government schemes among farmers'



Rohini Sindhuri, Chief Executive Officer of the zilla panchayat, looking at various exhibits at the Zonal Agricultural Research Station of V.C. Farm of the University of Agricultural Sciences in Mandya taluk on Tuesday.

Rohini Sindhuri, Chief Executive Officer of Mandya Zilla Panchayat, on Tuesday called upon the farmers to promote sustainable agriculture to enhance food production.

Ms. Sindhuri was speaking after inaugurating a three-month on-field agricultural workshop for final year students of the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS-B) on the premises of Zonal Agricultural Research Station (ZARS, V.C. Farm) in the taluk.

Later, Ms. Sindhuri addressed the students of agricultural science and their faculty members, when she urged them to go to farm fields and guide farmers on sustainable methods of agriculture.

The country should become self-sufficient in food production. Unfortunately, the farming community was facing series of problems. Therefore, they should adopt scientific methods of agricultural development.

Schemes

Agricultural Science students should also guide the farmers on availing themselves of the benefits of State and Union government sponsored

schemes. Governments were initiating measures to address the problems of farmers, she said.

T. Shivashankar, D. Raghupati, C.R. Ravishankar, H.T. Nagaraja, C.M. Savitha and others were present.

Students should visit farm fields and guide farmers:

Rohini Sindhuri, Chief Executive Officer of

Mandya Zilla Panchayat

Farmers in Jewargi get crop insurance compensation

Other taluks of Kalaburagi district ignored by AIC

At a time when farmers are facing the brunt of a drought-like situation without the rain to take up sowing operations of kharif crops, the release of the crop insurance compensation amount by the Agriculture Insurance Company (AIC) for the loss suffered by the farmers due to the failure of the kharif crop in 2014 has come as a blessing in disguise.

It is a bonanza for the farmers in Jewargi taluk in the district who received more than 95 per cent of the crop insurance amount released by the AIC. No compensation

The worst hit are the farmers in Afsalpur taluk who have not been sanctioned even a single claim of compensation. In Sedam taluk, only one claim of just Rs. 4,813 as crop insurance has been cleared by the AIC.

As per the official information pertaining to the release of the crop insurance compensation by the AIC, a total of nearly Rs. 62.56 crore has been released to the district as crop insurance amount by the AIC.

Of this, nearly Rs. 59.50 crore has been paid as crop insurance amount to 33,761 farmers in Jewargi taluk.

Meeting

Deputy Commissioner Vipul Bansal has convened a meeting of the officials of the AIC, Agriculture Department and Statistics Department on July 22 to discuss the criteria followed by the AIC while sanctioning the crop insurance

to farmers and take corrective measures to ensure uniformity in payment of crop insurance amount.

Official sources said the total denial of crop insurance to the entire Afsalpur taluk and the other five taluks in the district getting less compensation was wrong, since all the taluks had suffered loss of crop during the 2014 kharif season.

While 4,892 farmers in Chincholi have been sanctioned a sum of Rs. 2.48 crore as compensation, 1,789 farmers in Aland taluk have been sanctioned a sum of just over Rs. 32.58 lakh as crop insurance amount. Similarly, only 551 farmers in Chitapur were eligible to get crop insurance of Rs. 2,108 lakh and 178 famrrers in Kalaburagi taluk got Rs. 4.21 lakh as crop insurance amount.

Sources said that the sum insured for crop compensation during the 2014 kharif season was Rs. 374.57 crore, covering an area of nearly 2.67 lakh hectares.

Total amount

As many as 1,01,893 farmers had insured their crops. As against this, the AIC had released a total of around Rs. 62.56 crore as crop insurance amount to 41,172 farmers in the district.

According to the information available, the AIC had already released the crop insurance amount to the respective banks for crediting the same to the accounts of the farmers.

The crop insurance for the 2014 rabi season is yet to be settled.

· ***Rs. 62.56 crore has been released to the***

district as crop insurance amount by the AIC

· ***A sum of Rs. 59.50 crore has been paid as compensation to 33,761 farmers in Jewargi taluk***

CFTRI's 'gift' to farmers yielding dividends



Farmers at a field of chia crop grown in Bidarahalli of H.D. Kote taluk, Mysuru district.

The nutritious Chia and Quinoa seeds introduced to local farmers by the Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) last year is gaining popularity in the region.

Though they are staple crop in south American countries like Mexico, the CFTRI introduced them to the local farmers as an experiment which is yielding rich dividends.

“It has the potential to help fight malnutrition and hunger besides withstanding the vagaries of nature as these crops are drought and pest-resistant,” said Attihalli Devaraj, general secretary of the State Sugarcane Cultivators Association.

The cost of cultivation is low, the yield is 4 quintals per acre, it is rich in proteins and for an investment of Rs. 10,000 a farmer can earn upto Rs. 1 lakh at the rate of around Rs. 20,000 per quintal.

It is a boon to the agricultural community and more farmers are seeking information about them, according to the association president Kurubur Shanthakumar. “These crops were introduced last year and have health

benefits as they are rich in Omega-3 fatty acid and proteins besides being highly remunerative for farmers,” he added.

A farmer can reap as many as three to four crop a year as Chia and Quinoa seeds have a gestation period of only about 90 days from sowing to harvest.

What is significant for farmers in the region is that these are not water-intensive crops and hence can withstand the frequent bouts of droughts that afflict parts of Mysuru and Chamarajanagar belt, he said.

Besides being drought-resistant, domestic and wild animals do not find them edible. Hence, they are reckoned to be suitable for cultivation on the fringes of forests and national parks where sugarcane and paddy cultivation is extensively cultivated but are damaged by herbivores like elephants resulting in conflict situation.

The Raitha Mitra Company, launched by farmers, to distribute seeds find growing demand for Chia and Quinoa and are bracing up for its marketing and promotion on an extensive scale as they also have export potential.

“The Raita Mitra is in discussion with other farmers cultivating it to take up marketing of the seeds at Rs.200 per kg,” according to Mr. Shanthakumar.

Dial and get vegetables at your doorstep

Techie siblings set example through a unique vegetable vending concept



D. Trinath of 'Mee Sabzi' weighing vegetables before delivering them to customers at his warehouse at P&T Colony in Vijayawada.

