

27.07.2015

THE HINDU

‘Police need awareness on Acts to prevent cruelty to animals’



Jallikattu bulls being nurtured at a goshala in Coimbatore were exhibited at the cattle conference held in the city on Sunday.- Photo: M. Periasamy

The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), functioning under Ministry of Environment and Forest, plans to conduct classes on the laws and Acts against cruelty to animals for police officers and judicial authorities from the first week of August.

The programme is to help the enforcement agency know in detail on those subjects and enforce the laws effectively.

AWBI Assistant Secretary, Chennai, S. Vinoth Kumar said this at a cattle welfare conference organised by Coimbatore Cattle Care Welfare Trust (CCC) here on Sunday. Nearly 12,500 students from colleges in and around Coimbatore district enrolled as volunteers with the trust on Sunday to fight against illegal transportation of cattle.

Mr. Vinoth said that based on a recommendation from AWBI, the Ministry of Home Affairs wrote to the Director General of Police of all States in February this year to include Acts and laws on animal welfare in the curriculum of police personnel during their training. He said there are strong laws in India that will ensure that those who inflict cruelty on animals were punished, but awareness on the laws should improve among the police and other enforcement agencies.

“Proper implementation of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act will put an end to cruelty to animals,” he said.

CCC President S. Nizamudeen said that active role played by volunteers of the trust helped reduce number of cows and buffaloes illegally transported to Kerala – from 58,659 animals in May 2015 to about 7,000 so far in the month of July.

Actor Vishal, Secretary of Hindusthan Institutions Sarasuwathi Khannaiyann, General Manager of Blue Cross of India G. Dawn Williams and Joshine Antony of Gau Gyan Foundation, New Delhi, also spoke at the occasion.

The actor donated Rs. 1 lakh for the welfare of cattle at Velliangiri Goshala, which was received by the goshala's managing trustee P. Siva.

The actor also released a short film *Kanneer* (tear), which is on slaughtering of cows.

Resolutions were passed at the conference to urge the government to cancel the permit of vehicles used for illegal transportation of cattle and to detain persons involved in the trade under Goondas Act. The resolutions also sought a separate wing to monitor illegal transport of cattle and for protection of goshalas.

A harvest by the sea

Farming could possibly have emerged 23,000 years ago in present Israel



ALL IN THE GRAIN Wild emmer growing around the Sea of Galilee Photo: Reuters

People who lived on the shore of the Sea of Galilee in present-day Israel made the first attempt at agriculture around 23,000 years ago, much earlier than previously thought, new research shows.

Researchers earlier believed that farming started some 12,000 years ago in the Middle East. The new discovery was made at Ohalo II, a 23,000-year-old camp site of a community of hunter-gatherers that lived on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

The site is located nine kilometre (km) south of the modern city of Tiberias and was discovered in 1989 when the level of the lake **plummeted** .

Excavations at Ohalo II exposed six brush hut dwellings, a human grave, copious and well-preserved remains of both animal and plant foods, beads from the Mediterranean Sea, as well as evidence of flint tool manufacture and use.

“The study represents the earliest example of small-scale cultivation found anywhere in the world,” said the study’s lead researcher Ehud Weiss, professor at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.

“The plant remains from the site were unusually well-preserved because of being **charred** and then covered by sediment and water which sealed them in low-oxygen conditions,” Weiss said. “Due to this, it was possible to recover an extensive amount of information on the site and its inhabitants — which made this a uniquely preserved site, and therefore one of the best archaeological examples worldwide of hunter-gatherers’ way of life,” Weiss added.

“Here we see evidence of repeated sowing and harvesting of later **domesticated** cereals,” Weiss said.

The findings were detailed in the journal *Plos One* .

In the Ohalo II dwellings was a particularly rich **assemblage** of some 150,000 plant remains, showing that the site’s residents gathered over 140 different plant species from the surrounding environment.

Among these, Weiss’s team identified edible cereals — such as **wild emmer** , wild barley, and wild oats.

A grinding slab set firmly on a brush hut floor, a stone tool from which microscopic cereal starch **granules** were extracted, as well as a unique distribution pattern of seeds around this tool, provided additional, **unequivocal** evidence that cereal grains were brought into the hut and processed into flour, the study said.

Another intriguing finding relates to a number of sickle blades — harvesting tools composed of sharp flint **implements** inserted in wood or bone handles — found at the site; these are among the oldest of their kind ever found.

“We found several sickle blades at Ohalo II, and the study under the microscope of the **gloss** along their cutting edge indicates that they were used for harvesting cereals just before their complete ripening,” said one of the researchers Dani Nadel from the Zinman Institute of Archaeology, University of Haifa in Israel.

Organic crops ensure steady income to Sirumalai farmers

Struggling to market their brand for higher profit

At an altitude of 1,600 metres, farmers at Meenakshipuram near Sirumalai range of forests have started a revolution of sorts in organic farming.

As many as 100 farmers in the remote village belonging to Madurai district have been cultivating pepper, chow-chow and coffee which are free of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and insecticides.

The farmers, who were buying dried cow dung and vermi-compost from Dindigul and Madurai, have now also been trained in setting up vermi-compost units in their farmlands.

“They have adopted natural farming techniques with a loan of Rs . 25 lakh from National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development,” says S. Alagesan, secretary, Centre for Rural and Education Development, an NGO which has been working with the community there. These techniques are all based on low external input and sustainable agriculture, he adds.

Better marketing needed

V. Gunasekar, a farmer at Meenakshipuram, says pepper varieties cultivated here are popular in the markets.

“We take our produce to the markets in Dindigul. Despite being grown organically, we are still struggling to market our produce better and end up selling a kg of pepper at Rs. 700 to merchants who, in turn, sell them for more than Rs. 1,000,” he said. Farmers who cultivate chow-chow also say the crop is completely organic. “Most of the farmers here have less than three acres of land. While chow-chow can be harvested once in three months, pepper takes much more time which is why all of us cultivate the vegetable for a continued source of income,” says Chinna Ayyavu, another farmer. While poor road connectivity and access to resources had crippled the residents of the village, the recent boom in organic cultivation has come as a boon with regard to strengthening their livelihood. “We are earning a steady income by selling produce and are also saving a lot of money by not spending on fertilizers,” a farmer says. The organic farmers, however, say that their crops do not receive any special attention or better rates in the markets despite being fully organic.

“At present, we have a brand, ‘Sirumalai,’ under which we sell the organic produce in the markets. But, we want to expand and market the brand better so that we can take our produce directly to the customers through stalls or retail stores. The quality is superior than other crops grown with chemicals,” Mr. Gunasekar says.

Farmers, who were earlier buying dried cow dung and vermi-compost from Dindigul and Madurai, have now set up vermi-compost units in their farmlands

‘Production of dairy products ensures zero milk wastage’

With stocks of milk powder and butter mounting at one end, Aavin officials have said that they cannot stop production of the value-added products, as it was the only way to ensure that farmers were not turned back with their produce.

A senior official in Aavin, Chennai, said that they were pushed to this situation due to a nation-wide increase in milk production. “We have not asked farmers to take back the milk that they are supplying beyond the capacity of Aavin. The delay in payment will be set right gradually when the piled up stock of milk powder and butter was sold,” the official said. However, the official did not disclose the quantity that has got piled up over the months. He said that Aavin union in Coimbatore has witnessed an increase in daily milk procurement by 75,000 to 80,000 litres when compared to 2014 and has to be converted to value-added products to avoid wastage of milk.

Aavin gets more milk compared to private players as the Cooperative Milk Producers Federation pays better. On the other hand, private dairies have drastically reduced milk procurement from farmers – as they have dropped production of milk powder, since its international market price is very less.

The market seems to be picking up for butter with about 500 tonnes sold by Aavin in the first phase, recently. While a huge stock is to be sold, the official said demand for butter for making sweets will soon start going up - for Onam and Deepavali, followed by the wedding season.

About milk powder, the official said that they are now focusing in storing the stocks in a scientific manner and selling it when the market price recovers.

The official said that there was a similar situation about six years ago when there was delay in paying farmers by two to three months across the State and nearly six months in a few places like Dharmapuri. But things were back to normal during the following months, the official said.

Traders seek release of seized animals

About 50 persons thronged Velliangiri Goshala at Narasipuram on Sunday seeking release of 146 cows that were seized by animal right activists near Suler in June. The traders, accompanied by the police, said that they had obtained a direction from court to release the animals.

Managing Trustee of the goshala P. Siva told *The Hindu* that the goshala had filed an appeal petition before the Sessions Court in Coimbatore against the release of the cows and buffaloes.

“The matter has been listed. We will release the animals when we get a direction against our appeal,” he said.

Mr. Siva said that the animals have been certified as unfit for travel by a veterinary surgeon.

