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# THE HINDU

**A cheap and locally available feed for livestock**



*It is a cheap alternative feed to grains like pearl millet and wheat bran.*

Seemai Karuvel commonly known as Mesquite tree, is a waste-land tree found abundantly in areas where water and soil fertility are limiting factors. In Thoothukudi district, this tree is very common. It is similar to weeds and is a menace for normal crops.

Local farmers are trying to control its further spread due to its fast spreading nature and thereby posing danger to their crops. But this tree does have a use, during summer, when availability of green grass or hay is scarce, goat, sheep and cows are fed on the dry pods. “Unutilized pods if properly collected and ground into flour can be used as a cheap alternative in livestock feed for grains like pearl millet and wheat bran,” says Dr. G. Alagukannan, Programme Coordinator of SCAD (social change and development) KVK, Thoothukudi.

### **The potential**

SCAD saw the potential of this tree and started promoting the use of its pods as livestock feed from the year 2010-11. Farmers were motivated to collect the pods at a cost of Rs.3 a kg and then dried for 10-15 days to reduce the moisture level and ground into flour which was then given as feed for milch cows for trial purpose in order to test its suitability as alternate feed.

Trials conducted in two consecutive years showed encouraging results in terms of and 8 to 10 per cent increase in milk yield, improved quality too. One of the participants, Mr. T. Ganesan of Keelathattaparai village, says: “The pod flour is cheaper when compared to other commercial concentrate feeds. We are able to get at least one litre additional yield of milk a day during its peak lactating period”.

### **Positive feedback**

After getting positive feedback from several livestock keepers about eight tonnes of pod were procured and a grinding mill was set up at Vilathikulam last year. Within a month, all eight tonnes were sold out by collaborating with traders and cattle owners which showed that opportunity exists in promoting this enterprise. The pod flour is produced and marketed under brand name MS mesquite. The pods are collected during the month of April and May.

A person collects an average of 30 kg pods in two to three hours of work. For this they are paid Rs.150 (Rs.5 per kg of seeds collected) as wages.

“In fact many people in the village preferred to go for pod collection instead of going for the minimum guaranteed work scheme run by the government, in which they get 150 days of work per family per annum. By starting this venture it created an additional employment of 40 – 60 days. Besides, during the processing it provided additional employment opportunities for the mill workers for about 240 man days,” explains Dr. Alagukannan.

This venture has resulted in creation of 240 man days of work at mill and 267 man days of work for the pod collectors during 2014 just by collection and processing of eight tonnes of pods. We expect that in the coming year we can procure about 50 tonnes of pod and create an additional employment opportunity of 3,166 man days of work in the region, according to Dr.J.X.Amali Cletus, Member of Governing Council of Tamil Nadu

Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS) and Vice Chairperson of the institute.

### **The savings**

By feeding this flour as a cheap replacement for pearl millet / wheat bran livestock owners are able to save up to Rs.5 a kg (cost of the pod flour in Rs.16 where as the cost of wheat bran or pearl millet in Rs.21 a kg).

For details interested readers can contact Dr. G.Alagukannan, Programme Coordinator, SCAD Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Vagaikulam, Mudivaithanendal post, Thoothukudi District – 628 102, mobile: 9942978627, phone: 0462-226930, email:pcscadkvk@gmail.com

### **TNAU to start soil health care centre**

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will establish a State-level Centre of Excellence for Soil Health Care' in Tiruchi for ascertaining the soil health of all blocks across Tamil Nadu and for suggesting soil-specific cropping strategy.

The centre, to be established at an estimate of about Rs. 4.75 crore under the National Agricultural Development Programme, will compile the data of soil in all the 385 blocks in the State and will evolve a database. It would be corroborated with the satellite imagery data, an official source told *The Hindu* here on Wednesday.

While Rs.75 lakh would be spent for constructing the building, the balance Rs. 4 crore would be utilised for state-of-the-art equipment.

Being the state-of-the-art unit, it would have a comprehensive data of the soil health of each and every village in the district. The centre would focus on evolving ways and means for stepping up soil fertility and nutrient through proper scientific data of a specific village. It would analyse the physical chemical and biological factors pertaining to soil in a specific area.

The data would facilitate farmers to understand the problem of the soil in their block and take up remedial measures. It would suggest the soil-specific cropping pattern to the farmers, the source said.

In course of time, the data would be utilised for informing farmers about the nature of the soil and the crop suited for raising in a specific village, through SMS.

The centre would update the data periodically so that farmers would access the latest information about the soil health.

