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Farmers told to adopt integrated farming methods to enhance productivity

'The trend of sticking to sugarcane cultivation resulted in excess production'



Participants at an interactive session with farmers in Mandya on Monday.

Progressive farmers have advocated that integrated farming practices help farmers increase productivity as farming community in Mandya district are facing economic problems owing to sugarcane cultivation.

In the wake of series of suicides of farmers because of mounting debts and crop losses, the Mandya Zilla Panchayat and the Department of Information and Public Relations had organised an interactive session with farmers here on Monday.

Progressive farmers from different parts of the district attended the programme and narrated their success stories. They tried to educate the farmers on integrated farming methods.

Integrated farming approach was more relevant in the present-day scenario as it could sustain the family, even by owning less than an acre of land, the progressive farmers pointed out.

According to them, the small and marginal farmers should adopt integrated farming to ensure enhanced productivity.

Unfortunately, be it small, marginal or big farmers, a majority of them in Mandya were willing to cultivate sugarcane.

The trend of cultivating sugarcane had resulted in excess production of sugarcane and was causing agrarian crisis, they said. The farmers were suggested to involve themselves in dairy farming, animal husbandry and focus more on compatible crops, other than sugarcane, to achieve enhanced productivity.

K.T. Mohan from Kothathi, K.H. Ramesh from Kommerahalli, Satish from Chiladahalli, Satish from Karekura, Dyave Gowda from Sunkathonnuru, Nagaraju from Manchanahalli, Narasimhe Gowda from Arkanakere, Lakshmiddevamma and Prakash from Beeranahalli, among others, explained their experiences and called upon the farmers to take up scientific farming.

Rohini Sindhuri, Chief Executive Officer of Mandya Zilla Panchayat, inaugurated the programme by distributing saplings to farmers.

She told the farmers to approach their nearest Agriculture Department's office and seek suggestions and guidance.

“We have organised the programme to instil confidence among farmers and educate them on the improved methods of farming to help them improve their standards of living,” Ms. Sindhuri told *The Hindu*. Farmers and members of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha from across the district attended the programme. Many of them described the interactive sessions as useful.

Assistant General Manager of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) Bindumadhava Vadavi, Joint Director of Agriculture M.N. Rajasulochana, District Information Officer R. Raju, Deputy Director of Agriculture Chandrashekar, Deputy Director of Horticulture K. Rudresh, All India Radio programme officer Keshava Murthy, Deputy Conservator of Forest (Social Forest) Ramalinge Gowda and Deputy Director of Veterinary Sciences Prasadmurthy were present.

The interactive session aimed at instilling confidence among small and marginal farmers.

Rohini Sindhuri,

Chief Executive Officer, Mandya Zilla Panchayat

Innovative pellet method to boost paddy farming

Rice yield goes up from 1,400 kg an acre to 2,000 kg



Aji Thomas of Kunnel, a farmer at Ambalavayal in Wayanad district, and others making bio-slurry pellets.

While many a farmer in the State bids goodbye to rice cultivation owing to huge investment and low returns, Aji Thomas of Kunnel, a progressive farmer at Ambalavayal, has come up with an innovative rice cultivation method.

Mr. Thomas, 41, has developed the ‘bio-slurry pellet method of cultivation,’ after conducting 15 trial and error experiments on his 40 cents of land with the financial assistance of Rs.50,000 from the Wayanad branch of the NABARD. Mr. Thomas uses a rubber mould with 64 holes to make pellets.

Each hole is filled with 25 grams of enriched bio slurry mixture and one or two rice seeds are inserted in it before it is set.

Then, 25 grams of fenugreek paste (for bonding the mixture) and 5 gram each of Pseudomonas and Azospirillum, bio control agents, are added with a kg of bio slurry.

He discharges the dried pellets in the field, after drenching them in water for nearly six hours, at a distance of 25 x 25 cm spacing. As many as 64,000 pellets are placed on an acre of land. “The pellets can be sown manually. Rows are made in such a way that the germinating plant gets ample air and sunlight. This method saves both time and money and there is no need to prepare a nursery for paddy plants,” he says.

The method developed by Mr. Thomas is promising at a time the world is focussing on aerobic rice production, says P.K. Abdul Jabbar, Assistant Professor (Agriculture Extension) Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Ambalavayal. “In the conventional nursery method, paddy crops take approximately 160 days to mature while it takes only about 140 days if this technique is used. The average yield of rice from an acre in the area is 1,400 kg. But under the method it has increased to 2,000 kg, Dr. Jabbar says.

“The manual labour have come down to six persons an acre as against 25, including for transplanting rice plants and weeding, in traditional agriculture practice,” Dr. Jabbar says

The KVK is planning to train women Joint Liability Groups under the ‘Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana’ project to use this technology in leased land rice farming.

Planning committee to seek incentive for foodgrain growers

‘Farmers are shifting to other crops owing to poor returns’



Kalagodu Ratnakar (second from left), president of the zilla panchayat and chairman the Planning Committee, speaking at a meeting in Shivamogga on Monday.— Photo: VAIDYA

The District Planning Committee meeting on Monday resolved to urge the government to extend incentives to farmers engaged in cultivation of foodgrains.

Addressing the meeting, president of the zilla panchayat Kalagodu Ratnakar said that the area under cultivation of food crops had declined in the district in recent times.

As farmers were of the view that returns from the cultivation of paddy, the main food crop of the region, was not remunerative, they were switching over to arecanut, ginger and maize cultivation. The area under paddy cultivation, which was about 1.11 lakh hectares of land in 2011-12, had come down to 1.05 lakh hectares in 2014-15, he said.

A similar trend was prevailing in other parts of the country and it might pose a threat to food security. In Kerala, with a view to promote food crop cultivation, the State government had started providing Rs. 20,000 as incentive an acre of land as incentive. The Karnataka government should follow this model, he said.

Kumar, Assistant Director in the Department of Agriculture, informed the meeting that four farmers had committed suicide in the district in past one month. All of them had borrowed loans from various sources.

H.R. Rajappa, Project Director of Urban Planning Cell, said that all urban local bodies in the district had landfill sites to dispose off solid waste generated in their limits. At present, 105 tonnes of solid waste was generated in Shivamogga city, daily. It had been planned to decentralise the solid waste management system in the city. A plant that produces fuel briquettes from organic waste would be installed near Vidya Nagar here. The plant would be operated on public-private partnership model. The briquettes could be sold to industrial units. The Shivamogga City Corporation would soon float tenders in this regard, he said.

Waste treatment plant

In addition, the Shivamogga District Chamber of Commerce and Industries had come forward to establish a pyrolysis waste treatment plant in the city, where solid waste would be subjected to thermo-chemical decomposition at high temperatures with minimal oxygen. The plastic waste would be converted into bio-fuel and organic waste into manure in this unit, he said.

Member of the committee Esur Basavaraj said, residents of Esur, Gama, Arishinagere and Hittala villages in Shikaripur taluk were facing problems for burying the dead. Similar problem was there in other villages of the district too, he said. Mr. Ratnakar directed the executive officers of taluk panchayats to identify such villages. The possibility of allotting a land belonging to the

Revenue Department or purchasing some private land with the funds available under local area development funds of MPs and MLAs for burial land would be explored, he said.

Mayor of Shivamogga City Corporation Mangala Annappa and Chief Executive Officer of zilla panchayat B. Ramu were present.

Area under paddy cultivation in Shivamogga district has come down to 1.05 lakh hectares in 2014-15 from 1.11 hectares in 2011-12.

Kalagodu Ratnakar,

President, Shivamogga Zilla Panchayat

‘Solve problems of farmers’

Irrespective of political parties, members of Davangere Zilla Panchayat the members decided to appeal to the State government to take immediate steps to stop increasing suicide incidents of farmers in the district and provide suitable compensation to the families of deceased farmers.

As soon as the general body meeting of the Davangere Zilla Panchayat began on Monday, all the members started complaining that farmers are not getting suitable prices for crops grown in their farms. The prices of seeds and fertilizer are increasing every year, making it difficult for the farmers to carryout agriculture activities smoothly.

The farmers are not even getting back their investment from the last few years owing to adverse climatic conditions, they said. The members also alleged that farmers in the district have not received crop insurance amount even after paying the premium amount regularly.

The authorities concerned are trying to misguide the farmers by citing one or the other reason, when they approach for claiming crop insurance amount. “The zilla panchayat should send a memorandum to State government to take immediate steps to provide crop insurance amount to eligible farmers, ” they added.

Commenting on the demands of the members, Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer R. Girish informed the members that all banks in the district have been instructed not to issue notices to farmers or pressure them to repay their loans.

Action has also been initiated against the moneylenders who used to charge heavy interests from the farmers, he said.

Some of the members also alleged that many schools in the district were unable to provide proper teaching to students owing to scarcity of teachers. So the government should be appealed to take immediate steps to recruit teachers wherever necessary.

Reacting to the complaint of members, DDPI Prema informed that there was shortage of 483 teachers in the district, including 160 posts in Harapanhalli and 127 in Jagalur. The authorities concerned have already taken steps to recruit 181 guest teachers , she added.