It now takes just a phone call for you to get fresh vegetables at your doorstep. D. Raviteja, a software engineer with a Noida-based IT company, and his brother D. Trinath, a B.Tech graduate, from Guntur have launched the service, 'Mee Sabzi' (your vegetables). Interestingly, the concept is catching up with residents, and orders are pouring in.

"As of now, we get more than 10 orders a day. We are hopeful of receiving more orders once the concept becomes popular," says Mr. Trinath.

Raviteja graduated from BITS Pilani (Hyderabad campus), while his younger brother completed mechanical engineering course from K.L. University this year. They thought of vegetable business after learning that majority of farmers were not getting remunerative prices. "Farmers at our native place of Chebrolu in Guntur district are facing a crisis. With an aim to help them and customers, we decided to start the business," Raviteja says.

The brothers are hopeful that the concept will soon gain popularity going by time constraints in the lives of today's professionals. "They don't have to rush to rythu bazaar or malls after office hours. They don't have to wait for the hawker in the morning. All they need to do is call us, and we will deliver their chosen vegetables at their doorstep," Raviteja adds.

"We buy vegetables directly from farmers. Delivery is made only after weighing vegetables in the presence of customers. We deliver vegetables in six hours of bringing them from the field," Trinath says.

At present, the siblings sell vegetables at the price prevailing at the city's wholesale Kaleswara Rao market.

"If potato and tomato are sold for Rs. 25 and Rs. 30, respectively, we charge the same price but collect an additional amount of Rs. 25 towards packing and delivery charges," he says, assuring that the cost would be reduced once the business picks up. Meanwhile, the duo is keen on extending operations to Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam and Amaravati after the business in Vijayawada is streamlined.

“My brother comes to the city during weekends to oversee the operations, and I take care of marketing,” Trinath says. To place orders, one can call: 93938 81199.

Techie siblings set example through a unique vegetable vending concept

India wholesale prices drop for eighth month running

RBI governor has made controlling inflation a target and has been aided by the tumble in world oil prices over the past year

India's wholesale inflation rate fell for an eighth consecutive month in June, government data showed on Tuesday, pulled down by weak global oil prices and above average early monsoon rains.

Inflation based on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI), an indicator which measures the biggest basket of goods, slid 2.40 percent last month from a year earlier, the statistics ministry said. Economists surveyed by Bloomberg had estimated that the WPI would slump 2.30 percent after a 2.36 percent fall in May. "Crude oil has been weak for a while now and has helped tame inflationary expectations," Ashutosh Datar, an economist at IIFL Institutional Equities brokerage, told AFP.

Reserve Bank of India governor Raghuram Rajan has made controlling inflation a target and has been aided by the tumble in world oil prices over the past year, with Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) remaining consistently below six percent.

He has cut interest rates by 75 basis points in 2015 in a bid to inject life into the economy but is expected to wait until the end of the monsoon in September before deciding whether to move again. India relies on a strong monsoon for its tens of millions of farmers to produce a healthy crop yield and small fluctuations in food prices can adversely affect millions living in poverty.

Weak rains can force inflation up but India witnessed a good start to the monsoon with heavy rains in late June, which are believed to have contributed to the slide in WPI.

Tuesday's data release came a day after figures for June showed that CPI rose 5.4 percent, greater than an expected 5.1 percent increase.AFP

WHAT IS WHOLESOME PRICE INDEX?

The price of a representative basket of wholesale goods is Wholesale Price Index.

WHAT IS CONSUMER PRICE INFLATION?

The weighted average of prices of a basket of consumer goods and services is known as Consumer Price Inflation. The goods and services may include transportation, food and medical care. The CPI is calculated by taking price changes for each item in the basket of goods and averaging them. The goods are weighted according to their importance.

Farmers in the prime of life succumbing to ‘anxiety’

Inability to repay loans, and uncertain future taking a toll on young farmers



The ongoing agrarian crisis may deter youngsters from taking up farming unless the uncertainties are addressed, say farmers' leaders.

Even as the disturbing trend of debt-ridden farmers ending their lives is turning chronic, most among them, at least in Mysuru district, were in their youth and had perhaps entered the vocation with much hope.

At a time when youngsters are being encouraged to take up farming, the ongoing agrarian crisis in the State may drive them away unless the government addresses the uncertainties conscientiously, say farmers' leaders.

Nine cases in Mysuru

The total number of cases of farmers' suicides for reported agrarian reasons has touched nine in the district alone. Suicidal tendencies have been more among the young farmers, aged between 30 and 40, if the recent cases are an indicator.

The questions remain: why are farmers resorting to the extreme step? Is debt the only reason behind this?

Kurubur Shanthkumar, president of the Karnataka State Sugarcane Growers' Association, says: "Farming is becoming a sort of unthinkable occupation for young members of a farmer family for various reasons. The few that take up farming get trapped in debt, which is claiming lives."

Mr. Shanthkumar told *The Hindu* that most farmers were small land-holders and depended solely on the crop for their livelihood. "When crops fail and don't fetch expected returns after taking loans and toiling in the field for almost a year, it surely hurts them."

Arguing that getting loans from a cooperative institution was not easy, he said, "I had to wait for six months to get a loan. Most farmers therefore borrow from private moneylenders, paying overpriced interest rates."

Senior psychiatrist Ravish of Mysore Medical College and Research Institute says: "Besides economic reasons, gullibility, dependency, and uncertain future can also be the cause. At this stage, psychological counselling is best suited." Farmers, particularly, the younger lot seem to have "anxiety", which is taking a toll on them.

The issue of taking care of dependants, burdened with debt, and apprehensions over loan repayment, are some other factors.

Sociologist R. Indira suggests a case-by-case study of farmers' suicides to draw conclusions on the factors. Studies on farmers' suicides may have been done elsewhere, but the State is facing a serious crisis and therefore calls for an in-depth examination.

Step up water release for irrigation: farmers

Farmers' associations here have urged the State government to take steps to release adequate water in the 17 irrigation canals in the Tiruchi region to save the standing cash crops.

Farmers' representatives demanded that the discharge from Mettur Reservoir be stepped up to 5,000 cusecs. About 2,000 cusecs of water alone is being discharged to meet drinking water requirements.

A total of 17 irrigation channels branch off from either side of the Cauvery down Mettur dam and they all have assured irrigation rights even during the Mettur closure period, say farmers' associations.