Congress’ Kisan cell exposes State’s failure in tackling farm sector woes

Farmers unaware of crop insurance, says survey

HIGHLIGHTS OF SURVEY		
KISAN-KHET MAZDOOR CONGRESS MEMBERS VISITED 45 HOUSES OF FARMERS WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE	Survey covered Mandya, Mysuru, Chikkamagaluru, Hassan, Ramangaram, Chickballapur, Kolar, Haveri, Gadag, and Bagalkot districts	
MAJOR REASONS FOR FARMERS’ SUICIDE		
● Non-transfer of land records	● Failure of borewells ● Crop failure	● Borrowing loans at high interest from moneylenders
RECOMMENDATIONS		
Changing the crop insurance pattern	Government bearing expenditure of digging borewells	Encouraging sugarcane growers to grow alternative crops
Region-wise declaration of Minimum Support Price	Stopping harassment of farmers by bankers	Implementing Gorak Singh Committee report for areca growers

With cases of farmers’ suicides being reported every day, a farmers’ wing of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) has exposed the State government’s failure to tackle a plethora of problems haunting the agricultural sector.

The Kisan-Khet Mazdoor Congress conducted a survey to find out reasons for the suicides following directions from AICC general secretary in-charge of

Karnataka Digvijaya Singh and KPCC president G. Parameshwara. It submitted the report to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

A few days ago, Governor Vajubhai R. Vala had asked the government to submit a report on the steps taken to contain farmers' suicides. Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi too promised of touring the State to console families of farmers.

A team of Mazdoor Congress, led by its president Sachin Meega, conducted the survey in 10 districts and found lacuna in the implementation of the crop insurance. Except in the cases of sugarcane growers, farmers had ended their lives owing to crop failure as they were unaware of crop insurance schemes of the government, it said.

The survey report suggested to the government to change the crop insurance pattern for the benefit of farmers. "No farmer will be benefited if the present crop insurance pattern continues," it said.

Noting that failure of borewells was another major factor, the report said the government has to bear the expenditure of digging the borewells. The farmers should be asked to bear the expenses only in case water is found.

The Mazdoor Congress said nationalised and cooperative banks have been harassing farmers for delay in the repayment of crop loans. "Bankers are also hiring recovery agents for recovery of loans by giving them 5 to 10 per cent commission," Mr. Meega said.

He urged the government to issue orders to bankers to stop recovery of loans during crop failures.

The minimum support price for crops should be declared region-wise since yield varies from region to region. For instance, the yield of paddy per acre was 13 quintals in the Western Ghats region against 45 quintals in Davangere belt, he said.

In the sugarcane growing regions of Karnataka, the report suggested the government encourage farmers to grow alternative crops to avoid sugarcane glut. It recommended implementation of the Gorak Singh Committee report for the benefit of areca growers, who have suffered owing to yellow leaf disease affecting their produce.

Mr. Meega said the report would be submitted to Rahul Gandhi and Digvijaya Singh.

Kerala to get certified veggies

Produce brought by farmers to Oddanchatram market to be tested



After reports of pesticide residue in vegetables supplied to Kerala, the Tamil Nadu government has decided to test vegetables brought by farmers to Oddanchatram wholesale market, the second biggest market in the State, and issue quality and food safety certification before sending them to Kerala.

To begin with, names of all transporters and wholesale vegetables traders would be registered under the Food Safety and Standards Act 2006. Licence would be given to farmers and traders by the Department of Food Safety and Drug Administration, officials here said.

All vegetable traders, retailers and farmers attached with Oddanchatram market would be brought under the legal framework. A record will be maintained to monitor supply of vegetables to the market from various villages.

Name and place of farmer, name and quantum of vegetables brought by him will be noted down in the record for a follow-up.

“Random samples of vegetables bought from farmers will be sent to Madurai lab for testing. If vegetables have high pesticide residue level, such farmers will be advised to scale down its use and go for organic manure. Agriculture and Horticulture officials will coordinate with Food Safety officials in this connection,” says T. Sam Elango, Designated Officer for Food Safety.

An awareness campaign on production of high quality vegetables will be created among farmers.

After checking the quality of vegetables, food safety certification will be issued.

Meanwhile, agriculture officials will monitor fertilizer shops about quantum of sale in all areas to monitor fertiliser use, he adds.

“Our prime aim is to allay fears of buyers in Kerala. We have launched a special drive in this connection. A special meeting with traders, transporters and retailers had been conducted in Oddanchatram and all agreed to cooperate.”

Kerala had given time till September 4 to bring vegetables with permissible toxic levels. Besides banning vegetables having pesticides, Kerala has made it mandatory for vegetable and fruit traders from other States to register and get a licence. Vehicles carrying fruits and vegetables from other States too should register as per the Food Safety Act.

A total ban on vegetables from Oddanchatram will leave at least 10,000 persons, including farmers, traders, transporters, load men, drivers and helpers jobless.

The Oddanchatram market was handling up to 500 tonnes of vegetable every day, traders said.

An awareness campaign on production of high quality vegetables will be created among farmers

Brimming ponds, water holes confine wild animals inside STR

Forest Department is relieved over the comfortable storage level in water holes and ponds in Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, since wild animals, especially elephants will not have to stray into human habitations.

Ponds near Chikkalli and another located close to Mavanatham forest habitation are brimming with water. The same is the case with several other ponds and water holes in interior forests, say sources in the department.

Unlike last year, when Forest Department teams had to struggle for several hours, sometimes extending beyond a day or two, to chase away straying elephants into the forests, this time, a few spells of rainfall during summer months had not only filled the water holes, but also ensured lush greenery thereby eliminating scope for forest fires.

Barring a solitary incident, there has been no straying of wild elephants into human habitations and agricultural fields, C.H. Padma, District Forest Officer, Hasanur Division, and Deputy Director, Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, said.

Water storage

By February-end, water storage that accrued from favourable monsoon season last year had depleted, and there was an apprehension of elephants, deer and Indian gaurs straying out of the forest areas.

At the time of summer onset, the Forest Department was faced with the challenge of ensuring water availability for wild animals.

There were also a couple of sightings of elephant herds during February near Bannari check post. The Forest Department was helpless as all it could do was to source water from farmers on the hills and fill the water holes.

It was an onerous task, as water holes in interior forest areas could not be reached.

Farmers are most relieved as there has been no damage to their sugarcane and banana crops that straying wild elephants mainly target.

Though the Forest Department pays them compensation for crop loss, the amount does not measure up to the investment of time, money and human labour put in by the farmers.

Also, this time, the Forest Department has been spared of the trouble of sensitising residents of villages on the hills to precautionary measures to prevent bush fires that wipe out wild life as well, since the spells of rainfall during summer months have created abundant greenery on the hills.

Farmers prepare land for sowing

Ahead of water release in Lower Bhavani Project canal



A field has been readied for start of cultivation process in Erode. —PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

Ahead of water release in the Lower Bhavani Project canal, farmers have started preparing the fields for the next cycle of paddy cultivation. In all probability, water will be released in the LBP canal under odd turn on August 15, as per the usual schedule and till then farmers are in the process of enriching soil through different methods.

The different ways to enhance soil fertility ahead of sowing season includes application of farm yard manure at the rate of five tonnes per acre and sowing of green manure seeds wherever water is available and ploughing the field in situ after a gap of 30 to 40 days. Also, bio-fertilizers have been made available in all agricultural depots. Continuous cultivation is bound to deplete soil fertility and hence the short gaps must be utilised to improve the soil conditions for better crop productivity, official sources said.

Thanks to release of water under turn-system, farmers in LBP ayacut enjoy an advantage over cultivators in Kalingarayan and Arakankottai-Thadapalli ayacuts, the sources said.

‘Procurement of paddy appreciable’

The Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation has registered an appreciable procurement of paddy during the samba season which ended by mid-April this year. Now, the authorities have turned their attention to hulling the paddy and are despatching the same to modern rice mills.

Bulk quantities of paddy stocked at three centres by the TNCSC in the district have been despatched for hulling, official sources told *The Hindu* here on Saturday. Paddy had been stocked at Modern Rice Mill area, Adavathur, and Poolankulathupatti near Ramji Nagar in the city.

The paddy, which was stocked under cap storage pattern, was moved to the hulling centres.

Official sources said the procurement was appreciable this season.

Two-day horticulture expo in Courtallam

A show of entertainment for visitors



Carving of various fruits at the expo in Courtallam on Sunday.— Photo: A. SHAIKMOHIDEEN

With the launch of exhibition on Sunday by the Department of Horticulture at Courtallam, the venue has offered a show of entertainment for visitors.

The two-day expo of fruits and flowers was inaugurated by District Revenue Officer Kulanthaivel in the presence of Tenkasi MP Vasanthi Murugesan at the Eco Park near the Five Falls.

This expo was organised as part of the ‘Saaral Vizhaa.’ To attract tourists, a reception arch, made of jack fruit, papayas, pineapples, oranges, apple and hilly fruits, was erected.

It was a visual treat for people, who were holidaying at Courtallam.

Among various features, a replica of ‘bird of paradise, which is decorated with rose flowers from Kodaikanal and other exotic colourful flowers, remained the centre of attraction.

Besides, a replica of hen with chillies and dinosaur with rose flowers was made. With a colourful display of fruits and flowers with their botanical names, visitors, especially children, had a great deal of joy at the expo.

Deputy Director of Horticulture Sivakumar, Tenkasi Revenue Divisional Officer Venkatesh and horticulture officials were present.

Poultry farmers told to test feed

Poultry farmers in the district were asked to test feed ingredients, particularly sunflower meal, for mycotoxin before use.