‘Farmers have not received crop insurance even after paying premium regularly’

Water released from KRP Dam to benefit 9,012 acres

The release will continue for 150 days



Fresh hope:A fisherman throws a net in a canal as water was released from the Krishnagiri Reservoir Project Dam in Krishnagiri on Monday.— Photo: N. Bashkaran

Water was released from the Krishnagiri Reservoir Project (KRP) Dam for the first crop to benefit 9,012 acres in 16 village panchayats in Krishnagiri district.

Following the directions of Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, Collector T.P. Rajesh opened the sluice gates of the right and left main canals in the presence of Krishnagiri MLA K.P. Munusamy and engineers. Officials said that about 80 cusecs of water was released through the left canal while 75 cusecs was released through the right canal. The release would continue for the next 150 days till December 23, 2015, the officials said. They added that water level stood at 48.40 feet against its full height of 52 feet on Monday.

Farmers in Periyamuthur, Sundekuppam, Thimmapuram, Souteaalli, Thalialli, Kalvealli, Kundalapatti, Mittaalli, Erraalli, Penneswaramadam, Kaveripattinam, Balekuli, Marichettihalli, Nagojanaalli, Janapparuralli and Paiyur would benefit.

Farmers told to adopt integrated farm practices



Progressive farmers have underscored the need to adopt integrated farming methods to achieve enhanced productivity as the farmers in the district are more exposing to economic risks owing to sugarcane cultivation.

In the wake of series of suicide of farmers because of mounting debts and crop loss, the Mandya Zilla Panchayat and Department of Information and Public Relations had organised an interaction programme for farmers here on Monday. Progressive farmers from different parts of the district attended the programme and attempted to educate the farmers on practicing integrated farming.

Integrated farming approach is more relevant in the present days as it can sustain a family even if it owns a piece of land less than an acre, the progressive farmers pointed out.

According to them, the small and marginal farmers should adopt integrated farming to ensure enhanced productivity.

Unfortunately, be it small, marginal or big farmers, majority of them were willing to cultivate sugarcane in the district. The trend [of cultivating sugarcane] has been leading to excess production of sugarcane causing agrarian crisis, they opined.

The progressive farmers also suggested the farmers to get involved in dairy farming/animal husbandry besides focusing more on compatible crops other than sugarcane to achieve enhanced productivity.

Some of the farmers explained their success stories and called upon the farmers to take up farming activities in a scientific manner.

Rohini Sindhuri, Chief Executive Officer of Mandya Zilla Panchayat, inaugurated the programme by distributing saplings to farmers.

She said that farmers should approach their nearest agriculture office for suggestions and guidance.

“We have organised the programme to instil confidence among the farming community and educate them on the method and help them in improving their livelihood,” she told *The Hindu*.

Joint Director of Agriculture Rajalochana explained various schemes of the department.

Useful programme

Farmers and members of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) from different parts of the district attended the programme. Many of them described the interaction as “useful”.

Quit farming to run typing centre



K. Deivashikamoni, who was once a progressive farmer, now running a typing office in Tirupur city operating from his unusable car.—Photo: R. VIMAL KUMAR

Once a progressive farmer at Vaniyambadi, K. Deivashikamoni (62) is now running a ‘typing office’ which was interestingly been operated from his unusable car (Omni van), carrying out job works.

Though the arrival of computer has a cascading effect, Mr. Deivashikamoni manages to run the ‘office’ with two traditional typewriters, thanks to generation of ‘loyal customers’ over the years.

“I am mostly doing typing of property-related documents and also prepare typed petitions for the people who go with grievances to revenue department offices,” Mr. Deivashikamanoni told *The Hindu* from his car which could be seen at a short distance from taluk office and court complex here.

The tale of his life took an unexpected twist when he had to give up farming as the crops started affecting by the indiscriminate industrial effluent of discharges at Vaniyambadi in late 1970s and early 1980s.

“Once I quit farming after been the ‘victim’ of industrial effluents, I joined an Anglo-Indian firm at Vaniyambadi itself as a typist for which the typing skills acquired in the teens helped me, before moving to Tirupur in the mid-80s”, he said recollecting the past. It was a calculated move made by Mr.

Deivashikamoni. “I moved here seeing the buzzing activities in the cluster due to the escalation in knitwear exports and was running a prominent typing office alongside Kumaran Road in the heart of the city”.

Once the business flourished, he bought the car in 1998. But into the new millennium, his business started dipping with more and more people started showing preference for computer printouts than preparing documents using traditional typewriters.

“Apart from this, many government offices, too, made their services online which affected my business,” he said.

Without much revenue flowing in to maintain the office and carry out maintenance of the car, he converted by then unusable car into a typing office in the recent years.

“Even as business is down, I wanted to hear the ‘tik ...tik...’ sound generated by traditional computers.

So, will not leave this profession,” said Mr. Deivashikamoni, whose wife is now into computer typing business in another part of Tirupur city.

FCV tobacco crop size pegged at 120 million kg

Board to clamp down on excess production



SOIL WISE CROP SIZE

- Northern Light Soils (NLS) in West Godavari: **35 million kg**
- Southern Light Soils (SLS) in Prakasam and Nellore: **45 million kg**
- Southern Black Soils (SBS): **57 million kg**

BARN QUOTA

- SLS region: **34 quintals**
- NLS region: **25 quintals**
- SBS region: **32 quintals**

Tobacco Board Chairman K. Gopal addressing the media in Guntur on Monday. Manager (auctions) K. Ravi Kumar is seen.
- PHOTO: T. VIJAYA KUMAR

The decision to peg the crop size has been taken in view of the changing global dynamics of the trade
K. GOPAL, Tobacco Board Chairman

The Tobacco Board has pegged the crop size of Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha at 120 million kg for the 2015-16 crop season.

Unveiling the FCV production policy for 2015-16 here on Monday, Board Chairman Koothati Gopal said the decision to cut down the crop size by over 50 million kg than that of the previous year would give a 'clarity,' to the global customers on the domestic tobacco market.

“The decision to peg the crop size to 120 million kg has been taken in view of the changing global dynamics of the trade, huge carryover stocks, declining domestic demand for tobacco and the indent given by Indian Tobacco Association. The board is urging the farmers to regulate tobacco cultivation and under no circumstances, we will allow cultivation beyond November,” Dr. Gopal told reporters here on Monday.

The board fixed the soil wise crop size with Northern Light Soils (NLS) in West Godavari accounting for 35 million kg, followed by Southern Light Soils (SLS) in Prakasam and Nellore accounting for 45 million kg and Southern Black Soils (SBS) 37 million kg. The barn quota had also been fixed at 34 quintals in SLS, 25 quintals in NLS regions and 32 quintals in SBS region.

“We are not giving new licences for construction of barns, new registrations as FCV tobacco growers and no new area will be allowed for cultivation of tobacco. The nursery season will start in August and the crop can be cultivated until November,” he said.

The board further advised growers against leasing of land or barns at exorbitant prices in view of the volatile global markets.

Board secretary C.S.S. Patnaik, and Manager (auctions) K. Ravi Kumar were present.

The decision to peg the crop size has been taken in view of the changing global dynamics of the trade, huge carryover stocks, declining domestic demand and the indent given by Indian Tobacco Association

K. Gopal, Tobacco Board Chairman

Sowing the seeds of a disaster



AT THE CROSSROADS: “We are at a critical moment in India’s fight to achieve ecological security while ensuring progress.” Picture shows poplar plantations on the outskirts of Delhi. Photo: Meeta Ahlawat

The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Bill in its present form could squander away staggering amounts on meaningless afforestation. It must be recast to protect India’s forests.

While vigorously pursuing a slew of reforms to ease forest clearances, the Prime Minister and his Environment Minister have repeatedly averred that development will not be pursued at the cost of India’s remaining forests. Welcome as these statements are, there is cause for apprehension in the form of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Bill, 2015 (CAF Bill), which was introduced in the Lok Sabha on May 8, 2015.

‘Compensatory Afforestation’ is a convenient Indian concept that has been in place since 1980. Whenever development projects seek land inside a Reserved Forest or a Protected Area (PA), such as a sanctuary or a national park, certain levies are imposed on the project proponent. This money is to be utilised to plant trees elsewhere, ostensibly to compensate for the loss of forest.

Over the last 10 years, a staggering corpus of Rs.35,000 crore has accrued from such levies in a fund called Compensatory Afforestation Management Planning Authority (CAMPA). The Central government now wants to release 90 per cent of this money to States for carrying out afforestation projects. On the face of it,

this might seem like a progressive step. But given that the Bill is anchored on a flawed and unscientific premise, it is only likely to provide a ‘fig leaf’ for covering up the increasing diversion of forests in the name of development.

Threat of fragmentation

When ill-planned development projects are thrust into the heart of PAs, the result is fragmentation, that is, the breaking up of large forest blocks into smaller and more vulnerable patches. Peer-reviewed scientific research has clearly established that fragmentation is one of the most serious threats to long-term biodiversity conservation, causing several devastating impacts; among other things, it disrupts landscape connectivity, affecting dispersal of animals, and creates new edges that expose forests to exploitation and severe degradation. Sadly, instead of addressing this critical issue, successive governments have been pursuing the flawed idea of trying to ‘compensate’ for forest loss and fragmentation by raising artificial plantations elsewhere.