Crops such as banana, sugarcane, coconut and betel vine are raised in thousands of acres in the region.

The delay in opening the Mettur Dam for irrigation in the delta has resulted in short supply of irrigation water on these canals. Farmers' representatives said that the standing crops could wither over the next few days if adequate water was not released.

“The standing crops require at least one or two wettings until the Mettur Dam is opened. It would entail stepping up the quantum of water released from the dam. Otherwise the crops could wither,” said Mahadhanapuram V. Rajaram, working president, Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association.

Standing banana, sugarcane, coconut and betel vine crops on about one lakh acres in Tiruchi, Karur, Namakkal and Erode districts could wither if the water was not released quickly, said Puliur A. Nagarajan, president, farmers wing of the Tamil Maanila Congress.

The continued drought like condition has worsened the situation.

Farmers have invested up to Rs.50,000 an acre to raise cash crops, he said and said at least 5,000 cusecs of water should be released from the Mettur dam immediately to tide over the situation.

Echoing his views, P. Ayyakannu, president, Desiya-Thennindia Nadigal Inaippu Vivasayigal Sangam, said farmers dependent on various channels

such as the Ayyan, Peruvalai and Uyyakondan channels were worried over the prospects of the standing crops.

“We have decided to represent the issue to the Public Works Department officials and if no action was taken we would resort to a stir,” he said.

Vertical production of sugarcane will lead to better yield, says report

Belegavi-based institute stresses the need for advanced technology

Belagavi-based S. Nijalingappa Sugar Institute has underscored the need for vertical production of sugarcane crop and adoption of advanced technology to improve productivity.

In its latest report on sugarcane sector, the institute pointed out there was a huge gap in the availability of sugarcane and the requirement, which was around 100 lakh tonnes in Karnataka.

Several areas of the State provided favourable climatic conditions for sugarcane cultivation, which has ensured an increase in production year after year and also scope for establishment of new sugar factories. The total crushing capacity of the existing mills is 3,10,025 tonnes of cane a day. At least 10 per cent to 15 per cent of the cane is used for producing jaggery and seeds.

As of now, the requirement of sugarcane is 558 lakh tonnes, of which at least 465 lakh tonnes is used by sugar mills for 150 days. “The remaining is used for the production of jaggery and seeds,” institute director R.B. Khandagave told *The Hindu* here on Monday.

Better prices

As the government is finding it difficult to ensure better price for sugarcane to growers on the one side and the sugar mills citing operational losses on the other, Dr. Khandagave said the mills must work hard to improve their efficiency by crushing cane for 200 to 250 days, against the present practice of 150 days a year. Mills were expanding their capacity to crush maximum amount of cane in minimum number of days instead of increasing the number of operating days.

Operations

The mills in other countries operate anywhere between 210 to 240 days. The advantages of running mills for a longer period ensured higher utility of resources to produce byproducts, improved financial stability and better profits.

They could also pay higher prices to the growers. It would also help smooth harvesting, support allied industries and ensure employment to directly dependent persons for a longer period, he said.

Byproducts

All the sugar factories must utilise byproducts such as bagasse, molasses and press mud efficiently to improve their financial health, even as many mills had diversified and installed co-generation and distillery units, he added.

Sugarcane incentive: first installment released

The State government has released a part of the incentive to farmers who supplied sugarcane to factories.

Chief Minister Siddharamaiah had announced that a total incentive of Rs. 250 per tonne would be released to farmers.

Of this, the first instalment of Rs. 100 has been released to farmers who supplied cane to cooperative and private factories. Of the Rs. 300 crore released to all districts, Bidar has got its share Rs. 15.5 crore, according to government sources.

This includes Rs. 4.18 crore to farmers who supplied the cash crop to the Bidar Sahakari Sakkare Karakhane, Rs. 5.25 crore for suppliers of Mahatma Gandhi Sahakari Sakkare Karakhane, Naranja Sahakari Sakkare Karakhane's Rs. 4.98 crore, Bhavani Sugars's Rs. 48.18 lakh and Rs. 42.63 lakh of Bhalkeshwar Sugars. However, the government is yet to keep its promise of releasing money to cover sugarcane arrears that factories owe to farmers.

“The government announced in the Belagavi Assembly Session that it would pay off the balance of the government fixed-Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP). But that has not happened,” Vishwanath Patil Koutha, Karnataka

Rajya Raitha Sangha leader said. Of the Rs. 2,800 per tonne FRP announced by the government, factories have paid only between Rs.1,800 – Rs. 2,000 per tonne.

Insurance scheme for farming sector on the anvil: Jaitley



Finance Minister Arun Jaitley receives a sword from Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal during the inauguration of the Heritage Development and Augmentation Yogna (HRIDAY) scheme in Amritsar on Tuesday.

"In the coming time, we have plans to spend Rs 50,000 crore on farming and irrigation sectors in the country."

Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Tuesday said the Centre was planning to spend Rs 50,000 crore on the farming and irrigation sector and plans were also afoot to roll out an insurance scheme exclusively for the farming sector to compensate for crop loss.

Admitting that the condition of farmers is a “matter of concern”, Mr. Jaitley said, “In the coming time, we have plans to spend Rs 50,000 crore on farming and irrigation sectors in the country.”

Addressing a public rally in chaste Punjabi here, the Union Minister said if the state governments come forward and utilise these funds, it will bring positive change in the field of agriculture sector.

“The condition of farmers is a matter of concern...We are working on the next challenge wherein if farmer’s crop gets damaged, he will automatically get insurance amount for the crop loss while sitting at his home. We are bringing an insurance scheme only for the farming sector,” Jaitley said.

Speaking in Mumbai on July 12, the Finance Minister had said, “Hopefully, in the near future, a viable and vibrant insurance scheme will be in place for farmers.”

The present crop insurance schemes cover only the loans which a farmer has taken from banks.

Noting that the agriculture sector presents its own set of challenges with successive low rate of growth over the years, he had admitted, “We have been unable to ensure even a 4 per cent growth consistently in the field of agriculture.”

“With productivity levels reasonably low and 85 per cent farmers being small and marginal, the agriculture sector is afflicted by higher input costs, low level of irrigation, high indebtedness, absence of an effective insurance mechanism and adverse impacts of climate change,” Jaitely had told the 34th Foundation Day celebrations of Nabard here.