A press release from Agromet Field Unit of Veterinary College and Research Institute and Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai said that the sky is expected to be slightly cloudy with chance of isolated rainfall at one or two

places. The maximum and minimum temperature will be around 36 degree Celsius and 25 degree Celsius respectively while the wind speed will be elevated to around 10 km per hour. The humidity will be in the range of 47 to 76 per cent.

The expected cloudiness with mild rainfall together with raising wind speed is likely to reduce maximum temperature by one degree Celsius. Hence, feed intake and egg production will be normal in layer chicken.

However, to maintain normal egg production, farmers are asked to test feed.

Also, post-mortem observations in the birds brought for diagnostic purpose at Poultry Disease Diagnosis and Surveillance Laboratory in the institute revealed death of birds due to upper respiratory tract infection and E. coli infection.

Farmers are asked to test feed and drinking water and use appropriate sanitizers. They were also asked to follow bio-security measures in the farms.

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Agreement reached on tapioca price

PRICE PAID TO TAPIOCA FARMERS LAST YEAR
<u>MULLUVADI VARIETY</u> Rs. 260 per unit about Rs. 6,500 per tonne
<u>ROSE VARIETY</u> Rs. 270 per unit about Rs. 6,750 per tonne
<u>KUNGUMAROSE VARIETY</u> Rs. 280 per unit about Rs. 7,000 per tonne

Even while the tapioca farmers of the neighbouring Salem district continue to demand for the convening of tri-partite talks for fixing reasonable price for tapioca crop in the wake of commencement of harvest period and crushing season in the sago factories, the Namakkal district administration has taken a lead in solving this issue through negotiations.

The District Collector V. Dakshinamoorthy, following persistent demand from the tapioca farmers convened tri-partite talks to fix price for the crop. An agreement was reached on the price issue at the meeting between the farmers, sago factory owners and Sagoserve officials held in the presence of the District Collector at the Collectorate here on Friday late evening.

The farmers' representatives led by K. Sundaram, general secretary of the Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam, said that the production cost of tapioca has gone up considerably due to various factors including hike in the price of inputs and farm workers wages.

The present price of Rs. 4,000 per tonne offered for the crop is very much on the lower side and will harm the interest of the farmers.

They alleged that the buyers were intentionally offering lower price citing huge backlog of stock in the godowns, due to fall in demand. The demand for sago continues to be good in North Indian states, they said.

They demanded a price more than that was offered during last year – Rs. 260 per unit for 'Mulluvadi' variety, Rs. 270 per unit for 'Rose' variety, and Rs. 280 per unit for 'Kungumarose' variety.

Crisis

The members of the Sago factory owners association said that the industry was facing a serious crisis and there has been a steep fall in the sale. They offered a price of Rs. 230 per unit for Mulluvadi, while the farmers demanded Rs. 300 per unit.

The Collector intervened and urged the sago factory units to come forward to provide last year's price, considering the hardship and fluctuations, the farmers faced, following which the sago factory owners relented. The tapioca crop will get a price ranging between Rs. 7,280 and Rs. 7,840 per tonne, the official sources said.

The farmers also requested the Collector to ensure that the price less than the one fixed at the meeting was not offered throughout the current season. V.R.

Subbulakshmi, District Revenue Officer, Karthikeyan, Joint Director of Agriculture and other officials participated in the meeting.

‘Adequate stock of fertilizers in Salem’

FERTILIZER STOCK POSITION		
Total stock available	Stock available with the primary agricultural cooperative credit societies	Stock kept in TANFED godown
12,167 tonnes	8,565 tonnes	3,602 tonnes

The district has adequate stock of fertilizers for meeting the demand of the farmers during the forthcoming farm season.

About 12,100 tonnes of various varieties of fertilizers are available with the primary agricultural cooperative and credit societies and in the godown of the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Marketing Federation (TANFED) in the district, S. Srinivasan, Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies, said while replying to a query on the fertilizer stock position raised by N. Perumal, president, Salem Maavatta Vivasaya Sangam, at the monthly farmers grievances day meeting held here on Friday.

Mr. Srinivasan said urea - 2,607 tonnes, DAP - 1,427 tonnes, phosphate - 2,097 tonnes, mixed fertilizers - 2,339 tonnes along with other fertilizers have been stocked in the 205 primary agricultural cooperative credit societies in the district, for distribution to the farmers during farm season.

The buffer stock of urea - 1,486 tonnes, DAP - 557 tonnes, MOP - 1,359 tonnes and complex - 200 tonnes are kept ready in the TANFED godown, he said.

Only in the first of this month, about 2,600 tonnes of urea imported by the Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative (IFFCO) Limited arrived in the city by goods wagons. The IFFCO, to enable the farmers commence farm operations without any delay, shifted about 1,100 tonnes of urea instantly to the primary agricultural cooperative and credit societies in Salem and Namakkal districts.

The rest, 1,500 tonnes was moved to the TANFED godowns in the districts, the official added.

‘Virali’ turmeric variety fetches good price

About 4,500 quintal of turmeric was auctioned at the Tiruchengode Agricultural Produce Marketing Cooperative Society here on Saturday.

While 'Virali' turmeric variety fetched a price between Rs. 6,509 and Rs. 9,259. 'Kizhangu' variety fetched a price between Rs. 5,818 and Rs. 7,239.

'Panangali'

'Panangali' variety fetched a price between Rs. 8,999 and Rs. 18,499.

The 4,500 quintal was auctioned for Rs. 2.60 crore on the occasion, an official press release issued here said.

Salem central cooperative bank tops in deposit mobilisation

The bank has set record in recovery of crop loan

The 106-year-old Salem District Central Cooperative Bank (SDCCB) registered notable growth rate in mobilisation deposits.

The bank continues to occupy the top position among all the central cooperative banks in the state in deposit mobilisation. The deposits of the bank which stood at Rs. 2,224 crore on March 31, 2013, rose to Rs. 2,890.56 crore by the end of last fiscal (2014-15) and has further risen to Rs. 2,934.08 crores at present.

The Bank posted the highest profit earnings since its inception in 1909 of Rs. 15.92 crore during the financial year 2010-11. The profit further rose to Rs. 22.43 crore during 2013-14. The audit of the last year's achievements is in progress and the bank's profit is expected to further go up, top bank official says.

The bank which has been liberal in extending loan to the weaker sections, particularly to the farm sector, is also concentrating on the recovery procedure. Its track record on recovery rate too has been striking. The bank has set a record in the recovery of crop loan, by registering recovery percentage of 98.43 last year.

The bank, which accounted for 379 Primary Agricultural Cooperative and Credit Societies (PACCS) in Salem and Namakkal districts, has laid importance for strengthening the financial position of these societies.

R. Elangovan, Chairman of the SDCCB, has advocated steps for improving the performance of the PACCSs with less than Rs. 2 crore transaction.

The SDCCB, its 60 branches and 379 primary agricultural cooperative and credit societies, functioning in the districts of Salem and Namakkal, during the

current year so far, has disbursed Rs. 432 crore to its members, mainly comprising of farming community. The lion's has gone for crop loan (Rs. 73.72 crore); and jewellery loan (Rs. 399.49 crore).

The self-help group is yet another concept which attract the patronage of the SDCCB.

The bank has sanctioned more than Rs. 9 crore for women SHGs alone so far. The bank has been according top priority for the recovery process.

Speaking at the annual general body meeting of the bank held recently, Mr. Elangovan, said that the loan recovery performance will enable in improving the financial position of the cooperative bodies. He directed all the branches and the primary agricultural cooperative credit societies to achieve the monthly targets without default.

The work on computerisation of all the branches and Primary Agricultural Cooperative Credit Societies is being done in a phased manner. A majority of the bank branches are situated in the rural areas and computerisation will be of immense help in serving the masses. The SDCCB has already launched the work of imparting training to the staff of the bank branches on 'common accounting software'. In the first phase, 20 employees of branches in Salem, Attur, Sankagiri and Omalur underwent training for three days.

Mr. Elangovan says that the Government has already accorded permission for the opening of new branches at Karumanthurai, Ammapettai, Kannankurichi and Gurusamipalayam. The new branches will be opened soon.

TS to launch 'Grama Jyothi' for all-round development of villages

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has decided to launch "Grama Jyothi" programme from the coming Independence Day for integrated and comprehensive development of rural areas by spending about Rs. 25,000-crore in villages in the next five years.

The Chief Minister took the decision at a review meeting held here on Sunday on the formulation of schemes for development of villages. Ministers K.T. Rama Rao, T. Harish Rao, Principal Secretary (Panchayat Raj) J. Raymond Peter, Additional Secretary in Chief Minister's Office Smita Sabharwal, district Collector of Ranga Reddy M. Raghunandan Rao, Engineer-in-chief B. Surender Reddy attended the meeting.

Explaining his ideas, the Chief Minister stated that it was being planned to spend Rs.2-crore to Rs.6-crore on the development of every village over the next five years.

The objective of the programme was to strengthen the panchayat raj system, making gram panchayats active participants in development schemes and preparation of plans at village-level on their own, he noted.

The Chief Minister has also set up a Cabinet sub-committee headed Mr. Rama Rao with Ministers Etela Rajender (Finance), Tummala Nageswara Rao (Roads & Buildings), Pocharam Srinivas Reddy (Agriculture), T. Harish Rao (Irrigation) and Jogu Ramanna (Forest) as its members to prepare modalities of Grama Jyothi programme.