Here is just one example of how the compensatory afforestation approach ends up not just being a ‘greenwash’, but an ecological disaster as well. From 1980 to 2005, the Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited (KIOCL) strip-mined hill slopes clothed in virgin rainforests in the heart of Karnataka’s Kudremukh National Park. Besides the horrendous damage to the fragile ecosystem, over 150 million tonnes of tailings — the waste mud left over after extraction of low grade ore — were dumped into a pristine, 100-metre-deep, forested valley. To ‘compensate’ for this loss of natural habitat, KIOCL went on a massive compensatory afforestation spree, planting millions of trees. The problem with this was twofold: the trees were non-native species with zero biodiversity value; and they were planted on adjoining areas of natural grassland, which are an extremely important component of the Bhadra River’s watershed. Thus, apart from the forested hill slopes and the valley that were destroyed by mining activities, a third natural habitat, in the form of ecologically important grasslands, was destroyed through mindless tree planting. To add insult to injury, governments and project proponents alike proclaim such travesties as achievements towards a ‘Green India’.

The CAF Bill 2015, if approved in its current form, would end up repeating such colossal mistakes all over the country. In order to provide real benefits, the Bill must be modified to allow a major percentage of CAMPA funds to be utilised for consolidating the remaining large blocks of natural old-growth forests.

Poor results

Despite the investment of more than Rs. 4,600 crore during the last three decades, from international aid agencies such as the World Bank, U.S. Agency for International Development, The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Overseas Development Institute and others, there is ample evidence of the extremely poor results of past afforestation efforts. In Karnataka, where more than Rs. 1,500 crore have been spent on afforestation projects over the past 30 years, data from the Forest Survey of India shows that dense and moderately dense forest cover in the State went down by 2,898 sq km between 1997 and 2011. In Maharashtra, a recent official evaluation of ten-year old plantations (2004-2014) in all 11 forest circles has shown that 74 per cent of them have failed while 13 per cent are partially successful and only 13 per cent successful.

Under the 12th Plan, an allocation of Rs. 2,500 crore was made for the National Afforestation Programme, but with little to show on the ground. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology and Environment and Forests in 2015 has recorded that despite massive budgetary provisions, 40 per cent of forests in the country are still degraded. Currently, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has committed Rs. 15,000 crore for 22 forestry projects in 13 States. Ignoring all this, the Ministry of Environment is pushing forward with a poorly conceived CAF Bill that will only trigger massive corruption in the forestry sector, without providing any ecological benefits to the country.

There is further justification for a review of the CAF Bill. CAMPA is India's sovereign fund, and is thus the only one available for consolidation of large forest blocks. None of the international aid agencies funding afforestation projects allows for this ecologically vital activity.

Other than investments to consolidate large Reserved Forest blocks, PAs, and the creation of wildlife corridors, the other important activity that needs to be funded through CAMPA is natural restoration or regeneration of degraded forests. The approach must be to first identify degraded forest areas with existent root stock, and invest only on appropriate protection measures such as trenching, fencing and fire prevention. The degraded forests will then recover through a natural process at a very nominal cost to the exchequer. Funding for artificial plantations should only be considered in extremely degraded areas with no existing root stock.

We are at a critical moment in India's fight to achieve ecological security while ensuring economic and social progress. If recast on the basis of sound science, the CAF Bill 2015 will form the basis of a far-sighted and genuinely beneficial strategy to protect India's forests. However, given the way it is crafted presently, it will allow Rs. 35,000 crore to be squandered away on corruption-ridden 'afforestation' projects involving digging pits, buying polythene bags for raising saplings, and planting trees that can never become forests.

(Praveen Bhargav has served on the National Board for Wildlife, and the 2008 CAF Bill sub-committee. Shekar Dattatri has served on the National Board for Wildlife, and is currently on the State Board for Wildlife, Tamil Nadu)

Longer shelf life for Aavin gulab jamuns

Guess what Aavin has to offer now? Gulab jamuns with a longer shelf life.

Following in-house R&D, Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation Ltd. has launched gulab jamuns that will stay good for 30 days. According to a source at Aavin, preservatives have not been used to extend the shelf life of these gulab jamuns, offered in two different-sized packets. "We have slightly modified the way the sweet is made and have now made it last longer. The earlier variant, which had a seven-day shelf life and cost Rs.115, has been replaced," said the source. The new variant will come in 125 g- and 250 g-packs and costs Rs.50 and Rs.95 respectively. "It is prepared using pure Aavin Agmark ghee. The container also has a spoon so that it can be consumed on the go," the source said.

The gulab jamuns will be available at Aavin and FRO outlets. M. Margaret, a resident of Adyar, said she regularly bought Aavin's gulab jamuns and welcomed the idea of long shelf life for the sweet.

Farmers' organisations urge State government to waive all farm loans

Members of the Karnataka State Sugarcane Growers' Association and the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha have urged the government to waive all farm loans, and disburse fresh ones to ensure that no farmer in the State commits suicide. The government should also announce a special package on the lines of the Vidarbha package to help farmers in distress.

A meeting of farmers of Mysuru and surrounding areas, where many suicides had been reported, was held on Tuesday.

The meeting passed 15 resolutions, among which was to pressure government to prevent farmers' suicides. Ensuring farmers get remunerative price for agricultural produce, construction of adequate number of warehouses, and proper implementation of crop insurance scheme besides simplifying procedure to take loans were among the resolutions adopted by the two organisations. The meeting also resolved to urge the government to extend Ganga Kalyana Scheme to all farmers with land holdings of 10 acres irrespective of caste and community that they belong to, and provide pension totalling Rs. 5,000 per month to all farmers aged 60 and above.

Karnataka State Sugarcane Growers' Association president Kurubur Shanthakumar, association general secretary Athahalli Devaraj, and general secretary of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha Badagaluru Nagendra were among those who attended the meeting.

Before the meeting, the participants observed a two-minute silence and paid tributes to the former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

'Announce a special package on the lines of the Vidarbha package to help farmers in distress'

Training in sheep, goat management at KVK

A free one-day training programme on sheep and goat management and vaccination will be conducted at Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Veterinary College and Research Institute premises on August 4.

Topics

A press release from B. Mohan, programme coordinator, said that the programme would cover the types of sheep and goat and its management, feeding methods and vaccination for enhanced productivity.

Farmers, members of women self-help group and interested persons can participate. They should come in person on working days or register through phone numbers 04286 266345, 266244 and 266650.

For registration, mentioning of Aadhaar number was mandatory, the release added.

Procure entire milk from farmers: DMK tells Aavin

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) urged the Aavin to ensure the procurement of entire quantity of milk being supplied by farmers to the primary milk societies functioning in the villages.

A resolution adopted at the executive committee meeting of the Namakkal East district unit of the party held here recently, said that farmers were already suffering because of failure of monsoon, rise in the price of farm inputs, and inadequate market price.

They are depending much on milk production for stabilising their livelihood.

The cooperative societies were procuring only a limited quantity of milk and returning the excess milk to the farmers, because of which they suffer a heavy financial loss. Various agitations organised by farmers have failed to attract the attention of the government. The meeting decided to stage agitations to condemn the action of the Aavin.

Another resolution condemned P.R. Sundaram, MP (AIADMK), for inciting violence through his speech of cutting the tongue of those who spoke ill about the health of Chief Minister.

The meeting thanked the DMK chief M. Karunanidhi for coming forward to implement prohibition in the State if the party came to power in the State. School, and college students were fast becoming liquor addicts and this was not in the interest of society. The DMK chief has announced the decision with an eye on the future of society, the resolution said.

A session at Zilla Kannada Sahitya Sammelan to be dedicated to farmers

Chandrashekar, president of the Mysuru unit of the Kannada Sahitya Parishat, has said that one of the sessions at the Mysuru Zilla Kannada Sahitya Sammelan in H.D. Kote on August 11 and 12 will be dedicated to farmers. Causes and solutions for farmers' suicide will be among the prominent issues that will be discussed threadbare at the session.

Mr. Chandrashekar told *The Hindu* here on Tuesday that the session that will be held under the banner of 'Krishi Badukina Thallanagalu' is expected to chalk out solutions for various problems of farmers, including price crash, and debts. Farmers, agriculture scientists, writers and scholars will participate in the session, and later an interactive session with farmers will also be held, he said.

"Inaction" of the successive governments to fix a rational price for agricultural produce, and how farmers are taken for a ride by private financiers, middlemen, and commission agents would be discussed at the session, Mr. Chandrashekar said.

Loan schemes of the different financial institutions such as PLD Bank and cooperative institutions, besides absence of a proper market place for farmers to sell their agricultural produce for a remunerative price are other issues that will be focussed upon at the sammelan.