Mr. Jaitley also described the alliance between SAD and BJP as a “social alliance”. “Besides political alliance, it is also a social alliance as both the parties have put in hard efforts to bring out the state from turmoil,” he said.

He said the alliance worked hard to bring peace and prosperity in Punjab.

The Union minister also visited ‘Meritorious School’ run by Punjab government and held an interactive session with its students.

During the interaction, no student expressed interest in pursuing a career in agriculture sector as they showed keen interest in becoming doctor, engineer or join army.

The finance minister also appreciated Punjab government for preserving numerous heritage sites. He said that many heritage sites belonged to different religions and the state government was giving due respect to all religious places.

Jaitley also appreciated Punjab government for putting in Rs 200 crore for Ram Tirath Temple in Amritsar for its maintenance and renovation.

The Union minister also said that the Centre will never hesitate in sanctioning adequate funds to bring improvement in state's highways and road network.

Dip in Darjeeling tea output likely



Production of Darjeeling tea may drop by around 10 per cent this year due to climatic adversities being faced by the planters.

The heavy downpour, on the one hand, and the recent land slides, on the other, have all contributed to a decline of the crop, which is anyway grown under very exacting circumstances at high altitudes and on the slopes of the Himalayan range.

Early estimates have begun pegging this year's crop at sub-eight million kg level against the 8.42 million kgs output in 2014.

“Huge amount of rains and low temperature may be leading to a crop loss...we are fearing a 10 per cent loss of crop,” an official at the Darjeeling Tea Association told *The Hindu* .

“There is absolutely no sunshine ... and, the tea leaves are not sprouting,” industry sources said.

The landslip a fortnight ago in Darjeeling hit the tea-growing areas the hardest and nearly 52-55 hectares of prime tea-growing area has been lost to landslides. This happened in a proper garden area in Mirik, where an entire village of around 70 houses was devastated.

It may be mentioned that a total of 17,500 hectares of land is under tea cultivation in 87 estates in and around Darjeeling. The unique muscatel aroma comes from a combination of locational climate, soil conditions, altitude and the processing of the leaves. It is an exotic blend.

However, since it was first planted in the early 1800s, the bushes have aged and productivity is poor leading to a steady drop in output.

But the high value teas are prized in the world market and account for a sizeable portion of the Rs.4,000 crore that India earns from tea exports.

Huge amount of rains and low temperature may lead to a crop loss

Farmers' livelihood meet

The Tamil Nadu Cauvery Farmers' Association has resolved to conduct a Delta Farmers' Livelihood Conference in Thanjavur on August 11. This was decided at its State general body meeting held at Irulneeki in Tiruvarur district on Monday where a resolution was passed to conduct the meet to highlight the woes of farmers. The association's Tiruvarur district president T.P.K. Rajendran presided.

Deficient rain keeps farmers in Uttara Kannada worried

Scarcity of rain has been causing concern among paddy growers in Uttara Kannada district since July 9.

There was good rain in the month of June and farmers were happy as they were hopeful of a good harvest this year. Farmers expected good rainfall this month too, as per weather forecast which has, however, turned out wrong.

Thousands of acres of paddy growing areas are awaiting rain desperately. Paddy and crops such as sugarcane and groundnuts are also drying up due to lack of rain. Of the 81,3895 hectares of paddy-growing area in the district, sowing has been completed in 56,981 hectares so far, according to a report here on Tuesday.

T.N.'s first monkey rehab centre nears completion



Construction of the rehabilitation centre under way at M.R. Palayam near in Tiruchi.

The State's first monkey rehabilitation centre coming up at M.R. Palayam near Tiruchi is nearing completion.

“There has been an increase in instances of monkeys straying into agricultural fields and farmers have been complaining at the monthly grievances day meetings that their crops were being damaged in different parts of Perambalur, Tiruchi and Pudukottai districts,” says a Forest Department official.

Monkeys also stray into urban areas causing panic among residents.

The monkeys, mostly from reserve forest areas, stray into urban centres or agricultural fields in search of water and food, especially during summer, officials say.

According to Forest officials in Pudukottai district, the problem is felt even at the Collector's office. “We have to keep a cage and trap the animals periodically,” an officer says.

The Pudukottai Forest Department officials have been releasing the trapped animals into the forest area on the border of Pudukottai and Sivaganga district only to see that the monkeys return to the urban areas.

The monkey rehabilitation centre, once inaugurated, would accommodate stray monkeys caught in different parts of the region. The thick growth of trees all around the sprawling campus of about hundreds of acres would provide adequate forest ambience to the animals, officials hope.

Tiruchi is one of the centres identified by the Forest Department for setting up the centre. Similar centres would be set up at nine other places, including Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari, Nagercoil and Coimbatore.

Inordinate delay in mill modernisation irks sugarcane growers

There is also delay in commissioning power co-generation facility

Sugarcane growers who feed the Arignar Anna Sugar Mills at Kurunkulam are sore over the inordinate delay in plant modernisation and commissioning of power co-generation facility in the State Government unit. The mill procures cane from over 6,000 registered growers commanding an area of over 11,000 acres in Thanjavur and Pudukkottai districts.

The plan to modernise the mill and replace the plant and machinery that was commissioned in 1976 was set in motion in 2008 when the State Government accorded sanction for the mill modernisation and establishment of power co-generation facility with an installed capacity of 115 megawatt at a total estimate of Rs. 115.72 crore. Of this, the estimate of installing the co-generation unit was put at Rs. 78.66 crore while the rest Rs. 37.06 crore was to be spent on modernisation.

Within the mill complex, a 20-acre site was identified for the co-generation plant and work started in right earnest on both accounts. Work commenced in 2010 and took wings when the Assembly elections came in 2011 and brought about a new regime.

While the Power Finance Corporation was to take care of 90 per cent of funding for the co generation unit, 90 per cent of the amount required for mill modernisation was to come through the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency. The cane suppliers registered with the mill were to pay up an estimated 10 per cent of the outlay totalling Rs. 11.58 crore of which Rs. 9.60 crore has been handed over to TANGEDCO, the facilitating

agency for the project. The work that was supposed to have been completed in 18 months has been dragging endlessly. Incidentally, the co-generation plant is seen as the talisman to turn around the sagging fortunes of the sugar mill. While five megawatt power would be utilised by the plant itself, the balance power would be fed into the TANGEDCO grid.