He asked the sub-committee to give its report in a week's time.

Another meeting would be held on the programme with Vice-Chairman of State Planning Board S. Niranjan Reddy, Rural Development Minister and officials, district Collectors and Joint Collectors at Marri Channa Reddy Institute of Human Resources Development.

'Mana Vooru, Mana Pranalika' already being implemented by the government will make Grama Jyothi work easy, the Chief Minister felt.

The State government would sanction works based on the requirement of villages, Mr. Chandrasekhar Rao said.

The government is planning to meet the needs of every village in the State as part of the programme, Mr. Rao added.

Programme to be launched on Independence Day

Food processing sector hopes for Rs. 5,000 crore investment

The State government will set up Inland Container Depots at Chittoor and Kakinada port for the food processing sector to facilitate import/export of food products and establish a Banana Development Board.

This was stated in the Food Processing Policy 2015-20, which was released on Friday. The policy seeks to make Andhra Pradesh one of the most preferred destinations in food processing sector and attract investments worth Rs. 5,000 crore by 2020, besides creating additional employment for 50,000 people.

A Banana Development Board, with an allocation of Rs.10 crore initially, will be set up. The government will explore with the Union Agriculture Ministry the possibility of setting up of a Mango Development Board in Tirupati on the lines of Spices Board and Coconut Board.

It will also strive to set up three categories of Food Parks—Integrated Food Parks, Mega Food Parks and Ultra Mega Food Parks—across all districts. Suo motu proposals will be considered through Swiss Challenge process. An Ultra Mega Food Park has been proposed at Kuppam in Chittoor with state-of-art infrastructure.

Each Integrated Food Park will have a minimum of 10 food processing units to be set up on 30 acres. The government will provide a grant to meet 50 per cent project cost with a limit of Rs.20 crore. Each Mega Food Park will have 20 food processing units and the government will provide grant up to Rs. 50 crore. Reimbursement on VAT/CST/GST would be provided for Integrated Food Parks during construction period for two years limited to a maximum of Rs. 2 crore. Various fiscal units for units set up in the sector also have been offered. The government also stated that the food processing industry will be declared a public utility under the Industrial Disputes Act to prevent flash strikes.

Rs.92-cr. project for seawalls in Kannur



Seawalls to be erected along 12-km stretch Study on Neerozhukkuchal facing sea erosion

A project estimated at Rs.91.96 crore has been prepared by the Irrigation Department for laying seawalls along coastal areas facing erosion from tidal action.

An official press release informing this here said that the project was disclosed by Agricultural Minister K.P. Mohanan at the district development committee meeting held here on July 25. Seawalls will be erected along a total stretch of 12 kilometres, it said.

Steps are under way for entrusting experts in the Indian Institute of Technology to conduct a detailed study on tidal action along a total 12 km areas of Puthiyangadi, Vavunalappilthodu, Mattul South, Meenkunnu, Thayyil-Maidanappalli, Ezharakkadappuram, Palissery, Thalayi-Pettippalam and Parimadam. The Central Water and Power Research Station has been asked to study Neerozhukkuchal here which is facing severe sea erosion threat from wave action, the Minister told the meeting.

He directed Agricultural Department officials to expedite the agricultural schemes announced for the Aralam Farm. The schemes including a plant from making Neera would accelerate the development of the farm, the Minister said.

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- *Seawalls to be erected along 12-km stretch*
 - *Study on Neerozhukkuchal facing sea erosion*

Dinesh Foods to enhance production



Dinesh Foods has already begun a project to increase the production capacity of its coconut processing units that mainly produce value-added products.

Thrust on value-added products from coconut

project under implementation for expanding the manufacture of value-added coconut products of Dinesh Foods, one of the units of the Kerala Dinesh Beedi Workers' Central Co-operative Society Ltd., (KDBWCCSL), is all set to enhance the requirement of nuts for processing being procured from coconut growers in the region.

Dinesh Foods started as part of the diversification programme of the KDBWCCSL for rehabilitating beedi workers has already begun the project to increase its production capacity of its coconut processing units that mainly

produce value-added products such as processed coconut milk, virgin coconut oil, desiccated coconut powder and coconut chips.

“At present our production capacity is 300 kg of coconuts per day for manufacturing mainly coconut milk and it will be increased to 1,000 kg per day,” said KDBWCCSL chairman C. Rajan. This will require 5,000 coconut per day or production of 30,000 coconut palms. The enhancement of the production will benefit local coconut growers as the company is collecting nuts from local markets, he said.

Coconut milk ice-cream

In addition to the existing value-added coconut products, Dinesh Foods will soon be launching non-animal milk ice-cream made of coconut milk. The company has already purchased the machinery for the production of coconut milk ice-cream.

“We are doing forward linking of the agricultural sector that can provide succour to coconut growers in the region,” society secretary K. Prabhakaran said. The backward-forward integration through value-addition will be a bulwark against price fall of coconut.

Dinesh Foods started in 1998 with 30 workers now has over 100 workers and more workers are required as the expansion project gets under way, he said.

The society has represented to the State government and the Coconut Development Board to initiate steps for a nationwide campaign to popularise coconut products, especially coconut milk, the use of which is now confined to the State. “If we are able to make at least one per cent of the total population of the country to use any coconut product, the requirement will be huge,” Mr. Rajan said. The society’s proposals included observing a particular year as coconut year and organising countrywide roadshows, cookery competitions in big hotels, among others.

wE ARE DOING FORWARD LINKING OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR, SAYS SOCIETY SECRETARY.

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- ***Local coconut growers to benefit***
 - ***More workers to be enrolled***

Government forms task force on agriculture development

Agriculture Secretary Mihir Vardhan will be the Chairman



A view of a demo farm of winter vegetables under the Department of Agriculture at Thirukkanur near Puducherry. — Photo: S.S. Kumar

The Union Territory Government has constituted a Task Force for Agriculture Development to address the region specific problems in the sector.

Lieutenant-Governor A.K. Singh accorded approval for the proposal. Agriculture Secretary Mihir Vardhan will be the Chairman of the committee which will have six other members.

Central Task Force constituted

National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog of Government of India which replaces the Planning Commission, in its first Governing Council meeting held on March 16 constituted a Central Task Force on Agriculture Development under the Chairmanship of the Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog.

Further, the Union Government has suggested to the State/Union Territory Governments to constitute a Task Force on Agriculture Development to address the region specific problems of potential levels in agriculture.

The Director of Agriculture, the Director of Animal Husbandry and Director of Fisheries and Fishermen Welfare and three others are the members to the task force.

As per the terms of reference, the task force should co-ordinate and to recommend strategies to the Central Task Force for revitalising agriculture in Puducherry Union Territory.

Strategies

The task force will formulate strategies for reforms, innovation and technology diffusion in respect of bio-technology, post harvest technology, integrated farming, multiple livelihood opportunities, organic farming and ecological safety.

The task force was assigned the work of identifying strategies for reduction of land degradation and improvement of sodic soils (gypsum application, tolerance crops, application of extra nitrogen, zinc nutrition, growing fodder crops, grass and afforestation).

It will devise strategies for export oriented agricultural development and any other measures.

Official sources added that the task force would ensure that the report on the strategies recommended by the task force are submitted to the Central Task Force within two weeks after its notification.

Puducherry has been performing well on a range of agriculture-related parameters such as aggregate contribution to State Domestic Product, size of cultivable area under paddy and sugarcane, status of cash crop cultivation and best agricultural practices in mechanisation, pest and disease management.

For instance, paddy yield has risen from 4.5 to 5 tonnes per ha about three years ago to 6 to 6.5 tonnes per ha now. The mill average yield from sugarcane of about 39 tonnes per acre was well above the national average of about 33 tonnes.

Pioneer

Puducherry is also seen as a pioneer in end-to-end farm mechanisation from field preparation through to harvest for its major crops. Farmers are encouraged to use organic pesticides as much as they can and resort to chemical pesticides only as the last line of defence as part of propagating Best Practices among ryots.

The UT currently has about 26,000 ha of gross area under paddy cultivation, about 3,000 ha under sugarcane, 200 ha under banana crops and 400 ha under vegetable cultivation.

Project Unnati to boost mango yield



Jain Irrigation Systems Limited (JISL) and Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt. Ltd. (HCCBPL) have joined hands through Project Unnati (meaning betterment) to help farmers adopt Ultra High Density Plantation (UHDP) technique to boost mango yield. Over 25,000 farmers in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka would be enrolled in project Unnati to adopt UHDP technique, which will help boost mango yields. HCCBPL & JISL will be investing Rs. 50 crores into project Unnati in the next few years. Project Unnati is aimed at a large scale adoption of UHDP in the country and aims to scale up the project to cover end-to-end fruit supply chain and further optimise delivery.

The project, to be scaled up over a period of 10 years, is aimed at creating an ecosystem that delivers higher growth and income for farmers and ‘Grove to Glass’ fruit supply chain and optimizing delivery for Indian brands Maaza and Minute Maid Mango.