According to Mr. Chandrashekar, the sammelan will also discuss ways and means of making available small loans to get over domestic problems as this would prevent farmers from going to private financiers to avail loans for their

domestic needs at a high rate of interest. He added that writers have been asked to analyse the reason for farmers' suicides, and ways to prevent them.

Eminent writers to deliver lectures besides engaging in interactive sessions with audience

'Pressure sugar mills to pay arrears to growers'

Members of the Karnataka State Sugarcane Growers' Association and the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha have urged the State government to ensure that the sugar mills pay the arrears to farmers. At a meeting held to chalk out steps to prevent farmers' suicides, the participants said that sugarcane growers were unable to continue cultivation as many sugar mills had not made payments to them for the cane purchased during the past four years.

Besides adopting stringent policies for establishing new sugar mills, the government should nationalise all of them, and give impetus for the production of ethanol in all sugar factories, the speakers at the meeting said. The participants also welcomed the decision of a nationalised bank to provide a loan of Rs. 1 lakh to every farmer for the purpose of carrying on with agricultural activities.

Cross-section of society to take out padayatra in support of farmers



Pratap Simha, MP; Chandramouli, president of Advocates' Association Chandramouli; Vasudev Bhat, president of Vijaya Vittala School; and Chandrashekar, president of the Mysuru unit of the Kannada Sahitya Parishat, at a press conference in Mysuru on Tuesday.— Photo: M.A.Sriram

Even as the number of farmers' suicides is mounting in the State, advocates, writers, scholars, actors and religious heads have decided to take out a padayatra

in the city on Wednesday to instil confidence among farmers. The main objective is to boost the morale of farmers and pass on a message to them that people of all sections of society are with them, and that they should not take the extreme step under any circumstances.

Pratap Simha, MP; Chandramouli, president of the advocates' association; Chandrashekar, president of the Mysuru unit of the Kannada Sahitya Parishat; and Vasudev Bhat, president of Vijay Vittala School, said that the padayatra would be taken from Basaveshwara Circle to Freedom Park in Subbarayana kere. Later a programme will be held at the Freedom Park to send across a message to the farming community that all sections of society are with them. Personalities from different fields would address farmers on the occasion.

Writers, including S.L. Bhyrappa, Latha Rajashekar, film and theatre personalities Prem, Sadhu Kokila, M.S. Ramesh (Director), Rajashekar Naidu, Ajay Rao, Rangayana Raghu, seers of different mutts, and advocates will be among those who will participate in the padayatra.

Mr. Pratap Simha said that all of us are indebted to farmers as they grow crops for us, and that it is everyone's duty to rush to those of them who are in distress. As many as 165 farmers have ended their lives, and all like-minded people should come together to boost the morale of the community engaged in agricultural activities. He added that while agriculture contributes to 15 per cent of the GDP in the country, over 60 per cent of the population in the country are dependent on it. Mr. Chandramouli urged the government to find out the cause of farmers' suicides in the State. He also called for fair price for agricultural produce. He attributed the spate of farmers' suicides in the State to falling prices of agricultural produce.

The rally from Basaveshwara Circle will culminate at Freedom Park where eminent personalities will speak on issues concerning agriculturists

Tobacco growers seek partial crop holiday

Upset with the truncated crop size of 120 million kg fixed by the Tobacco Board for 2015-16, growers in Prakasam district wants the Centre to instead declare a partial crop holiday in half of the auction platforms to remove the glut in the market.

The Union Government, which had given a commitment to the World Health Organisation to phase out tobacco cultivation in phases, should announce a compensation of Rs. 10 lakh per barn as a long term measure for ryots to dismantle tobacco barns, said a group of farmers coming under Ongole II auction platform. Over 75 per cent of the growers were ready to switch over to other crops instead of remaining captive growers to meet the needs of cigarette manufacturers if shown an alternative, said former Tobacco Board member M. Bangarababu.

Slashing of quota per barn to 3,400 kg in Southern Light Soil and 3,200 kg per barn in Southern Black Soil would go against the interest of growers, he argued. “Sharing of barns by two farmers was impractical,” a farmer from Podili, K. V. Ramana Reddy, said. It would be a win-win situation if a crop holiday was declared in one of two auction platforms in Ongole, Tangur, Podili and Kandukur, felt another farmer V.Bhaskar Rao.

“Ryots who skip tobacco cultivation in one auction platform in a year can be allowed to grow in the subsequent year. By this method, the crop size can be brought down without hurting the interest of farmers who can also grow good quality produce by practicing crop rotation,” Mr. Bangarababu says.

CTRI role

Mr. Bangarababu, progressive farmer, wants the Central Tobacco Research Institute to introduce organic tobacco cultivation to tap the huge demand for such tobacco in Germany and other European countries.

Slashing of quota per barn will go against the interests of farmers, says former Tobacco Board member M. Bangarababu

Agrarian distress and suicides

Too much of public discourse on farmer suicides could bring on unseemly haggling over the numbers. Activists and the media rightly question loopholes in the National Crime Records Bureau data, pointing out that several State governments often report no farm suicides, contrary to local media reportage.

However, there is also much needless suspicion and conspiracy-theorising; the NCRB’s data are from police station-level First Information Reports, and FIRs are often contested documents, not conclusive proof. Attacking the NCRB for

the numbers rising or falling is illogical; media reports about the NCRB changing definitions or manipulating the data this year are demonstrably false. For the government's part, it could start by accepting that these numbers are the bare minimum, unlike Chhattisgarh's Agriculture Minister who responded by insisting that no farmer had killed himself and the NCRB must be wrong.

Moreover, while the NCRB lists several reasons, including marital and family problems and illness, as the causes of farm suicides, this should not be taken as the gospel truth; initial police reports often have little to do with the complex factors that drive someone to take his or her life. The government would do better to study more scientifically what is driving farmers to take their own lives at the rate of over one every hour.


What's clear is that suicides represent only the tip of the iceberg that is agrarian distress in India. So far in July, an estimated 90 farmers have taken their lives in Karnataka, while the government and the media struggle to understand the immediate catalyst; these did not occur in the State's drought-prone regions, nor was there a sudden crop failure or similar emergency.

Interviews with farmers in the region have pointed to lack of institutional credit as one of the major problems, an issue that has been repeated by farmers across the country, including in the suicide epicentres of Vidarbha and Marathwada in Maharashtra. The income of an average farm household is just over Rs.6,400 a month, National Sample Survey Office data show, and this is grossly inadequate to meet consumption demands, not to mention rising input costs. Only households with over one hectare make more than they spend, and they constitute less than 35 per cent of all farm households. This leaves over half of all farm households in debt. These are no small debts; the average amount outstanding for a farm household today is Rs.47,000.

These must be extremely heavy burdens for them. Farm suicides, whether owing to purely agricultural reasons like crop failure, or the complex pressures on an Indian farmer, must be tackled seriously on the basis of a comprehensive examination of the causative factors, and the context.

A double whammy for environment

RICE ACREAGE			
District	Area (Ha)		
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Thiruvananthapuram	2,395	1,816	2,001
Kollam	2,097	1,387	1,363
Pathanamthitta	2,802	2,280	2,468
Alappuzha	36,251	36,195	37,402
Kottayam	21,410	17,571	15,746
Idukki	1,264	1,176	661
Ernakulam	7,731	3,940	4,052
Thrissur	21,172	23,098	22,275
Palakkad	83,998	79,201	82,896
Malappuram	7,528	6,674	7,548
Kozhikode	2,920	3,511	2,433
Wayanad	8,995	10,230	11,481
Kannur	5,740	6,684	5,079
Kasaragod	3,857	3,514	4,206
State	2,08,160	1,97,277	1,99,611



The State government's move to amend the Kerala Conservation of Paddy Land and Wetland Act, 2008, to regularise paddy reclamations till 2008 has drawn sharp reactions from water conservation experts, farm scientists, and environmental activists.

While the world is struggling to conserve farmland, Kerala is throwing away even the little it has now, said K. Krishnankutty, former Chittur MLA, a key member on the committee that drafted the Kerala Agricultural Development Policy in 2013.

The draft policy called for incentivising conservation of farmland as it declared "farmlands as precious diamonds". Mr. Krishnankutty said as per an estimate of the United Nations Organisation, a hectare of paddy land offered economic benefits to the tune of Rs.22 lakh a year in terms of their usefulness in ecological balance, water conservation, and conservation of biodiversity.

"It was not just an incentive, but an invitation to people to reclaim paddy lands. If this time it was 2008 for regularisation of paddy land reclamations, it would be 2015 next time," hydrologist A. Achuthan said.

A senior government official said it was a double whammy for environment in Kerala as two water conservation structures, paddy fields and hillocks in the

midlands of Kerala, took hit for the same purpose. “The hillocks are great water retainers and they are razed to fill paddy lands, which hold up to five lakh litres of water per hectare at 5 cm of water depth.”

John Peruvanthanam of the Western Ghats Protection Samithy said paddy field reclamations had been most intensive over the last decade. “People are taking advantage of the situation in which there is no databank on waterbodies and paddy lands in the State. Even the fields that were reclaimed yesterday will be regularised by the government,” he said.