Mobile kiosk to showcase SHG products comes up



Promotional move: People visiting the kiosk showcasing products made by self-help group members in Tuticorin on Tuesday.

A new mobile kiosk has been established to market products manufactured by members of self help groups in Tuticorin. Cooperation Minister Sellur K. Raju inaugurated the kiosk, which has come into existence near the farm fresh vegetable outlet in Tuticorin new bus stand area, on Tuesday.

The kiosk was set up at a cost of Rs. 5 lakh.

The Minister took stock of the products on display at the kiosk. To empower women and to boost their confidence by helping them achieve economic security, the women SHG members had been encouraged by the government with financial assistance, sources from Mahalir Thittam said.

Products made from palm leaves, millet flour products, terracotta items, handicrafts, imitation jewellery, pickles made of lime and fish, purses, handbags, phenyl bottles, washing powder were all available in the kiosk.

Three salesmen from panchayat level federation have been deputed initially in the kiosk.

Similar kiosks to boost the sale of SHG products would be set up at Vana Tirupathi and Tiruchendur soon.

Currently, around 6,500 SHGs in rural areas and over 3,000 SHGs in urban areas were functioning across the district, sources added.

Collector M. Ravikumar, Project Officer of Mahalir Thittam K. Indu Bala were present.



WPI negative for eighth straight month

Even the core WPI inflation plunged further to -0.9 per cent in June against -0.6 per cent in the previous month, while the CPI core inflation rose to 4.8 per cent in June.



Wholesale price index (WPI) inflation remained in the negative zone for an eighth straight month, easing to -2.4 per cent in June from -2.36 per cent in the previous month.

The latest inflation figure is just above a revised -2.43 per cent for April, when it had crashed to its lowest in the current inflation series, with food inflation slowing down consistently since January despite concerns about monsoon.

The WPI data, released on Tuesday, further widened a gulf with the consumer price index (CPI) inflation — the latter scaled a nine-month peak of 5.4 per cent in June. While the WPI food inflation rose to 2.88 per cent in June from 3.80 per cent in May, the CPI food inflation rose almost 0.7 percentage point to touch 5.48 per cent in June.

Even the core WPI inflation plunged further to -0.9 per cent in June against -0.6 per cent in the previous month, while the CPI core inflation rose to 4.8 per cent in June.

Coffee has nothing to do with obesity, diabetes

You can drink your cup of coffee worry free and a new study has shown that coffee neither increases nor decreases the risk of lifestyle diseases such as obesity and diabetes.



You can drink your cup of coffee worry free and a new study has shown that coffee neither increases nor decreases the risk of lifestyle diseases such as obesity and diabetes.

New research from the University of Copenhagen and Herlev and Gentofte Hospital, which is also the world's first to have used genes to investigate the impact of coffee on the body, analysed 93,000 Danes from the Copenhagen General Population Study. Medical student Ask Tybjaeg Nordestgaard said that the genes were completely independent of other lifestyle factors, and it could hence be concluded that drinking coffee in itself is not associated with lifestyle diseases.

The researchers designed a unique study, where they looked into a number of genes that affect people's desire for coffee. If a person has special coffee genes, he/she may be drinking more coffee than those not having the genes.

This allowed the researchers to see whether a higher coffee consumption increases or decreases the risk of developing lifestyle diseases. The study is published in the well-reputed International Journal of Epidemiology.



[Farmers wary as poor rain may affect kharif crop](#)

Agricultural experts said that if it does not rain in the next few days, the dry spell in the eight districts of Marathwada could lead to a drought-like situation for the fourth consecutive year. And the biggest casualty was bound to be agriculture, impacting the kharif crop. They say that if the region fails to receive rainfall within a week's time, over 50% crops sowed in around 32 lakh hectares (Ha) of land would be damaged amounting to a loss of around Rs 300 crore.

Superintending agriculture officer of the Aurangabad division, P D Lonare, said that kharif crops have been sown on 32.54 lakh Ha of the total 43.94 lakh Ha cultivated land in the region. "An estimated 75% sowing was done after the region received record rainfall in the beginning of monsoon this year."

"But the dry spell since the last fortnight has put farmers in distress. If an estimated average loss of Rs 20,000 invested per Ha for sowing operations, seeds, land preparation and fertilisers is added, then the total amount of loss would be huge. Around 50% crops would be hit estimating a loss of over Rs 300 crore," said Lonare.

Satish Shiradkar, Aurangabad division deputy project director, Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA), echoed similar sentiments. "If the region fails to receive rainfall within the next five days, about 50% crops would wither and die. Though medium to heavy size crops may survive for another fortnight but the major threat is for crops sown on light soil as their chances of survival are very bleak," he said.

"The agriculture department is making all efforts to sustain the crops," said Lonare. "We are implementing methods like spraying of fertilisers and inter-culture operation, which helps to sustain the crops for some days and also controls evaporation of moisture from the soil," he said.

Regarding re-sowing operations, Lonare said, "Though re-sowing can be done, the yield would come down by 20-25%. Moreover, some crops like cotton cannot be re-sown," he said, adding that the major crop sown this year is cotton. It was sown on around 10 lakh Ha.

Since June saw a record rainfall of around 117 mm, farmers were in an upbeat mood. As per the agriculture department reports, crops were sown on around 32 lakh Ha as on July 11, recording 75% completion of sowing operation as per the target.

Scientists develop rice that wouldn't take arsenic from soil

High concentrations of arsenic, a highly toxic element, in soil and water of Indo-Gangetic plains have always been a cause of concern for the people of the region. Scientists at CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (CSIR-NBRI), Lucknow, have developed a variety of rice that minimizes the uptake of arsenic from the soil.

NBRI director Chandra Shekhar Nautiyal told TOI his institute in collaboration with Rice Research Station, Chinsurah (West Bengal), had developed an arsenic-free rice variety (CN-1794-2-CSIR-NBRI) after over

seven years of research. It is under trials at present and would be released by the West Bengal government in near future. The process for registration of the variety has been initiated.