Project Unnati alone is expected to deliver close to 240KMT fruit by year 2023 – 24 UHDP is a proven technology, commonly practiced for mango cultivation worldwide and combined with other sustainable agricultural techniques, has the potential to yield upwards of 200 per cent more produce than that by the traditional method.

PM confers ICAR award on The Hindu journalist

Prime Minister Narendra Modi gives ICAR's Chaudhary Charan Singh Singh Award for excellence in Journalism in Agricultural Research and Development, 2014 to Gargi Parsai, Associate Editor The Hindu during 87th ICAR Foundation Day, in Patna on Saturday Photo: Special Arrangement

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday presented *The Hindu's* senior journalist Gargi Parsai with the prestigious Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) award.



Ms. Parsai, an Associate Editor, was conferred the Chaudhury Charan Singh Award for excellence in Journalism in Agricultural Research and Development-2014.

Expressing happiness, Ms. Parsai said she felt honoured to get the special award from the Prime Minister in recognition of her work in the field of agriculture and research.

The award-winning journalist has been writing on crucial subjects of agriculture, food security, water resources and rural development for over two decades. She has also been reporting on politics and Parliamentary affairs.

In a career spanning 37 years, Ms. Parsai has brought to light various issues relating to farm research and development, environment and food sector that have made a difference. She is the winner of the Prem Bhatia Award in Journalism, FAO Award for Best Writing and is among the Women of the Millennium.

Ms. Parsai represented India in a Press Fellowship in the United States and was invited by former Prime Minister Deve Gowda for her views on agrarian crisis.

The success story of an entrepreneur

He employs value-addition in corn using indigenous technology



A cornflakes processing unit at Small Industries Development Corporation (SIDCO) Industrial Estate at Ilambalur in Perambalur.— Photo: B. Velankanni Raj

An entrepreneur, who has been successfully manufacturing corn-snacks using indigenous technology, has been working on a newer strategy to produce newer products, particularly corn flakes.

V. Chollin Selvan, 25, who has set up his manufacturing unit at the Small Industries Development Corporation (SIDCO) estate at Elambalur near here, has been making six snacks products.

The installed daily production capacity of the unit is 2.5 tonnes but he has restricted the production to 400 kg a day.

The success of snacks industry has been mainly due to baking technology being adopted by the factory.

He says: “we have adopted conventional method of the ‘vatthal’ and ‘grandma recipe’. For instance, the ‘cup and corn’ is made based on grandma recipe while the ‘cocus’ is well suited as a breakfast dish.”

He said it was two phases of initial training he had undergone -- first at the National Institute of Technology – Tiruchi and later at the Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology near Thanjavur which inspired him to understand the significance of value-addition in corn, that too using indigenous technology.

The project cost is Rs. 3.30 crore that includes a subsidy of Rs. 50 lakh sanctioned by the National Mission on Food Processing, Rs. 33 lakh interest-free loan sanctioned by the Small Farmers Agri Business Consortium for a period of eight years, a loan of Rs. 80 lakh sanctioned by the Canara Bank.

The entrepreneur has invested about Rs.1.67 crore towards the project.

Having started the industry, he has embarked on marketing strategy, visiting various places in Puducherry, Kumbakonam, Thanjavur and southern parts of the state.

He said he has taken up a new experiment on making corn flakes, another baking-based product. “We are studying the shelf life of corn flakes and want to ensure its longest and safest shelf-life period,” he said.

The industry, he says, has been ensuring assured market for local farmers of Perambalur, Ariyalur and Thanjavur districts. He purchases maize in Perambalur and Ariyalur, and quality rice from Thanjavur.

He said the district administration has been extending cooperation for setting up the industry.

Cane farmers start destroying crop after fall in prices

‘When we don’t get returns, we have no option but to destroy it’



Over the last two days, four farmers have destroyed their standing crop.

Following the decline in price for sugarcane, the growers have begun destroying the crop in their fields in Channarayapatna taluk.

Over the last two days four farmers have destroyed the standing crop. M.K. Swamy of Srinivasapura, Rathamma and Kallappa of Shettihalli and Sudhakar of Jogipura have destroyed the crop, disappointed with turn of events that affected their income.

Mr. Swamy, on Sunday, told presspersons that the sugarcane had no demand in the market.

“I was not sure of getting back what I spent on the crop, considering the current price in the market. Instead of spending more on harvest and transportation, I destroyed the crop,” he said.

Sugar factories have stopped crushing activity. Even if growers sell their crop to the factory, they will get the returns only several months later.

Farmers cultivate sugarcane by borrowing loan or pledging valuables.

“When we don’t get expected returns, we have no option but to destroy it,” he added.

The traditional jaggery making units (‘aalemanes’) are also reeling under loss. Dayanand, also a sugarcane grower of Shettihalli, said the owners of jaggery units would have to spent up to Rs.1,150 to produce a bag (75 kg) of jaggery and at present they are getting only Rs. 1,400 to Rs.1,600 per bag of jaggery in the market. “When jaggery units are not doing well, they can’t purchase sugarcane paying well,” he said.

A herbal farm comes up in Menambakkam



A view of a herbal farm. Photo used for representational purpose only

A farm set in a four-ground plot in Meenambakkam is reported to have several rare herbs. There is also a Siddha clinic attached to it.

This facility, located on Meenambakkam station road and not too far away from the BMW showroom on GST Road, is a brainchild of Karthikeyan, physically-challenged, and his brother P. Ravichandran, a fitness enthusiast who holds an M.Phil in exercise physiology. The brothers are assisted by friends and practising Siddha doctors, which include Esther Pari. The idea of setting up such a farm was triggered by a study of the herbal product market, which, they believe, largely functions through the Internet and is beyond the means of the common man. They set up the farm, taking the four-ground plot on lease for five years.

As a preparatory measure, they carried out a survey, spanning nearly a year, which included a study of the availability of the crops and their suitability to the local conditions. Following the survey, they got crops from Chengalpattu and

Kancheepuram. Later, to their surprise, they found most of these crops near city roads. “We are providing treatment for diseases free of cost and charge only for saplings and medicines,” says Karthikeyan. They have found help in running the farm.

“The Thamizhnadu Matruthiranaligal Sangam is helping us by supplying additional manpower. Now, the two people – a man and a woman – are working regularly,” he says.

The farm has around 50 regular customers. The saplings are sold and customers are also trained on how to grow, maintain and use them. They are also educated on the medicinal value of herbs and how the crops could be used to cure diseases.

He says, “We also educate people and make them understand that this system of treatment is not magical and a disease cannot be treated in a day. Those who go in for treatment have to be patient. They need to realise that for any treatment to be effective, they should take the medicine for at least two months.”

The farm is said to have 101 varieties of herbal plants. It takes two months to grow these plants. “Only organic manure is used,” they say.

Onion prices sharply up in a month

Wholesale onion price at Lasalgaon in Maharashtra, Asia’s biggest market for this kitchen staple, has shot up by 70 per cent in just about a month — hitting its highest level for the month of July in the past two decades.

Prices in July usually tend to be higher because the supply goes down and the onset of monsoon season also affects the onion quality. The onion was being sold at Rs.25.50 per kg in Lasalgaon market on Friday, while the retail prices are in the range of Rs.35-40 per kg here in the national capital. Lasalgaon accounts for a bulk of the supply in various parts of the country, including Delhi region. The prices have shot up by 70 per cent, since June 27 when the government increased the minimum export price for the commodity.

The prices in both wholesale and retail markets have been rising in recent weeks due to sluggish supply of good quality onion in the wake of the crop getting damaged in storage across major growing states, including Maharashtra. Apprehending further increase in onion prices, the government has already increased MEP of the commodity to \$425 per tonne and extended by another year the ban on hoarding. The Centre is also planning to import onion though in limited quantity.

TNCS begins despatching paddy



Paddy being loaded on to a truck Poolankulathupatti near Tiruchi.— PHOTO: M. SRINATH

The Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation has registered an appreciable procurement of paddy during the samba season which ended by mid-April this year. Now, the authorities have turned their attention to hulling the paddy and are despatching the same to modern rice mills.

Bulk quantities of paddy stocked at three centres by the TNCSC in the district have been despatched for hulling official sources told *The Hindu* here on Saturday. Paddy had been stocked at Modern Rice Mill area, Adavathur, and Poolankulathupatti near Ramji Nagar in the city.

The paddy, which was stocked under cap storage pattern, was moved to the hulling centres.

Official sources said the procurement was appreciable this season. In fact, the TNCSC had extended the purchase of paddy at the Direct Procurement Centres well beyond April in Puliyancholai where farmers had raised late “samba” variety. “Farmers of the villages in and around Puliyancholai had raised the crop in a cluster of villages and harvested about 350 tonnes which was marketed at the Direct Procurement Centres at Alathudaiyanpatti and B. Mettur,” the source said.

Salient features

Although the TNCSC had introduced online disbursement of money to farmers, many farmers preferred spot payment.

“And, we made special arrangements for disbursement by cash,” the source said. Winnowing machines had been allotted to all the DPCs for ensuring procurement free from dust and husks.

High potential for horticulture in the district: Sorake

Vinay Kumar Sorake, Urban Development Minister, said on Saturday there is a vast scope for horticultural crops in Udupi district.