An official of the Department of Agriculture said there was no data on which to decide which areas were reclaimed before the cut-off date proposed by the government. The draft list of waterbodies and paddy land in the State had not seen the light of day, he added.

Meanwhile, acreage under paddy crop has shrunk to 1.99 lakh hectares in the State during 2013-14, with Kollam, Ernakulam, Thiruvananthapuram, and Malappuram districts accounting for the sharpest fall.

Kharif season sowing hit hard by scanty rain, crisis in agricultural sector

Only small and marginal farmers have taken up cultivation for the current kharif season in Mandya district.

Sowing completed in only 19,817 ha. against the target of 2.06 lakh ha.

The ongoing crisis in agricultural sector, coupled with scanty rainfall, has hampered sowing for the kharif season in Mandya district.

Following good pre-monsoon showers in May and June, the farmers had prepared their land for sowing activities. Nevertheless, lack of rainfall in July and the series of farmers’ suicides have jeopardised the farming community.

Against a target of 2.06 lakh hectares of land for cultivation, the sowing has been completed in only 19,817 hectares or 9.6 per cent of the targeted area, till Monday, according to the statistics provided by the Department of Agriculture.

A majority of farmers, who have engaged themselves in cultivation in Mandya, are small-time and marginal farmers. Farmers with large land-holdings in all the

seven taluks of the district are refraining from agricultural activities, according to department sources.

Slow pace

The cultivation of paddy has come down by 99.06 per cent and of millets by 98.07 per cent for the current kharif season. Farmers have cultivated paddy only on 259 hectares against the targeted 63,450 hectares, millets on 350 ha. against the targeted 68,650 ha. and maize on 619 ha against 6,500) ha. targeted.

Sowing of cereals is also at a slow pace. While it had been targeted to sow cereals on 25,700 ha., the farmers have so far completed sowing on a miserly 6,406 hectares, a senior official of the department told *The Hindu*.

The percentage of sowing of jowar, wheat and minor millets for the present kharif season was zero till Monday, he said.

Coverage of oilseeds has also remained zero in the district. Moreover, not a single farmer has sown bengalgram, horsegram, mothbean, sunflower, mustard, soyabean, safflower and linseed in the district so far, the department said.

However, in spite of the crisis in agricultural sector, which is stated to have led to suicides by sugarcane growers, cultivation of sugarcane has been completed on about 6,257 hectares of land till Monday, against the target of 30,550 hectares.

Shortage of rain, labourers and stoppage of water to canals could be attributed to the low acreage of sowing, another official of the department said. Meanwhile, the district administration has initiated measures to ensure availability of seeds and fertilizers.

“We have adequate stocks of seeds and fertilizers. Farmers can contact the department or the raitha samparka kendras and seed distribution centres to procure them,” the official said.

The district administration has established seed distribution centres throughout the district.

Central team visits areas hit by deficient rainfall

Report will be submitted to Union government: Raghavendra Singh



Raghavendra Singh, head of Central Drought Assessment Team (third from right), during a visit to a field in Koppal district on Tuesday.

The Central Drought Assessment Team headed by Raghavendra Singh, Central Drought Relief Commissioner and Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, New Delhi, on Tuesday, went around parts of Ballari, Koppal and Gadag districts to understand the condition of crops during the current kharif season due to deficient rainfall.

He was accompanied by Rajkumar Khatri, Principal Secretary Revenue (Disaster Management).

Sameer Shukla, Deputy Commissioner, Ballari, along with Joint Director of Agriculture and other officials explained the grim situation prevailing in the district.

He said the district received 23.1 mm average actual rainfall as against the normal average of 49.2 mm up to July 23, which not only affected sowing but also affected the standing crop in rain-fed areas.

The following is the taluk-wise average rainfall (in mm) received, with figures in brackets indicating normal rainfall: Ballari 13.17 (31.8), Sirguppa 34.7 (47.9), Sandur 28.4 (55.6), Kudligi 25.8 (55.3), Hosapete 21.9 (51.9), Hagari Bommanahalli 14.2 (48.7) and Hadagali 26 (57.9).

As against the targeted area of 3.65 lakh hectare (ha) — of which 2.10 lakh ha is rain-fed — sowing had been completed on 0.95 lakh ha. In the rain-fed areas, sowing had been completed on 0.53 lakh ha recording a percentage of a mere 25.

Normally, by July, the sowing coverage should have been 1.54 lakh ha in the district.

Jowar, maize, minor millets, tur, green gram, cowpea, ground nut, sunflower, sugar cane, cotton cultivated in 42,658 ha were withering due to moisture stress.

Following is taluk-wise area affected (in ha): Hadagli (21,835), Hagari Bommahanalli (7,026), Hosapete (2,080), Kudligi (9,150) and Sandur (2,567).

Later, the team visited a couple of villages in Hosapete taluk before heading towards Koppal.

Moisture stress

At Koppal, the team saw loss of green gram in Halageri village for want of rain, growth-affected onion, withering of groundnut crop among others due to severe moisture stress, besides glancing at vast patches of land remaining unsown due to failure of follow up rain.

Veeresh, Deputy Director of Agriculture, explained that the district was reeling under a long dry-spell during the month of July and sowing had been completed in about 45 per cent of the targeted area.

Speaking to presspersons, Mr. Singh said that the team had toured several districts in Rayalaseema of Andhra Pradesh and also in north Karnataka to assess the drought condition prevailing due to deficit rainfall.

He said the situation was grim and a report would be submitted to the Union government, to enable it to take appropriate decision to tackle the situation.

A release by the Department of Information and Public Relations from Gadag said that Mr. Singh was accompanied by the Union Agriculture Department director Atul Patne and district-level officials. They visited Harlapur, Lakkundi and surrounding areas and took stock of the conditions.

They also visited the farm pit launched by the State government to maintain soil moisture levels under the Krishi Bhagya scheme at Churchihala village.

Deputy Commissioner N.S. Prasanna Kumar, Department of Agriculture joint director C.B. Balareddy, zilla panchayat chief executive officer Sanjay Shettennavar and others appraised Mr. Singh about the losses incurred by the people following monsoon failure of about 40 per cent. Sowing was done on 1.38 lakh hectares against the target of 2.39 lakh hectares. Nearly, 92,543 hectares have been affected by lack of moisture in the district, the release said.

Solve problems of farmers: JD(S)

The members of district unit of Janata Dal (S) took out a procession and staged a dharna outside Deputy Commissioner's office here on Tuesday to protest against the failure of State and Union governments in protecting the interests of the farmers and stopping them from committing suicides.

The agitators took out a procession from Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Circle, which passed through main streets of the city. They also raised slogans against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The agitators alleged that both Congress and BJP came to power at State and Centre giving top priority to the farmers' problems. However, after coming to power, they started vote bank politics by introducing schemes for certain communities and also started framing policies for capitalists. Both the parties are making attempts to gain popularity only by introducing schemes to remain in power and have completely neglected the farmers, they alleged.

Though the water sources in rural areas have dried up owing to scanty rainfall and the farmers have incurred heavy losses, the State government is least bothered to bring the farmers out of the crises by finding a scientific solution, they alleged.

The agitators demanded that the government should make health insurances for small farmers mandatory, conduct a detailed study and fix scientific prices for the agricultural produce and declare special packages for onion, groundnut and pomegranate growers. The agitators submitted a memorandum in this regard to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah through Deputy Commissioner Srirangaiah. He

said that the agitation would be intensified if the governments fail to solve problems of farmers.

‘Govt. must fix scientific prices for agricultural produce’



THE TIMES OF INDIA

APEPDCL moots Rs 2.9K cr rural network upgrade

The Eastern Power Distribution Company of AP Limited (APEPDCL) has mooted a Rs 2,894.07 crore project to modernise and strengthen its power supply network in the rural areas under the centrally-sponsored Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyothi Yojana (DDUGJY) scheme, a flagship scheme of the Union power ministry.

While the highest spending of Rs 1,062.18 crore has been mooted for West Godavari district, the lowest amount of Rs 317.37 crore is slated to be spent on Vizianagaram district. For Visakhapatnam district, the discom has mooted an expenditure of Rs 399.05 crore on improving the rural network.

If the project is sanctioned, the discom will initiate advanced reforms in its rural power supply network in the five coastal districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East and West Godavari. The key reforms include feeder separation (the existing network will be separated into a dedicated network for rural households and agricultural consumers) and strengthening of sub-transmission and distribution infrastructure (metering at all levels of the electricity supply network such as input points, feeders and distribution transformers in rural areas). Thousands of km of new electricity lines will be laid and hundreds of new substations will be come up in rural areas, if the proposal gets the nod.

Confirming this to TOI, APEPDCL director (projects) Vajja Krishna said the project would help provide round-the-clock power to rural households and

adequate power to agricultural consumers with the help of key components like feeder separation, while metering will reduce losses. "Improvement of the sub-transmission and distribution network will improve the quality and reliability of power supply. For feeder separation alone, Rs 1,128.03 crore was proposed," Krishna said.