This variety has relatively safe levels of arsenic even if cultivated in areas with high arsenic levels in soil. It has higher yields too. The variety has been given the name 'Muktashri' since it accumulates arsenic less than maximum permissible daily intake. Nautiyal was in the city to give a talk on 'Environment friendly microbial intervention for enhancing crop productivity' at the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI). The lecture was dedicated to late Ashok Juwarkar, a Neeri scientist who died in a plane accident while on duty.

NBRI team under Nautiyal's leadership has also been working for over two and half decades in developing various formulations containing microbes like Rhizobium, Azotobacter and PSB (phosphate solubilizing bacteria) that can be used as bio-inoculants or biofertilizers. These have been very successfully used in the Uttar Pradesh (UP) on an area of over 86 lakh hectares. It has saved about Rs 349 crore worth of chemical fertilizers as well as improved the soil health.

"NBRI has worked with agriculture department of UP and tried these plant growth promoting microbes. These bio-inoculants have been used successfully in common agricultural crops like urad, tur, mung, soyabean, groundnut, gram, pea, lentil, mustard, wheat, sunflower, sugarcane and paddy. These have also shown promising results in trees, floricultural crops like gladiolus, tuberose and calendula, spices, medicinal and aromatic crops. In fact, our inoculants are complementary to chemical fertilizers," said Nautiyal. The yield in bacterised plants increased by 10-30% and the farmers' income increased by 15-40%, he informed.

Earlier, Neeri director Satish Wate said that Juwarkar, a former head of land environment and management division at NEERI, would be remembered for his works like rejuvenation of several wastelands belonging to Manganese Ore India Ltd in Maharashtra, Western Coalfield Ltd in Madhya Pradesh and Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Ltd in Karnataka. Wate said Juwarkar had initiated a new way for treatment of industrial waste water. Prakash Kumbhare proposed a vote of thanks and Jaya Sabjiwale conducted the programme.

Government to set up 11 spice development agencies

The government is gearing up to set up 11 [Spice Development Agencies](#) (SDAs) with the saffron produced by Jammu & Kashmir will be the first one off the block at a time when the state government and the Centre are discussing a Rs 1 lakh crore package for the strife-torn state.

Sources said the task of boosting exports is handled by the Spices Board but the agriculture ministry is responsible for local production and marketing. With SDAs for various regions in place, the government is hoping to pool in resources of the agriculture ministry, the commerce department as well as the states to provide a major thrust to the production, marketing, distribution and exports of several spices in which India can dominate the global market.

In recent years, India has lost its dominant position as a global exporter of spices and plantation crops such as tea and coffee and the government is looking to restore some of the lost ground, an official said.

During 2014-15, export of spices added up to under \$2 billion in India's total export basket of over \$310 billion. On Wednesday, the commerce department is expected to raise the issue with the 11 major producing states including Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Andhra Pradesh for spices ranging from pepper to zeera, ginger and mint, among others.

Onion prices may rise by 10-15%: Assocham

Contrary to expectations of downward movement, onion prices are likely to increase further by 10-15%. With retail inflation inching up and the possibility of damage to the commodity stored in warehouses due to rain, the prices of onion are likely to rise, says a study by the industry body, the Associated Chambers of Commerce of India (Assocham).

At present, onion is selling at Rs 1,800-2,500 per quintal in different wholesale mandis. Retail vendors are charging upward of Rs 30-Rs 35 per kg. The wholesale price of onion at Chimanbhai Patel APMC in Ahmedabad was quoted at Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,150 per quintal on Tuesday, which works out to be Rs 15 to Rs 21.50 per kg.

"Any rise from this level will exert pressure on the consumer price index inflation," said D S Rawat, secretary general, Assocham. "The onion, being an essential item, evokes sharp reactions from households and even political parties. Thus, there is a need for being watchful." The study also suggested that the gap between retail and wholesale prices should somehow be reduced.

Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Gujarat contribute over two-thirds of all-India onion production, with Maharashtra alone accounting for about 30% of India's production, which stood at 19.36 million tonnes in 2013-14.

"In order to prevent sudden spike, the state level agencies should consider distribution of onions from July onwards and also ensure gradual liquidation of stocks instead of holding it till the end of the season," the study added.

Considering an average consumption of 1 million MT per month, the annual consumption of onions on all-India basis is around 12 million MT. In the wake of storage and handling losses, the annual domestic requirement of onions works out to be nearly 14 million MT. India also accounts for over 50% of the import share in Malaysia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Nepal, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar, besides sending regular exports to UAE, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Vietnam.

According to the association, timely and realistic assessment of crop and a reliable estimate of state-wise consumption requirement with proper understanding of peak demand period and volumes is a pre-requisite for prudent handling of the developing situation in onions.

Water to be released for double-crop areas today

Water for the irrigation of double-crop areas in the district will be released from the Vaigai dam today, the public works department (PWD) has confirmed, much to the delight of the farming community. As much as 900 cusecs will be released from Vaigai dam to irrigate 44,000 acres of paddy fields from Peranai to Kallanthiri in the district.

Public works department (PWD) officials said they had received the orders to release the water for irrigation.

"We will release the water from the Vaigai dam on Wednesday through Periyar Main Canal that will irrigate these double-crop areas," said a senior official from PWD Periyar Basin, Madurai.

The water will be released for 120 days based on the storage in Mullaperiyar dam, officials said.

The farming community here has been demanding water for irrigation and had submitted a petition to the district collector on June 29. Later on July 6, they laid siege to the PWD office demanding water. The siege was called off after officials assured them that water will be released by July 15.

Sentiments were running high as double-crop farmers have been suffering continuous losses in the last three years due to drought in the region and the entire double-crop cultivation had been abandoned in 2014 due to lack of water in the reservoir.

On Monday, posters came up across the city warning that a major protest will take place if water was not released on Wednesday.

"We are glad that the water is being released as promised by the authorities," commented A N M Tiruppathi, a farmer from the double-crop area.

On Tuesday, the water level at Mullaperiyar dam was 124.70 feet, with storage of 4,378 mcft. The dam was getting an inflow of 374 cusecs while 1,300 cusecs was being released for irrigation. As the water was drawn steadily from Mullaperiyar, the storage level at Vaigai dam has increased significantly. The dam level was 51.12 feet with an inflow of 803 cusecs while 60 cusecs are at present being released for the drinking water needs of Madurai city.