He was speaking after inaugurating an information workshop on horticultural crops under the National Rural Horticultural Mission organised by the Department of Horticulture here.

Mr. Sorake said agriculture, horticulture, dairy farming and fishing were the main occupations in Udupi. It was essential that farmers had knowledge of various horticultural schemes of both Union and State governments, as the agrarian sector was currently facing challenges, he said.

The government departments could encourage the farmers and farm workers to take up community based schemes in the villages. They could also encourage the farmers to take up individual schemes wherever it was necessary. This would help in the better implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme, he said.

Rain revives hopes of good yield of kuruvai crop

Scattered and widespread rain in several parts of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, and Nagapattinam districts over the past few days has provided the lifeline to standing kuruvai paddy crop in close to 1.20 lakh acres that were craving for water.

Adi month

Normally with the commencement of the Tamil month Adi, cool breeze with heavy moisture content in the air would strengthen the health of the kuruvai paddy.

However, that was not to be this season as the dry, hot, and humid weather conditions threatened to undo the efforts of the farmers who went in for kuruvai banking on the motor pump sets for irrigation.

Overloaded electrical transformers could hardly feed the parched paddy fields to the extent required and in many regions, the kuruvai crop came to depend on water from the Cauvery that was not to be as the customary opening of Mettur Dam for the delta kuruvai cultivation was not possible this year too.

Temporary relief

To some extent, the kuruvai package of the State government helped sections of farmers tide over the crisis for the time being but many were yearning for rain.

The delta districts on Thursday and Friday and several parts of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, and Nagapattinam districts experienced scattered and moderate rainfall.

“One or two more such spells would help us see through the critical stage in this year’s kuruvai paddy life cycle as the possibility of the Mettur Dam being opened for delta irrigation is seemingly nearer.

Opening the dam

“If the dam was opened in the first week of August, then we might see through kuruvai with some success,” say farmers in Kodavasal region of Tiruvarur districts, reflecting the expectation of their delta fraternity.

Dairy farmers upset over delay in payment

Seek govt. to announce grant for Aavin to disburse the dues

MILK PROCUREMENT PRICE Aavin - Rs. 27 to Rs. 28 Private - Rs. 18 to Rs. 22	CONVERSION 15,000 litres milk ▼ 1,150 k.g. milk powder 600 k.g. butter	MILK POWDER per k.g. Production cost - Rs. 235 Market price - Rs. 140
	13 litres milk ▼ 1 k.g. milk powder	BUTTER per k.g. Production cost - Rs. 225 Market price - Rs. 195
25 litres milk ▼ 1 k.g. butter	CURRENT PER DAY PRODUCTION in k.g. Milk Powder - 65,000 to 70,000 Butter - 35,000 to 36,000	

A large section of dairy farmers supplying milk to Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Producers Federation (Aavin) have complained about delay in payment for the milk that they supplied to the federation.

Payment is delayed by more than 30 days, they said adding that they have been asked not to supply milk more than their average supply to Aavin.

They are clueless on what to do when there was an increase in milk production. Till about two months ago they were paid once a week.

The former Chairman of Coimbatore District Milk Producers Union S.R. Rajagopal attributed the delay in disbursement to the piling up of milk powder and butter stock across the State.

Aavin procures about 2.95 lakh litres milk from farmers in Coimbatore and Tirupur, while the retail sale is a mere 1.37 lakh litres. Excess milk procured from farmers is converted into milk powder and butter. Piling up of stock has made it difficult for Aavin to pay the farmers on a timely basis. He estimated milk powder stock in Coimbatore at 1,200 tonnes and butter stock at about 500 tonnes.

Stating that there are about 22,000 dairy farmers supplying milk to Aavin through 560 cooperative milk producers societies in Coimbatore and Tirupur districts, Mr. Rajagopal said about 80 per cent of them were small and tiny farmers with one or two cows. “The delay in payment has made it difficult for them to meet their expenses and in buying mixed feed and fodder for their animals,” he said.

Farmers have made an appeal to the government to announce a grant for Aavin to disburse the dues to farmers. They have also sought supply of fodder at a subsidised price.

Kasimedu fishing harbour gears up for a good season



Construction work in progress at Kasimedu Fishing Harbour in Chennai.—
Photo: M.Vedhan

At the Kasimedu fishing harbour, but for the opening to the sea in the east, there are boats in every direction. Space along the finger jetties has been used to create facilities at a cost of Rs. 75 crore to park 533 boats . The fishing harbour, where nearly 110 to 130 tonnes of fish land every day, has 720 trawlers, 700 smaller motorised boats and catamarans and these need space to be anchored.

The Fisheries Department has completed works taken up to increase anchoring space inside the harbour and is presently in the process of fixing rubber fenders along the wharfs, said a source.

The harbour, with a water spread area of 48.56 hectares and land area of 24.28 hectares, was inaugurated in 1984 and at that time was designed to berth 560 mechanised fishing boats and 15 trawlers. However, owing to increase in the

number of boats, more space was required to berth them and hence works were taken up in February 2014. “Due to wear and tear, the existing trawler wharf was damaged and was also repaired as part of the modernisation works,” a source added.

Along with extension of the existing wharf, two finger jetties of 200 m length each and two of 150 m length each and a 290 m-long low-level wharf have been constructed. Two net-mending sheds, auction halls and road repair and re-laying works have also been completed.

Fishermen, who are happy with the additional space, say that more space is required since 180 trawlers and 405 smaller craft are yet to get their own parking bays. “If the State government takes over the management of the fishing harbour from the Chennai Port Trust, it would be even more helpful. We want fish from here to be exported directly, the harbour must be upgraded to meet European Union standards,” said a fisherman.

Water release from Mettur dam stepped up for Aadi Perukku



Release of water was stepped up to 6,000 cusecs on Sunday morning—
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The release of water from Mettur dam was stepped up to 6,000 cusecs on Sunday morning in connection with the forthcoming Aadi Perukku festival.

About 2,000 cusecs was released from the dam for drinking purpose till Saturday and on the order of the Chief Minister, the release was increased by 4,000 cusecs for Aadi Perukku.

The increase in release will be continued till August 3, when Aadi Perukku will be celebrated, according to official sources.

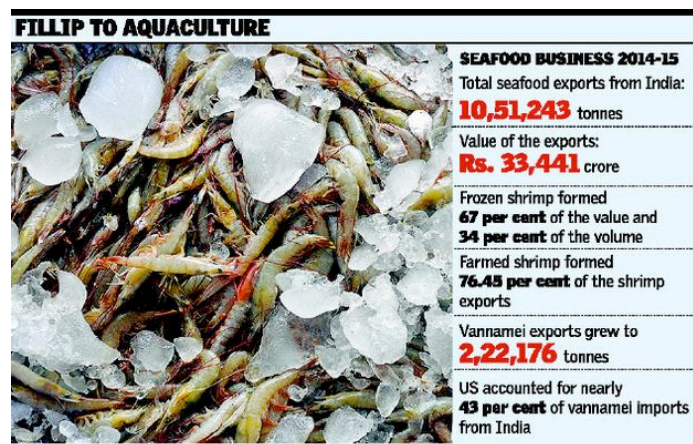
The water level in the dam stood at 93.95 feet on Sunday morning against its full level of 120 feet.

The inflow was 12,926 cusecs and the storage 57.28 tmcft.

Happy days ahead for shrimp farmers



Seeds of domesticated, disease-free black tiger shrimp are now available



Domesticated, disease-free shrimp seeds are available for farmers

Kerala shrimp farmers may look forward to a change of fortunes with the availability of specific pathogen-free black tiger shrimp seeds and a decision by the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies to set up the State's first vannamei hatchery.

Farming of black tiger shrimp has virtually been abandoned since the early 1990s after rampant spread of white spot disease.

However, seeds of domesticated, disease-free black tiger shrimp are now available at the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Aquaculture in Andhra Pradesh.

The specific pathogen-free black tiger shrimp farmed by George Alexander Vattakkattusery of Valamangalam, near Cherthala, won him the best aquaculturist award in the State for 2014-15.

An official of the Marine Products Export Development Authority said 80,000 disease-free shrimp seeds had been supplied to a farmer at Narayanamangalam, near Kodungalloor, recently. Black tiger shrimp farming, using bio-enclosures and following the methods prescribed by the RGCA, would make it a profitable business once again.

First hatchery

Meanwhile, Kufos has decided to set up the State's first hatchery of the exotic white leg vannamei shrimp with a capacity to produce 20 lakh seeds a year. At first, the hatchery will be used for the university's purposes and that of farmers associated with the university, said a statement here.

University authorities have sought permission of the Coastal Aquaculture Authority for converting the recently completed hatchery complex on Puthuvype Island into a vannamei hatchery.

The university also plans to extend vannamei farming to 11 more ponds of 1,000 sq.m. each. Seeds will be released in different densities to find out what density is ideal for the best yields.

Farming operations are expected to start in mid-September and around 11,000 tonnes of vannamei is expected from the ponds.

Kufos has been cooperating closely with the Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture on vannamei farming. Feed developed by scientists at the central institute will also be experimented with during the farming operations by Kufos.