"The scheme will improve agriculture productivity due to dedicated lines for agricultural consumers besides rural electrification. We are waiting for the government's approval for the project," he added.

Meanwhile, another senior APEPDCL official said the DDUGJY was recently launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Patna by incorporating some points from a similar pioneering scheme in Gujarat. The UPA government's rural electrification scheme, Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana (RGGVY), has been included in the DDUGJY as the rural electrification component.

The scheme has an outlay of Rs 76,000 crore for implementation of projects proposed by discoms across the country. The Centre will provide a grant of Rs 63,000 crore and the remaining will have to be garnered through loans. Projects worth Rs 14,680 crore have already been approved across the country under the DDUGJY but APEPDCL did not make it to the first list, the officer said, adding that they hope to get approval from the government soon.

A senior APEPDCL official from the operations section said that as the demand of power in rural areas is increasing by the day due to the fast changing consumer habits and improving living standards, the augmentation of rural infrastructure is required.

"Distribution companies like APEPDCL cannot make investments in strengthening their network due to their poor financial position. In such cases,

the government's support through the DDUGJY scheme will surely play a pivotal role in helping them augment their network," the officer added.

Onion rates bring tears, potatoes some cheer

After 2013 when it touched Rs 80 a kg, onion prices are once again going northwards. Known to be the poor man's accompaniment with roti (bread), wholesale rates touched Rs 40 per kg which may push retail prices to Rs 50 soon, traders said on Tuesday.

If onions are bringing tears, potatoes which are sold along with it, are bringing cheers. Potato rates are at an all-time low, thanks to a major glut in Uttar Pradesh — the main production centre in country. Potatoes are in the range of Rs 12-15 a kg in the retail markets, which is one-fourth of last year's levels.

Unseasonal rains in various pockets of the country during May hit the onion-growing regions hard. It was the time when crop is ready, but almost 25% of the produce was lost due to the showers.

"The supplies which should have lasted till now are fast depleting which has led to prices flaring up," said Jaiprakash Wasani of Pankaj Trading Company at the Kalamna Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC).

TOI had reported last week that the government is planning to import onions to bridge the supply gap.

In July, supplies from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka reach the markets. But the southern crop has been hit due to the dry spell. "The size and quality too is not up to the market, so the fresh supply may not help much in reducing the prices," said a representative of Kalamna-based M/s Afzal Trading Co.

Fresh crop from prominent centres like Nashik and Dhule will come during the Diwali festival, but a dry spell is worrying the farmers there too. Punjabrao Patil, an onion grower from Dhule, said, "We were expecting a good harvest but rains have spoiled everything."

Potato production has been ample this year. "As compared to last year when the rates per 'maund' (40kg) had crossed Rs 950 last year at Nagpur, it is in the range of Rs 280-350 in this year," said a representative from M/s Afzal Trading Co. This comes to Rs 8.75 a kg. Potato growers are complaining of huge losses due to the glut.

Potatoes come from UP, Bengal and Gujarat and Chhindwara too. The production is over 20% more than the normal average, especially in UP. "Soon fresh supplies from Chhindwara will reach Nagpur, with this potatoes are expected to remain cheap throughout the year," said a trader.

Aditya Kumar of M/s Barhanlal and Adityakumar, a potato trading firm in Mainpuri in Uttar Pradesh, said tempted by the high rates for two years in a row, farmers tried to increase the acreage this year. "However it resulted in a glut. The wholesale markets at the main production centre in Mainpuri are quoting a rate of Rs 250 a maund for potatoes. Last year it went up to Rs 1300," said Kumar.

"The middle class can still afford but I am really wondering how the poor will be able to afford it," said Jyoti Maniroque, an academican, on the rising onion prices. "However," she said, "potatoes are compensating the loss to a certain extent."

IN A NUTSHELL

* Unseasonal rains hit onion production

* Rates touch Rs 40 a kg in bulk and may reach Rs 50 in retail

- * It had touched Rs 80/kg in 2013
- * Potatoes at an all-time low
- * Rates at 12-15 a kg
- * Over-supply of potatoes from Uttar Pradesh
- * Onion growers complain of losses due to rains
- * Potato farmers say glut has left them in the red
- * Current dry spell worrying onion farmers

[Kalam exhorted Punjabis to start 2nd Green Revolution](#)

Known for his simplicity, former President A P J Abdul Kalam had pushed Punjab for a second Green Revolution to give a new lease of life to agriculture. During his visit to the state in 2003, he had visited Kharoudi village in Hoshiarpur, besides Kapurthala, Amritsar and Badal village.

According to a senior Akali Dal leader, Kalam had stayed in Badal village and asked villagers about things like how they made the traditional dish of 'saag'. "He preferred to spend a couple of days in the village, leaving the luxurious stay planned for him in Chandigarh," he said.

Underlining the need for a second Green Revolution, he had asked farmers to go in for value addition of soil and seeds with crop diversification wherever he went. "He cited the example of Japan and other progressive countries, where farmers make up to Rs 5 lakh per acre compared to Rs 50,000 in Punjab. This could make the coming generations quit farming, he would warn," the senior leader said.

Punjab Congress president Partap Singh Bajwa, who was the minister-in-waiting of the Congress government then, recalled, "He was so learned and yet too saintly in his demeanor that everyone was charmed by him. He was very inquisitive about the Punjab culture and the Sikh traditions and did not miss a chance to interact with children wherever he went."

During his visit to Kapurthala, Kalam was impressed with the architecture of the Moorish mosque, the only structure in the country built on the lines of Grand Mosque in Morocco. In Kharoudi, a group of NRIs had invited him to see a sewerage system they had built. He had paid obeisance at the Golden Temple and attended a function at Guru Nanak Dev University in Amritsar.

"He did not want his personal security to come between him and the people and interacted with the locals freely," reminisced Randhir Singh, a retired school teacher from the village. "Delighted to visit the village. Excellent effort to make the village clean. My greetings to village members and great minds who love service," Kalam wrote in the visitors' book of the village.

Due to the local initiatives and help from NRIs, the village had various projects, including the sewage treatment plant, solar lights, solar water pump and concrete streets and pavements, which impressed Kalam.

[Government to equip all gram panchayats with digital mini soil-testing labs](#)

In order to provide farmers an easy tool to check nutrients of the soil before opting for suitable crops in their farms, the Union agriculture ministry is planning to install a mini-lab -- Mridaparikshak -- for soil testing in each and every gram panchayat in the country.

The Mridaparikshak is a digital mobile quantitative mini-lab which can provide soil testing service at farmers' doorsteps.

The ministry had announced the decision to equip every gram panchayat with such sophisticated mini-lab on the occasion of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research's (ICAR) foundation day in Patna on July 25.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was the chief guest at the function, had emphasised the need for issuing Soil Health Cards to all the farmers. He had also distributed three mini-labs to farmers on the occasion.

The digital mini lab, developed by Bhopal based ICAR-Indian Institute of Soil Sciences and manufactured by Nagarjuna Agrochemicals Private Limited, is compatible with the government's soil health card scheme. The scheme is meant for distributing soil health cards to all 14 crores farmers across the country in next three years.

"The innovative tool in the form of digital mobile quantitative mini lab will determine important soil parameters such as soil pH, EC, organic carbon, available nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulphur and micronutrients like zinc, boron and iron. Besides, it also provides crop and soil specific fertiliser recommendations directly to farmer's mobile through SMS," said Mukund Maheshwari managing director of the Nagarjuna Agrochemicals.

The digital mini-lab has been packaged with soil sampling tools, balance, shaker, hot plate, and a Smart Soil Pro - an instrument for determining the soil parameters and displaying of fertiliser nutrient recommendations.

The tool can be operated by any young educated farmers or rural youths with primary training of its basic features.

[Kalam's vision gave Rashtrapati Bhavan its herbal garden](#)

The herbal garden of Rashtrapati Bhavan, which consists of a large number of medicinal and aromatic plants, owes its existence to the vision of APJ Abdul Kalam. The former president roped in Lucknow-based Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants CIMAP to realise his dream. The institute supplied and planted all the medicinal plants in the herbal garden.

Recalling his meeting with Kalam at Rashtrapati Bhavan, senior scientist at CIMAP, AK Singh, said, "The herbal garden was initiated in 2002 during his (Kalam's) tenure. My job was to identify the place and its layout, and ensure the

delivery and plantation of the saplings." The scientist-president remained closely involved with the project, Singh added.

"The speciality of Dr Kalam's chamber was that it utilised the natural light during daytime (to save electricity), and he insisted in working under natural light. Kalam asked CIMAP to focus on medicinal and aromatic plants, as they are required by the industry (both in India and abroad)," Singh said.

In August 2003, President Kalam was the chief guest at the silver jubilee function of CIMAP. In his address, Kalam told CIMAP to focus on establishing linkage between modern sciences of medicinal and aromatic plants with age-old traditional knowledge of herbs. He also stressed on conserving the rich biodiversity in the country.

"He planted a Rudraksh sapling at the institute and spent 2-3 hours interacting with scientists, children and farmers," Singh recalled.