### **Area under paddy cultivation set to exceed 40,000 hectares**



Thanks to comfortable storage position in the Bhavani Sagar Dam and the spell of rainfall during summer, the Agriculture Department is hopeful that paddy could be cultivated in over 40,000 hectares in the forthcoming season.

It has been a decade since paddy was cultivated in excess of 40,000 hectares. Last year, too, the rainfall was favourable, and paddy was cultivated in 38,800 hectares. In the previous year, the area covered was in the range of 31,000 hectares.

Paddy remains to be the most preferred crop in the district, followed by sugarcane and maize, Agriculture Department sources said. This year, a

corresponding increase was expected in the area of cultivation for other crops, officials said.

Meanwhile, farmers are hopeful that the Public Works Department will stick to its regular schedule for release of water for irrigation of ayacuts covered by the three main canals: Lower Bhavani Project, Thadapalli-Arakankottai and Kalingarayan canals, in view of the comfortable storage position in the Bhavani Sagar reservoir.

The release of water into the Kalingaryan canal is due later this month. Thanks to the heavy rainfall of 59 mm in the catchment area of the

reservoir until 8.00 a.m. on Wednesday, the level has risen up to 64.08 feet, pushing up the storage to 8.5 tmc. At the corresponding time last year, the level stood at 47.93 feet.

### **Centre prepared to face deficient monsoon: Minister**

The Centre is geared up to face a deficient monsoon and to keep under check the prices of essential commodities, Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said on Wednesday.

Addressing a press conference on one year of his ministry, Mr. Singh said the government had enough stock of foodgrains and pulses. Forecast of monsoon deficiency this kharif has raised concerns about farm production.

Mr. Singh said the government had a Price Stabilisation Fund from which money had been given to some States to stock up on pulses and onion and intervene in the market when required.

The fund has an estimated corpus of Rs. 500 crore.

### **Land Bill**

Asked about the controversial Land Acquisition Bill, Mr Singh said “not an inch” would be given to private players, and lashed out at the Congress for giving away farmers’ land at throwaway prices to “suited booted” people and “kith and kin.”

The Minister said the fisheries and dairying sector had grown by about 5.5 per cent in the last year although the overall agriculture growth rate was hit

on account of losses in food production from deficient monsoon in kharif and unseasonal rain and hail in rabi.

### **Bengal takes measures ahead of weak monsoon**

With the Met Department predicting deficit monsoon, the West Bengal government is putting in place measures to tackle the situation at a time of rising deaths of distressed potato farmers.

A meeting of agriculture department officials has been scheduled for next week.

An important tenet of the strategy is supplying farmers in drought prone areas with drought-resistant paddy seeds and other inputs that will help cut costs. “Irrigation pushes up costs and there is a case for increasing diesel subsidy,” West Bengal Agriculture Minister Purnendu Bose told *The Hindu* .

Nearly 60 per cent of West Bengal’s farm activity is rain-fed with the western districts of Bankura, Birbhum, Purulia and Paschim Medinipur being among the drought-prone districts which have received less rainfall during the 2014-15 kharif season. It was learnt that these districts lack irrigation facilities, and cultivation is mainly rain-fed. “The government’s strategy in areas like these has been and will be (if the predictions come true) to increase crop productivity,” the minister said.

Additionally the government is also emphasising on the use of farm mechanisation and modernisation. Mr Bose said that under a Centrally Sponsored scheme custom hiring of equipment was being encouraged to enable small and marginal farmers to use equipment such as harvesters.

Under this scheme, the resources are collectively pooled with a part sponsorship by the State government to make available equipment to small farmers.

Rainwater harvesting assumes renewed focus in view of the impending rainfall shortage.

### **Cultivation of paddy, sugarcane threat to Hampi monuments**

Cultivation of paddy and sugarcane pose a threat to the conservation of the historical Hampi group of monuments, says UNESCO in its “State of

Conservation” report on the World Heritage Site. Though the recently-published report commends the Hampi World Heritage Area Management Authority (HWHAMA) – which manages the site – for progress in numerous issues, it flags irrigation for water-intensive agriculture, traffic close to the site and seasonal flooding of the Tungabhadra as challenges.

The threat of agriculture, explains archaeologists, is water-logging that weakens the foundation of minor monuments situated on farm land. There have been incidents of monuments sinking or damage caused due to dampness and wetness.

The HWHAMA had, in their submission to the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO in February, expressed the same concern and had even chalked out a broad plan involving awareness on sustainable practises to protect monuments and artefacts that might be lying buried in the area. The UNESCO report, however, praises the efforts of the authority in clearing debris from the collapsed Anegundi bridge. It must be remembered that construction of the bridge had put the site in the “danger” category between 1999 and 2006.