Seeds of domesticated,

disease-free black tiger shrimp are now available

Food processing sector hopes for Rs. 5,000 crore investment

The State government will set up Inland Container Depots at Chittoor and Kakinada port for the food processing sector to facilitate import/export of food products and establish a Banana Development Board.

This was stated in the Food Processing Policy 2015-20, which was released on Friday. The policy seeks to make Andhra Pradesh one of the most preferred destinations in food processing sector and attract investments worth Rs. 5,000 crore by 2020, besides creating additional employment for 50,000 people.

A Banana Development Board, with an allocation of Rs.10 crore initially, will be set up. The government will explore with the Union Agriculture Ministry the

possibility of setting up of a Mango Development Board in Tirupati on the lines of Spices Board and Coconut Board.

It will also strive to set up three categories of Food Parks—Integrated Food Parks, Mega Food Parks and Ultra Mega Food Parks—across all districts. Suo motu proposals will be considered through Swiss Challenge process. An Ultra Mega Food Park has been proposed at Kuppam in Chittoor with state-of-art infrastructure.

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All about dry fruits



A one-day training programme on ‘dry fruits and vegetables’ will be conducted by TNAU Information and Training Centre, No.U-30, 10th Street, (Behind Jaigopal Garodia School), Anna Nagar on August 30, between 9.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m.

The course will cover preparation of dry fruits and vegetable preservation. Training certificates will be given to all participants.

Those interested may call 2626 3484 .

White revolution offers a way out



A successful workable model for women empowerment in dairy business.

The recent momentum seen in dairy farming through out the country is catching up in Kerala state too. Many village-based dairy units run by Kudumbasree groups have been functioning in many parts of the State for some time now. A workable model for such simple, but organised system of milk production and distribution was launched in the Idukki district way back in 2007, when G.S. Madhu, as district coordinator for Kudumbasree Project, initiated a cluster dairy project in Edavetty grama panchayat in Idukki district.

The project became very popular and inspired launching of similar projects in Kannadi (Palakkad), Alagappanagar (Thrissur), Sasthamkotta (Kollam), Thidanadu (Kottayam), Sreekaryam and Pookulam (Thiruvananthapuram) with women's Joint Liability groups being engaged in production and distribution.

In Edavetty itself the enterprise has to be discontinued, mainly due to the presence of middlemen in distribution and transportation. Learning from the past mistakes, a new Commodity Interest Group (CIG), Ponpulari, in Uppukunnu of Udumbannoor Grama Panchayat of Idukki, has started a similar but, better organized cluster dairy unit in 2010, under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Madhu, now Deputy Project Director of Agricultural Technology Management Agency, Idukki.

The immediate provocation for the new venture is the failure of cash crops in Idukki, especially the pepper vine due to bacterial and fungal wilt, and the resultant financial crunch. As a sop to the financial crisis and with Women's Empowerment as a long term motive, the new venture was obviously an all-women endeavour.

Ponpulari started the cluster dairy farming with 10 members, who attended training programmes on scientific dairying at Kerala Livestock development Board, Mattupetty; Director of Entrepreneurship under the Kerala Veterinary

and Animal Sciences University (KVASU), Mannuthy; and Animal Husbandry Department at Thodupuzha. The project was established with the help of District Kudumabsree Mission - the poverty alleviation programme of the State of Kerala.

The 10 founding members started dairying at their own land, each with two cows. Cattle sheds were constructed at elevated place with good ventilation facilities, scientific flooring and cleaning of cattle shed facilities, which are the main domains of success in dairying, says Dr. Madhu.

Periodic screening of milk for mastitis, through California Mastitis Test; appropriate scientific interventions in breeding, feeding and managing disease control and marketing measures is the secret behind the success of Ponpulari in dairying, T. P. Sethumadhavan, Director of Entrepreneurship, KVASU.

The group sells the milk under the brand name, Nature Fresh Milk. Mainly the group collects milk from the members, who ensure the milk is made available as single cow-milk. Tigi Anandan, secretary of the CIG claims that consumers are ready to pay premium price for good quality single-cow milk, if it is made available. The group sells milk at the premium price of Rs.50 per litre. Ms. Tigi claims that she is earning Rs.60,000 a month as profit, only through dairying, now that she has nine cows at her farm, with she and her husband fully involved in the venture.

Moreover, she is getting added income through the sale of manure and calves, for which there is good demand, she says. Ponpulari sells around 500 litres of milk daily, packed in 650 ml and one litre bottles. The women's group concentrated on selling high quality farm fresh milk within a 19 km locality a role model of an enterprise with 'Small is Beautiful' as its guiding spirit.

13 Mega Food Parks get Centre's final nod



The Central Government has accorded final approval to thirteen proposals for setting up of Mega Food Parks in various parts of the country including rural areas during the current Five Year Plan period till date. These Mega Food Parks

are private sector driven projects and responsibility of execution, ownership and management of these projects vests with a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), which is a company incorporated under the Companies Act. State Government/ State Government entities/Cooperatives have also been allowed to set up Mega Food Parks in the country by recent amendments in the scheme guidelines.

These Mega Food Parks are currently in the process of implementation. On completion, these Mega Food Parks would provide direct and indirect employment for about 30,000 persons.



First person - Rural empowerment

My background is in chemical engineering, and I am presently pursuing a PhD in bioenergy from agricultural waste. The idea for Oorja, which I co-founded with Amit Saraogi, an Indian social entrepreneur, was conceptualised during the Climate-KIC 'Journey,' a summer school which aims to develop the next generation of climate entrepreneurs, in August 2014.

Amit and I were brought together by three common motivating factors -to accelerate the process of sustainable development, to provide access to clean energy to underserved communities and to reduce the climate impact of rural populations by using waste resources and displacing fossil fuels. The core mission of Oorja, is to address the challenges of energy poverty, soil degradation and food security that are faced by rural agrarian communities in India. We essentially aim to develop locally available crop wastes into a resource to catalyse socioeconomic and environmental change and help build climate resilient communities.

To achieve this purpose, we combined Amit's background in development, business and finance with my technical skill-set to develop an efficient multi-component unit that can transform crop waste into renewable and affordable energy and biochar for off-grid communities. This scalable innovation will initially target off-grid villages in Uttar Pradesh (UP), where it will significantly reduce the cost of energy, displacing dirty fossil fuels which release black carbon that is hazardous to health. India is a crucial target market due to its thriving agricultural sector and huge underserved population living on less than \$2/day.

We chose UP as our pilot location for a number of reasons. Firstly, the state is densely populated and its rural population is drastically under-served, with the majority of the population living at the 'bottom of the pyramid' without electricity access. Secondly, because the state is the biggest producer of crop wastes and farmers face serious soil degradation problems there.

We are currently building a prototype and expect to deploy the first biomass-to-energy plant in Bahraich district, UP in 2016. In early May we visited the state to undertake customer validation, energy demand analysis and meet key stakeholders including farmers, rice mill owners and household representatives. We also met with the energy minister and various stakeholders within the ministry of agriculture and ministry of new and renewable energy to gain support for our initiative. The visit to rural UP was highly successful and enabled us to identify a suitable pilot village, gain key energy demand data and develop partnerships.

Our initiative has received support by the Althea-Imperial programme, where I was awarded a runner-up prize for the most innovative women entrepreneurs in science in technology. Additionally, we were recently selected for the Echoing Green Climate Fellowship, which is specifically targeted at next-generation social entrepreneurs committed to working on innovations in mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Having been chosen out of over 3,600 applicants, we are very motivated as we now have access to seed funding, mentorship and leadership opportunities to help finance the business launch and propel Oorja in helping to reduce social exclusion, combat energy poverty and improve food security for small-holding farmers in rural India.

Rural areas take lead in solid waste management

At a time when urban bodies such as the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) are struggling to tackle waste, rural areas are set to steal the show by implementing a unique solid waste management programme.

According to sources, the state panchayat raj and rural development department had initiated the pilot programme in Cherujampalem, East Bapatla in Guntur, G Medapadu, Undooru and Vetlapalem in East Godavari and Kotakandriga, Pedakanaparthi in Srikalahasthi of Chittoor district in December last year. Owing to its success, the ministry is now planning execute a similar model in 659 mandal headquarters of the state.

Sources said that around Rs 8 lakh is being provided under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, whereas another Rs 4 lakh is funded under MGNREGS and Rs 4 lakh under the 13th and 14th finance commission funds for implementing the solid waste management programme in each village.

Speaking to TOI, the programme's field coordinator from G Medapadu, S Raghu said, "Our village has a population of around 10,000 and we segregate the waste at the source itself. In order to implement the programme, we have undertaken awareness drive and provided colour-coded bins so that villagers can separate the waste into dry and wet waste. The dry waste is being used to generate vermicompost, whereas the plastic and glass is shredded with the help of a shredder and sold to recycling agencies."

"For every 100 kg of waste collected, around 50-60% is converted into vermicompost, which is again distributed to the farmers," he added.

Founder director of Sangamitra Research Training and Consultancy, which has been providing technical consultancy to the panchayat raj department, Chodamani said, "The programme aims at safe disposal of waste. We are able to keep the villages clean and environmental friendly."

"Each village is provided with rickshaws, safety equipment, and shredders. Sheds are also being setup in order to ensure that waste is handled optimally by generating by products," she said.