Spices Board eyes North-East to promote local varieties



In tune with the Centre's Look East Policy, Spices Board is focussing on the North East and beyond to leverage the export potential of several spice varieties.

The Board has implemented programmes for developing large cardamom, ginger, turmeric and chilli varieties from this land-locked region of the North Eastern States. A series of action-oriented programmes have been drawn up to tap the export potential of these spices, after laying out a blue print.

Local varieties

The main spices grown commercially in the region are ginger, turmeric (Lakadong), black pepper (Bird's Eye chilli) and large cardamom. The Lakadong variety is highly curcumin rich and used for manufacturing

turmeric oleoresin. Bird's eye chillies grown in Mizoram are highly pungent and are extremely small size. Bhut Jolokia (chilli) is another variety in which the Assam government has taken steps to start its production on a large scale.

Lower productivity

There are good enquiries for these special varieties. However, the smooth flow from the farms to domestic and export markets have been hampered due to high operating cost and huge presence of middlemen.

Bangladesh is the only accessible market for which a trade route exists through the border areas of Moreh, Karimganj, Dawki, a senior official in the Board said.

The productivity of agri/horti crops in the region is significantly lower than the prevailing national standards and the region requires widespread promotion of horticulture and floriculture.

To promote production and marketing, the official said the Board constituted two regional centres at Guwahati and Gangtok and also organised training programmes for officers in the departments concerned in the areas of cultivation, harvest and post harvest techniques.

Organic farming

Considering the traditional way of growing spices, steps also have been taken to promote organic farming. The niche market for organic spices is growing at a fast rate and an early entry into this segment will improve the exportability and demand for spices from this region.

There are also proposals to establish seed banks in the farmers' field to retain the purity and as a source for supply of quality planting materials.

Centre buys 280 lakh tonnes wheat



Wheat procurement by State agencies and the Food Corporation of India has crossed last year's total mark of 280.23 lakh tonnes (lt) during the current Rabi marketing season.

According to data released by the Food Ministry, procurement across various wheat-growing States stood at 280.87 lt as on Tuesday. On date, 271.66 lt had been procured in the 2013-14 marketing season.

Punjab led the way with 103.43 lt procured, followed by Madhya Pradesh where 73.09 lt was lifted by State agencies. Agencies in Haryana picked up 67.77 lt while 22.67 lt and 13 lt was procured in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, respectively.

The Centre had earlier relaxed norms for grain purchase after significant quantities of the standing crop had been damaged during heavy unseasonal showers and hailstorms between end-February and early-April.

Wheat output has been pegged at 907.8 lt for the 2014-15 crop year (July-June), lower than the record 958.5 lt registered in 2013-14.

FMCG majors shy away, start-ups move into premium coffee segment sourced from Indian estates



At a time when big FMCG companies are shying away from entering the premium coffee segment, a slew of start-ups have decided to bridge the gap with their brands both in the online and offline space. Gourmet coffee brands such as Bonhomia, Indian Bean and Bluetokai have been investing behind creating the premium segment with their bean to cup approach across formats like capsules and fresh ground coffees.

“We felt there was a gap in the market for premium coffees as there were limited options for Indian consumers. The existing brands – Bru and Nescafe – are mostly instant coffees and the companies selling them do not have the skill set for marketing and distributing premium coffees,” says Matt Chitharanjan, Co-Founder, Bluetokai.

A 250 ml cup of Nescafe would be about Rs. 5-6 while a similar cup from Bluetokai is pegged at Rs. 15.

With a seed capital of Rs. 10 lakh, Bluetokai (tail of a peacock), the Gurgaon-based start-up is setting up roasters after sourcing its coffees from estates across Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, selling its premium brand online and modern trade outlets apart from supplying to chains such as the Oberoi and Park Hotels.

Superior quality

Considering most of the coffee grown in India gets exported to overseas markets such as the US and UK, these start-ups have taken it upon themselves to create access for premium coffees from Indian-origin coffee estates.

“Most of the instant coffee brands meant for Indian consumers tends to be of low quality, but we wanted to make superior quality brews by setting up coffee roasters and sourcing from Indian farmers,” added Chitharanjan.

Mumbai-based Indian Bean has also adopted a similar strategy. “We saw a need gap since coffee is still commoditised in India with 80 per cent of it getting exported. The purpose was to create a market which would give domestic consumers access to freshly ground coffee sourced from estates in the coffee belts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka,” says Kunal Ross, Founder, Indian Bean.

Not into quick returns

Besides, unlike the larger companies which are in a hurry to reap returns from the premium segment, start-ups can take their own time to get profitable. “Economics do not allow the bigger companies to enter the branded premium segment easily as quick returns are not always guaranteed. While for start-ups like us, we can grow slowly and tap into this opportunity,” explains Ross.

Creating the coffee capsule segment under the Bonhomia brand, Indulge Beverages also sources pure Indian origin coffees. “Some of the India made arabica beans are of the highest quality and we have used them to create the premium coffee capsule segment. Big Indian companies have a mass way of selling and do not want to take the risk of entering the premium segment,” claims Tuhin Jain, Co-Founder, Indulge Beverages.

Millets Commune shows the way for rain-fed farming

Women farmers preserve seed, give it on barter to fellow farmers



Paramma, 50, holds the mud-topped bamboo box as she takes it down from the attic, as if she is holding an infant, with a lot of care. For, that 1.5 ft diameter box contains the sorghum seed for the season.

Treated using the processing techniques she learned from her mother and her father-in-law, the seeds would do not only for her own farm but also for a few others.

Paramma is the village seed banker of Bida Kanne village near Kishtapur in Medak district. She would never turn a farmer away when they come for seed.

“I don’t sell them. I just give them on barter or kind of lend them. They will give me back double the quantity next time,” she says.

She is not just alone, who is preserving millet seeds for the next season, using the traditional methods passed on to them by their elders.

Seed corpus

This has been a practice for majority of farmers in about 75 villages near in four mandals of Medak district.

Though some well off farmers go for expensive commercial crops such as sugar cane, majority of small and marginal farmers are still relying on

millet, the crops that are well suited for rain-fed areas such as Telangana. They don't buy seeds. They preserve them.

"We go around the field and pick some healthy grain for preservation. We top the box with mud, lay a layer of neem leaves and then ash on which we keep the seed. We use a layer of mud and dry grass and seal the whole box with mud, dry it and keep it at a secure space," Paramma explains.