[Naveen asks Centre to allocate more fertilizers for Odisha](#)

Chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday urged the Centre to allocate adequate amount of Urea for the state for August to meet the requirement during the kharif season.

For the month of August, the Centre has allocated only 1.14 lakh metric tonne (MT) of Urea for the state against the requisition of 1.75 lakh MT, official sources said.

"This would be grossly inadequate to meet the requirement of farmers in the state. The short supply of Urea during the peak agriculture operation period will not only affect the productivity of the crops, but also lead to the law and order problems," Naveen said in a letter to Union chemicals and fertilizers minister Ananth Kumar.

Naveen also noted that the state has received good rainfall during June and July, 2015 and the agriculture operations are in full swing. This has resulted in increase demand of fertilizers.

"The Ministry of fertilizers had made adequate allocations of fertilizers for the month of July, 2015. The state government is also making efforts to ensure lifting of the allocated quantity of fertilizers and smooth distribution thereof," he mentioned.

Though the Centre had initially planned to allocate 9.80 MT of different varieties of fertilizers for Odisha for Kharif- 2015, the ministry has enhanced the allocation to 10.75 lakh MT of fertilizers including 5.52 lakh MT of Urea, official sources said.

The state has so far received 1.40 lakh MT of Urea by June-end and 1.51 lakh MT by July-end.

"The state is due to receive 2.34 lakh MT of Urea during the remaining period of Kharif ie August and September, 2015," said Naveen in the letter.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Seed sales seen rising on improved kharif sowing



Seed demand continues to be a matter of concern for cottonseed suppliers though the South-West monsoon has covered most of the country. However, other leading kharif crops such as hybrid rice, maize and soyabean showed a mixed trend in different growing regions.

“Initial rains during June had given optimism. But now we see cotton area is less compared to last year. We anticipate a drop in cottonseed sales of about 15-20 per cent this kharif season,” said M Ramasami, MD, Rasi Seeds, a leading player in Bt cotton.

Acreage shift

In spite of the delayed monsoon, farmers are still hopeful about recovery of Bt cotton crop with good yield this season. “There have been acreage shifts to pulses, soyabean, groundnut and other crops from cotton primarily due to subdued prices most of last year. Such adjustment in supplies to match demand is normal in agriculture,” said Subbarao Appemane, Senior Vice-President, Corporate Communication and Regulatory Affairs (Africa & South Asia), Mahyco.

But Cotton Association of India (CAI) President Dhiren Sheth said the year-on-year comparison of kharif cotton sowing was misleading.

“People are getting carried away by comparison of year-on-year sowing data. Considering the sowing of last-to-last year, there is a decline in cotton sowing area this year. This is primarily due to lower prices,” said Sheth.

Delayed monsoon

According to Ministry of Agriculture data, total area covered under kharif sowing stood at 69.38 million hectares as on July 24 against 55 million hectares around same time last year. Cotton area is reported at 9.9 million hectares, against 10.05 million hectares in 2013-14.

The scenario is not rosy for other crops such as hybrid rice, pulses and oilseeds also. According to experts, the delayed monsoon had affected sowing preferences of farmers.

Sales may grow

“There were concerns about lack of rains in July. This resulted in delayed sowing in crops like cotton. Guar sowing is almost over. And the scenario is not

very good for maize as well. We believe farmers are still confused due to delay. There won't be much growth in seed demand," said Ram Kaundinya, Director-General of Association of Biotech Led Enterprises – Agriculture Group (ABLE-AG).

However, the seed industry expects growth in sales this year. It is estimated to be around ₹10,000 crore, and growth is likely to be around 10-15 per cent this year.

Rain deficit narrows to 4% as monsoon peaks over West, East



The rain-deficit for the country as a whole as on date has narrowed down to four per cent with the monsoon suddenly peaking both to the west and east of the country.

The low-pressure area over south-west Rajasthan and adjoining Gujarat has beat forecasts to intensify three rounds to become a deep depression in the area.

Rare spectacle

There is also a counterpart depression in the making to the east of the country as well, making a rare spectacle of more than one strong monsoon system based over land dictating weather.

India Met Department has forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall and squally weather along coast over Gujarat, Rajasthan, Konkan, and Goa for the next few days.

Similar conditions will be replicated in the eastern parts especially over Gangetic West Bengal and Odisha where the other depression is expected to intensify as a deep depression.

The sudden spurt in monsoon in the north Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal is being attributed to the return of the Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) wave high in the atmosphere back over the Indian Ocean.

MJO wave returns

The wave travels periodically from Africa into the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, before getting activated for the next cyclical journey over Africa.

It is fresh from setting up the busiest typhoon season since 1981 in the Pacific. Forecast models could not agree on whether it would carry some punch on return.

They have now been provided with an answer, an update from the Australian Met Bureau on Tuesday said. It went on however to add that the MJO signal has started weakening from Tuesday.

Meanwhile, a Central Water Commission update said that live storage in the country's reservoirs is 115 per cent of the last year's storage and 108 per cent of the normal.

Theni farmer cooks rice, banana intercrop

Growing banana in rice fields would probably have been dismissed as "unthinkable" by traditional farmers, but M Murali, an agricultural graduate from Muthurapuram of Theni District dared to experiment with it in his father's farm.

His success not only encouraged others in that belt to try it, but brought officials from the horticulture department scrambling to see for themselves.

After graduating in agriculture, Murali did a programme in Business Management before returning to his native village to take care of his father's fields.

His degree in agriculture gave him the confidence to try out some innovative practices.

He did what no one had done in the banana growing belt of Theni by taking to cultivation of banana as an inter crop in rice field.

Murali tried this across the 21-acre holding, raising the bed by 1.5 feet and going for tissue culture planting material of Cavendish banana.

He planted 1210 tissue culture plantings per acre.

Drip irrigation and fertigation techniques helped him conserve water up to 50 per cent and get a four-fold increase in income.

“If we had gone with just the rice crop, our profit would have been limited to ₹50000 per annum. By going for the intercrop, we were able to get an extra income of ₹2.50 lakh,” Murali said.

Murali incidentally got back-end subsidy from the Tamil Nadu government and finance support from Federal Bank.

And a high-profile official came all the way from Delhi to take a look: Ranglal Jamuda, Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Government of India, dropped in on a recent visit to Theni.

Pepper rules steady

Pepper markets ruled steady as demand matched supply. On the terminal market, 18 tonnes of pepper from Wayanad and the High Ranges were traded. Wayanad material was sold at ₹645 a kg while that of the high ranges was at ₹650. Rajkumari (Idukki) sellers were quoting ₹655 and offering small quantities, trade sources told *BusinessLine*. In the world market, Indonesia was reportedly selling L Asta at \$10,700 a tonne. Sri Lanka was also reportedly offering at lower rates below \$9,500. Spot prices remained unchanged at

₹62,600 (ungarbled) and ₹65,600 (garbled) a quintal. August and September contracts on the IPSTA also remained steady. Export prices were at \$10,700 a tonne c&f for Europe and \$10,900 for the US.

Premium teas from Unitea group

Tea connoisseurs in the country will henceforth be able to enjoy Nilgiri tea premium grades, manufactured in Chinese and Japanese style, from the leaves plucked at a height of over 7,000 ft above mean sea level from Chamraj and Korakundah estates owned by The United Nilgiri Tea Estates Co Ltd. (Unitea).

“These grades packed in attractive containers are now available exclusively for Indian tea drinkers,” Unitea Director D Hegde told *BusinessLine*.

“Korakundah Oolong tea, manufactured in the style of 400-year-old Chinese Ming Dynasty, is rich in anti-oxidising vitamins and enzymes beneficial for digestive health,” Hegde said.

“While a single green tea itself has proven health benefits Chamraj Emperor’s Choice premium green tea is a blend of select green tea grades from delicate-leaves and steam-processed in traditional Japanese style preserving natural flavour and colour. These leaves, are vibrant green which brew into golden green liquor with delightfully herbaceous sweet flavour that is extremely rare,” he said.

“Detox tea, now released, has herbal infusion helping metabolism and energy,” Hegde added.

Move to revive Aranmula Punja

Revival of Aranmula Punja for paddy cultivation is inevitable, according to farmers and experts.

Paddy cultivation in the punja with an area of nearly 1,500 acres was stalled when the Kozhithode canal that brought water from the Pampa river to the paddyfields was closed for construction of two bridges in 2002. The canal remained closed since then and that in turn transformed the paddyfield into a marshland, R Sreeranganathan, a social activist and native of the area, said.

Revival move

With the Aranmula airport project in limbo, a team of farmers led by the Executive Director of Kuttanad Vikasana Samaithi (KVS), Rev Thomas Peeliyanikkal, is preparing to resume paddy cultivation in the punja.

“It is going to be a challenge. The canal, which is the artery of the punja, needs to be restored fully. Scientists from the Soil Research Institute at Mankombu in Alappuzha district would be brought to Aranmula to conduct a study on the change in soil structure, if any, because of the prolonged water-logging,” Peeliyanikkal said.

He said a study on the traditional varieties of paddy used for cultivation in the Aranmula Punja too would be carried out.