Panchayat raj and rural development minister Ch Ayyanna Patrudu said, "Earlier, plastic and tyres were burnt in the open, but now these are being recycled. The farmers are able to generate vermicompost, which is high quality manure for their crops. The planning for the project has been completed and we have drawn action plans to execute the solid waste management programme in all 659 mandal headquarters." He further said that gram panchayats will be able to earn revenue from selling vermicompost to farmers and plastic to recycling agencies.

Effective recycling

- * Seven villages in three districts implemented solid waste management pilot programme under panchayat raj department

- * Waste is segregated at source helping gram panchayats to generate vermicompost

- * Plastic and glass waste get shredded and sold to recycling agencies

- * Solid waste management programme to be extended to 659 mandal headquarters in AP

Agri economy may nosedive

State's agriculture economy may nosedive with farmers not receiving remunerative prices of their produce in absence of sufficient number of agriculture processing plants and drought conditions looming large on the one hand and non-payment of about Rs 365 crore from existing 11 sugar factories in the state going into gradual deficit on account of glut in sugar market, on the other.

Fast changing climatic conditions have already damaged litchi and mango crops in the state and the prospect of a good kharif too has been marred by scanty rainfall. Director, state agriculture department, Dharmendra Singh, acknowledged that the rainfall during the current month is nearly 60% less than normal rain in the state. Although, it is too early to say that Bihar is facing drought, farming has been definitely affected in rain-fed areas, he added. Informed sources said Bihar produces nearly 80 lakh tones of paddy every year, on an average. But only 8 lakh tonnes of paddy is being consumed by state's own rice mills. Producers have sold out their paddy only at Rs 800 per quintal to traders who have sent the entire stock to good quality rice mills outside Bihar. Definitely, there are rice hullers in every locality of the state being operated either with diesel or electricity but even villagers prefer to eat polished and branded rice produced by outside rice mills than that produced by local hullers. Similarly, in absence of mills for producing flour and suji from wheat, wheat producers have sold out their produce at Rs 1300 per quintal instead of the price of Rs 1450 offered by government this year. The simple reason was that small farmers could not manage to carry their produce to government purchasing centres they had to sell out at cheaper rates.

Even many rice mills who took paddy from government centres could not pay the price. Moreover, there are inadequate number of godowns in the state for storing wheat and rice. Even FCI godowns lack sufficient space to store grains. A prospective farmer and litchi grower Bholanath Jha said the growers were a disappointed lot these days for failure of their crops for the last three years. Changing climate has damaged their fruit and cereal crops. Had there been processing plants, they could have compensated their loss by selling fruits and foodgrains to them at higher rates.

11 new food processing projects to boost state's horticulture sector

Uttarakhand's food processing industry is going to contribute in a major way to the state's economy, as per the horticulture department. A meeting was held in Delhi on July 20 in which 11 food processing projects worth Rs. 108.73 crore in investment across Uttarakhand have been approved by the empowered

monitoring committee of the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), the national horticulture mission under ministry of agriculture. Along with this a government subsidy of Rs. 40.13 crore will also be given, said officials.

The eleven approved projects include ten food projects from Udham Singh Nagar and one from Haridwar. The most significant project approved at the meeting was for the creation of seed infrastructure of an international grade for horticulture crops. It would comprise all three categories: vegetables, flower and fruits. "We will be in a position to cultivate more and better produce, especially the ones which are most sought after in the international market, as we will have our own seeds and techniques to grow best quality seeds," said B S Negi, director, horticulture mission, Uttarakhand, talking to TOI.

The direct beneficiaries of all the projects will be those farmers who cultivate perishable horticultural crops, as their produce will be immediately consumed by the food processing industries. To enjoy the perks of MSME policy 2015, all the food processing units of Uttarakhand have tied-up directly with the farmers.

"As of today in Uttarakhand, an investment of nearly Rs 650 crore has been made in the food processing industry. With these projects getting a go-ahead, a major reduction in the losses which are observed during post-harvest in horticulture crops will be seen, and farmers will get better income on their produce," Negi added.

In Uttarakhand, major food processing industries are active in Udham Singh Nagar, Haridwar and Dehradun. Within the overall agriculture sector, the horticulture department generates the most funds, according to officials. At present, the highest volume of exports are in mushroom, peas, cauliflower and honey.

TOI has learnt that the horticulture department is making the blueprint to convert horticulture into one of the most profitable ventures of state for stopping agricultural migration and exploiting the temperature and topography, which is favourable for growing international produce. The action plan will be similar to other states that are reaping major profits by following modern cultivation techniques.

"We are making a vision document to lift up the entire horticulture industry of Uttarakhand and, in a few months, we will be ready with a plan of action for radical development in horticulture," added Negi.

We have eliminated bulk agents, says Hatsun MD



Hatsun Agro Products Ltd, the largest private sector dairy company with a clutch of top brands including ArokyA milk, Arun Icecreams and Hatsun dairy products in its fold, has seen its net quadruple in the first quarter of the current year. Its investments in acquisitions and expansions a year and a half back have begun to pay off, says Managing Director RG Chandramogan. The company has also strengthened its milk procurement systems qualitatively and quantitatively to deal with dairy farmers directly. He shares with *BusinessLine* some of the key developments and the focus on strengthening links with customers that will drive growth for the ₹ 2,900-crore company. Edited excerpts:

The first quarter results have been quite buoyant. What are the factors driving the growth?

The milk procurement base has increased by about 25 per cent over last year. Earlier, we had built up handling capacity and now utilisation of the installed capacities is happening. We now procure about 28 lakh litres of milk daily and capacity utilisation is about 90 per cent in liquid milk plant and nearly 100 per cent in the milk powder plant. At peak procurement, we have handled 29.5 lakh litres of milk.

What is driving the increase in procurement?

We have completely eliminated milk traders, the bulk agents who collect milk from groups of farmers to bring to the chilling centres. More than 95 per cent of the procurement is directly from farmers, with money going into their bank accounts. We are the first in the country to do that. Banks, which are looking to disburse viable agriculture loans, get a huge database of solvent farmers.

We invested over a ₹100 crore in equipment to assess milk quality, based on which farmers are paid. We have put Eko Milk Analyser, an equipment that analyses the milk in front of the farmer at each of our 8,000 milk collection centres across the State. Each machine costs ₹1.25 lakh. Farmer's are confident and banks are also happy and willing to support them.

What is the status of the expansion plans announced in 2013?

Towards the end of 2013, we did three major investments totalling over ₹200 crore. We expanded into Andhra Pradesh with the acquisition of Jyothi Dairy, set up a greenfield dairy plant in south Tamil Nadu and acquired a cattle feed plant. All these have stabilised over the course of last year and are now paying off.

Jyothi Dairy, which was handling about 65,000 litres of milk daily, has now grown to 2 lakh litres and has a presence in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The 'Santosa' brand cattle feed business targeting our own dairy farmers has grown to about ₹15 crore a month.

What will drive the next phase of growth?

We are now strengthening our retail and marketing and getting closer to our customers. The traditional Hatsun Distribution Centres are being rebranded as Hatsun Daily and will act as distribution and retail outlets for all of Hatsun Agro products. There are now 2,200 outlets and these would be expanded to over 3,000 in the next year-and-a-half.

Arun ice cream is the largest brand in South India, Arokya is the largest private milk brand. Hatsun Ghee, which is cow's milk ghee, is a leader in north India and has a substantial share in Tamil Nadu. Ice cream chain Ibaco, with 140 outlets, is picking up. We also have a new brand in Aniva milk sweets in the ready-to-eat segment which is being tested.

Modi calls for revolutions in farm, allied sectors

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today said that India cannot wait for the second Green Revolution, which must come from eastern states and also called for similar revolutions in energy, milk and fisheries to make the country self-sufficient.



Thanking farmers for taking his advice seriously, Modi said sowing of pulses and oilseeds has touched a record this Kharif (summer) season.

Addressing the 87th foundation day of premium agri-research body ICAR here, Modi asked agri-scientists and progressive farmers to ensure the country does not need to import any farm commodities in the future.

He emphasised on increasing crop yields per hectare and expressed concern over agri-wastage, while pitching for food processing and value-addition to boost farmers income.

“We have benefited from the first Green Revolution. But the country cannot wait for the second Green Revolution. We are already late. We need to prepare plans to achieve second green revolution,” he said.

“I can see clearly that the second Green Revolution will take place from eastern states like Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, and eastern Uttar Pradesh,” he added.

Emphasising on taking research from lab to land, Modi exhorted agricultural scientists to give a report to him in six months identifying priorities needed to be given for fast pacing the farm growth.

“As agricultural land is shrinking, there is a need to increase crop yields per hectare through newer research in the field of agriculture,” Modi said and urged the agri scientists of the country to help this happen.

Modi praised Indian scientists for their work despite budgetary constraints, and emphasised the need for scientific innovations in the agriculture sector to move from “lab to land,” so that farmers can benefit from them.

He said that his government's priority was to usher in four-prong revolutions in tune with the four colours - saffron, green, white and blue in the national flag.

“We have tricolour flag. There is blue chakra. I believe that there is a need for ‘Chatur Kranti’ (fourth revolution) in the country,” Modi said while naming these four revolutions as - green, saffron, white and blue.