Chandramma, who heads the Seed Bank run by Deccan Development Society (DDS) at Pastapur, points out that crops of different seeds require different treatments.

The society, which is driving the millets initiative in the State and elsewhere, builds a corpus of seeds to distribute to the needy. This bank is connected to the village level banks, run by the local women committees. These committees would hold an annual meet to draw a strategy for the following season, while reviewing the performance of the previous season.

"I maintain a log of who takes what and how much and request them to contribute back to the bank," she said, taking the reporter around the bank.

Gene bank

Started about 30 years ago, the DDS is building a network of farmers, mostly small and marginal farmers in four mandals in the district. It sets up village-level gene banks that helped revival of about 80 land races of various crops.

"We now connect with 5,000 farmers with complete focus on millets. We use no chemicals. We give them marketing support, while allowing them to sell their produce on their own. Our idea is to make them self-reliant and don't depend on others, including us," PV Satheesh, Development Communicator and Founder-Member of DDS, told *BusinessLine*.

DDS volunteers collect the produce from the farmers in the network, process it and sell it under the brand name 'Sangam'. It has started selling it to the organic food product firms in Hyderabad.

DDS built an ecosystem around millets in the surrounding areas. It runs an FM radio that produces and broadcasts programmes on millet cultivation and related culture around it. It is run by children of farmers.

Other activities

They take care of content generation, recording, editing and broadcast. It runs a school too, segregating children based on their IQ level and preparing them for high-school education.

“Each of them would be taught a profession such as book-binding and carpentry,” a teacher at the school said.

Farmers in the area, however, are a bit worried as there are no follow-up rains after the initial monsoon showers. “We desperately need good bouts of rains now. We have sown the seed we have. Where we can find the seed, if it fails now,” Tukkapopa, who sowed millets on five acres, said.

“We have developed a functional model. This is like a pilot. It is up to other stakeholders to scale it up and cover the rain-fed areas,” the 69-year-old development communicator observes.

Onion prices may rise through monsoon, says Assocham study

The prices of onions, a staple across the country, could rise by 10-15 per cent through the monsoon, according to a study conducted by The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Assocham).

“...the gap between retail and wholesale price should be reduced. While onion is selling at Rs. 1,800-2,500 a quintal at different mandis, the retail vendors are charging upward of Rs. 30-35 a kg,” the association said in a note released here on Tuesday.

Rains could damage onions stored in warehouses. Domestic losses can also translate to losses for exporters with India accounting for over 50 per cent of imports in Malaysia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Nepal, Vietnam, and various Gulf countries, the study suggests.

“Any rise from this level will exert pressure on the consumer price index inflation. The onion, being an essential item, evokes sharp reactions from the households and even the political parties. Thus, there is a need for being watchful,” said DS Rawat, Secretary-General, Assocham.

Respite for North; monsoon runs dry elsewhere

The hills and adjoining plains of north-west India are returning to normal after witnessing sustained heavy rainfall over the past few days. A weak phase of the monsoon continues elsewhere.

Heat wave

During the 24 hours ending on Tuesday morning, heavy rainfall was confined to isolated places over coastal Andhra Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Some parts of south coastal Andhra Pradesh witnessed heat wave conditions only the previous day with dry conditions persisting over large parts of the interior peninsula, central India and west India.

Forecasts by the US Climate Prediction Centre points to some activity brewing in the Bay of Bengal but the impact would be confined largely to east and north-east India and along the foothills in north India. The US agency does not see any large change in conditions until July 20 except in the south-west coast (Kerala, adjoining Karnataka and south Tamil Nadu).

The situation may change for the better in the following week with the rains spreading out along the West Coast right up to Mumbai/south Gujarat.

Cumulative deficit

Peninsular India may also benefit during this phase.

An experimental storm tracker hosted by the US agency hinted at the possibility of a larger and productive weather system brewing in the Bay during the last week of July.

This is depicted as bringing rainfall to Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, parts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh as well as Rajasthan during this period.

But even here no large gains are indicated for the rest of central India or even the peninsula. The cumulative rainfall for the country as a whole as on date is three per cent. Distribution of rainfall has been skewed towards the east, north and northwest India.

August trend

As on July 13, rainfall has been excess in west Rajasthan, Haryana-Chandigarh-Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Gangetic West Bengal and coastal Andhra Pradesh. Deficits are reported from Lakshadweep, Kerala, coastal Karnataka, Rayalaseema, Konkan, Goa, north interior Karnataka, Madhya Maharashtra, Marathwada, eastern half of Gujarat and Bihar.

NCDEX cottonseed oilcake (Rs. 1,906/quintal): Buy



Cotton Seed Oilcake futures contract traded on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) has surged over 4 per cent in just last three trading days. This rise marks the beginning of a fresh leg of up move for the contract. It offers a good opportunity for traders to go long in this contract.

Short-term view: The corrective fall from the high of Rs. 1,907/quintal recorded on May 11 halted at a low of Rs. 1,740 in the last week of May. Since then the contract has been consolidating sideways in a range between Rs. 1,740 and Rs. 1,850. The sharp rise in the past week has broken this range decisively above Rs. 1,850. With a key support at Rs. 1,840, a rise to Rs. 1,950 looks likely in the coming days. A break above Rs. 1,950 can take the contract further higher to Rs. 2,000.

Traders with a short-term perspective can go long. Stop-loss can be kept at Rs. 1,830 for the target of Rs.1,980. Intermediate declines to Rs. 1,850 can be used to accumulate long positions.

The short-term outlook will turn bearish only if the contract breaks and records a strong close below Rs.1,740. The next targets will be Rs. 1,700

and Rs. 1,650. However, given that the contract has formed a strong base around Rs. 1,740 a break and a fall below this support level looks unlikely.

Medium-term view: The contract has been in a strong uptrend since December 2014. Important support is at Rs. 1,670 and the uptrend would remain intact as long as the contract trades above this level. A rally to test the key medium-term resistance at Rs. 2,050 looks likely in the coming weeks. A downward reversal from this hurdle can drag the contract lower to Rs. 1,850 levels. On the other hand, if the contract manages to break above Rs. 2,050, it can then move up to Rs. 2,100 or even higher levels.