The restoration work following the directions of the Kerala High Court is moving at a snail’s pace, Sreeranganathan said. Two crops were cultivated in the Punja until 2002, he added.

Kummanam Rajasekharan, Chairman of Aranmula Heritage Village, decried the practice of reclaiming paddy fields for non-agricultural activities. He said that with the support of institutions such as the Kerala Agricultural University and Krishi Bhavans, the Aranmula Punja could be revived.

Fall in cultivation

The total area under paddy cultivation, which was eight lakh hectares in 1967, has now come down to below three lakh hectares in the State, according to official sources.

NK Sukumaran Nair, General Secretary of Pampa Parirakshana Samiti, said the district faced acute shortage of potable water following indiscriminate sand mining from the rivers and reclamation of paddy fields.

Sugar rules steady in routine trade

Sugar market ruled calm and steady on routine activities. On the Vashi market, S-grade lost ₹4 and M-grade dropped by ₹10.

Sources said local demand and arrivals were slightly up. But continuous selling by mills and due to ample supply morale remained under pressure. Vashi market itself carries about 110-115 truck loads continuously.

Arrivals were at 60-62 truck loads and local dispatches were about 62-64 truck loads. On Monday evening, 19-20 mills offered tenders and sold about 38,000-40,000 bags at ₹1,980-2,140 (1,980-2,140) for S-grade and ₹2,140-2,230 (2,140-2,250) for M-grade.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade ₹2,132-2,222 (2,132-2,226) and M-grade ₹2,242-2,392 (2,252-2,502). *Naka* delivery rates: S-grade ₹2,100-2,180 (2,100-2,180) and M-grade ₹2,200-2,350 (2,200-2,350).

Stockists' buys heats up edible oils

Activities in edible oils market improved as stockists came forward with fresh orders considering lower price and expectation of higher festival demand.

On the Bombay Commodity Exchange, groundnut, rapeseed, cotton and palmolein dropped by ₹10, ₹5, ₹3 and ₹2 for 10 kg each. Liberty was quoting palmolein at ₹487 ex JNPT, super palmolein ₹520 and soyabean refined oil ₹578. Ruchi's rates: palmolein ₹483, soyabean refined oil ₹570 and sunflower refined oil ₹675. Allana traded palmolein for ₹485, super palmolein ₹520, soya refined oil ₹575 and sunflower oil ₹680.

In Saurashtra-Rajkot, groundnut oil *telia* was at ₹1,660 (1,690) and loose (10 kg) at ₹1,070 (1,090).

BCE spot rates (₹/10 kg): groundnut oil 1000 (1010), soya refined oil 575 (575), sunflower exp. ref. 605 (605), sunflower ref. 672 (672), rapeseed ref. oil 850 (855), rapeseed exp. ref. 820 (825), cottonseed ref. oil 600 (603) and palmolein 483 (485).

Barring 4 states, summer crop prospects good so far: IMD



Prospects of summer crops such as rice, pulses and oilseeds are “good” in most parts of the country, barring some interior parts of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka, the IMD chief said today.

More than 50 per cent of the sowing of summer crops has been completed so far in this kharif season and farmers have taken up pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals in a big way, according to the latest data of the Agriculture Ministry.

Sowing of kharif crops begins with the onset of the southwest monsoon from June. So far, there has been 4 per cent deficit rains in the country, while in July alone the rainfall deficiency was about 17 per cent, according to the Met Department.

“The situation is not good in central Maharashtra, Marathwada, Rayalseema region of Andhra Pradesh, some districts of Telangana and north interior Karnataka. These areas have received lower rains and there are concerns about crop prospects,” the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Director-General Laxman Singh Rathore told PTI.

The situation in northern India is good barring some parts of Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, he said, adding that however, “the crop situation in the rest of the country is good.”

Echoing similar views, the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) Deputy Director-General (Crops) J S Sandhu said, “There is over 50 per cent

rainfall shortage in some regions in these four states. This is an acute deficit and obviously there will be some impact on pulses, coarse cereals and cotton.”

Otherwise, sowing operations in other parts of the country is in full swing. More than 50 per cent of kharif sowing has been completed so far, he said.

Interestingly, the area under pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals has increased significantly so far this kharif season, signalling record production of these crops, he added.

Kerala workers protest attack on cattle trucks in Tamil Nadu

Protesting against a series of attacks on cattle trucks coming to Kerala by pro-Hindutva organisations in Tamil Nadu, slaughter houses and meat shops in Kerala will observe a shutdown on July 29-30.

As a fallout of the ban on beef in some States and the BJP-led Central government’s policies that protect cows, cattle trucks have been routinely waylaid by right-wing outfits in Tamil Nadu’s Coimbatore and Tirupur districts. As a result, arrival of cattle to Kerala has petered off and slaughter houses are running short of animals.

‘Criminal attacks’

“Trucks carrying cattle from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are waylaid and cattle are taken away after assaulting the truck crew on the way to the Kerala border by criminal gangs,” said KU Kunjumohammed, Ernakulam district secretary of Kerala State Meat Workers Congress. He told *Business Line* that because of the threat of attacks, truckers are not willing to operate service and cattle traders are afraid to bring in cattle by lorries.

Kunjumohammed said the attacks on the cattle trucks took place at isolated places. In many cases, the gangs took away the cattle purportedly to be handed over to the ‘goshalas’ that have come up recently in Coimbatore. He said the loss of a truckload of cattle would mean a loss of around ₹8 lakh.

Cattle traders said ultra-Hindutva outfits such as Hanuman Sena and Hindu Munnani were, in the pretext animal welfare groups, opposing transport of

cattle to Kerala because they promoted cow worship and hence were against meat eating. However, in many cases, the cattle seized from the trucks were sold cheaply and the money pocketed by the gangs.

Meat shortage

Because of the drop in the arrival of cattle from Tamil Nadu, meat has been in short supply across Kerala and the price of beef (mainly buffalo meat) has gone up. Already, scores of meat shops have downed their shutters.

Kunjumohammed said the meat shop keepers and members of his organisation, which is affiliated to INTUC, was backing Tamil Nadu cattle farmers who were up in arms against the illegal prevention of cattle transport.

He urged the Tamil Nadu government to take stern steps against the attack on the trucks. The July 29 march to the Tamil Nadu Secretariat planned by the cattle farmers is also supported by the cattle traders and meat shopkeepers.

Kerala imports cattle from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Buffaloes and bulls coming from Andhra Pradesh are mostly transported through the checkpoints in Palakkad district that borders Tamil Nadu, while the cattle from Karnataka arrive in Wayanad district.

There have been several protest marches and demonstrations in Kerala in the recent past against the Centre's move against beef eating. The DYFI had organised a series of beef-eating festivals as a form of protest.

Assocham ranks Kerala highest in agri exports-to-investment ratio

An Assocham study has ranked Kerala top among states for achieving a ratio of about 735 in terms of actual exports to actual investments through Agri Eport Zones (AEZs).

It is too far ahead of others in the ranking that second-placed Rajasthan comes in at with a ratio of 59.5, followed by Punjab (21) and Karnataka (17), the study titled 'Agri exports: Issues and concerns.'



Actual investments

An Assocham official told *Business Line* that as per the study, for every ₹1 crore invested in an AEZ in Kerala, it exports horticulture products worth ₹735 crore.

With actual investments of ₹3.10 crore in its two AEZs, the state has exported products worth ₹2,277.79 crore. It shows that Kerala has much better exports to investments ratio that betters peer states, the source said.

This also gives it the third largest share of six per cent in the total net exports value of worth over ₹38,300 crore in terms of actual exports through AEZs across States.

Net export share

Rajasthan is in the first place with the lion's share of 72 per cent amounting to an export value worth over ₹27,600 crore; followed by Andhra Pradesh (eight per cent); Kerala (six per cent); and Karnataka and Punjab (four per cent each).

In terms of actual investments in AEZs, Rajasthan has topped the list with a value of about ₹465 crore (31 per cent); followed by Maharashtra (₹374 crore); Andhra Pradesh (₹207 crore); Karnataka (₹91 crore) and West Bengal (₹83 crore).

The country's overall agricultural exports are expected to cross \$300 billion mark by 2023 since policy stabilisation, institutional support, awareness about

safety norms, implementation of strict regulations and infrastructure development are expected to catapult it into a major player in global agricultural market, the study projected.

Growth rate

Its agricultural exports (including tea, coffee and marine products) have grown almost eight times in the last decade i.e. from around \$5 billion in 2003 to over \$39 billion in 2013 thereby clocking a growth rate of over 21 per cent, the study noted.

But it is also challenged by inefficient economics of scale, high level of intermediation, wastages, inadequate and inappropriate storage, procurement and distribution infrastructure, poor adherence to food safety norms as well as lack of consistency in supply and quality, cost competitiveness due to statutory changes and research for processable grades and trade barriers.

There is a need for long-term sustainable policy which attracts more investments in agriculture sector and increases private partnerships in rural and remote areas of the country, says DS Rawat, national secretary general, Assocham.