### **Climate change not sole cause, says Javadekar**

A day after Union Earth Sciences Minister Harsh Vardhan blamed climate change for the unprecedented heat wave in May and the delay in the onset of the monsoon, Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said here on Wednesday that climate change alone could not be cited as a cause for anomalous weather.

“Climate change is one of the factors, perhaps, but to say that heat waves and delayed monsoon are only because of it would be misguided,” he told *The Hindu* .

D.S. Pai, head of the Long Range Forecast Division at India Meteorological Department, Pune, said too much was being made of the delay in the monsoon as the variation of a week was normal. While a neat cause-effect link between climate change and freaky weather is debatable, Mr. Pai said, his own research had shown a spike in the occurrence of heat waves in the past decade in India.

## ‘A blessing in disguise for farmers’



Minister for Road Transport, Highways and Shipping Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday said land acquisition was a blessing in disguise for farmers.

Mr. Gadkari said that with increased compensation for land, the response of farmers towards giving their lands for various projects would also change. “It is nothing but beneficial to farmers as prices of the land will increase everywhere. Land acquisition is a blessing in disguise for them,” he said in Mumbai.

“I must say this with our experience from Nagpur where the coal production has increased in this year after land was acquired to which farmers were paid good amount,” said Mr. Gadkari. Mr. Gadkari’s comments come at a time when the Opposition has united against the Land Acquisition Bill. The government re-promulgated the ordinance for the third time on Saturday, as it is finding it difficult to form a consensus among parties to pass the Bill.

Listing out the achievements of his ministry in past one year, Mr. Gadkari told a press conference that his aim of building roads worth Rs. 5 lakh crore in next five years would be achieved at any cost.

The Minister said he had already signed on projects worth Rs. one lakh crore.



## PPP model

“The private players were not ready to participate in PPP model as they lost trust in the previous government. However we have introduced the hybrid model where we will share risk with them,” he said. The government will share 40 per cent of the cost while the rest will be contributed by private players.

Mr. Gadkari said he was not dependent on Finance Ministry for money. “We know how to raise funds,” he said.

Commenting on the proposed Road Safety Bill, Mr. Gadkari said the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) had given two suggestions on which States would be consulted. “Final draft will be discussed with the States and then will be presented in Parliament,” he said.

## Water transport

On inland water ways, he said the Ministry had identified five major rivers, including the Ganga, for development. “The water transport in India’s economy is merely 3.3 per cent, which needs to be increased,” he said.

The Ministry is also opening 1000 islands and 300 lighthouses across the country, which will be developed for tourism.

## Mango and Jackfruit Mela by PAPSCO



In a bid to offer residents fruits at subsidised rates, the Puducherry Agro Products, Food and Civil Supplies Corporation (PAPSCO) has organised a Mango and Jackfruit Mela at the ground near the Rajiv Gandhi statue.

A press release from PAPSCO said that nine varieties of mangoes including Mulgoa and Raspuri among others are available at the mela. It added that the mangoes have been procured directly from the farmers, and have been organically cultivated, without the use of chemical pesticides. The mela is open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. and will continue till the end of the mango season.

### **Farmers seek survey for relief under crop insurance scheme**



Farmers of Keezhanilaikottai near Arimalam staged a demonstration at Pudhupatti Embal junction on Wednesday urging the district administration to conduct a survey for sanctioning relief under the crop insurance scheme.

M. Sebastian, district president, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, said that although the farmers of 12 village panchayats falling under the Keezha Nilaikottai firka, who had grown paddy, had suffered serious loss due to the failure of monsoon a few years ago, the villages had not been included in the survey taken under the crop insurance scheme.

He said that a revised report should be sent to the government and adequate steps should be taken for payment of compensation to the paddy farmers.

## **Urea for samba crop arrives in Pudukottai**

A total of 1,321 tonnes of urea reached here on Wednesday. The Agriculture Department has made arrangements for its immediate despatch to the cooperative go-downs across the district.

S. Ganesh, District Collector, inspected the quality of urea at the railway station before its despatch to cooperative societies. According to R. Sadanandam, Joint Director of Agriculture (in-charge), 1,068 tonnes of urea had been sent to 62 cooperative societies while the balance 253 tonnes had been retained as buffer stock to meet any crisis. He expressed the hope that the 'samba' farmers would get adequate quantity of urea during the forthcoming season.

## **Workshop on farming practices**

The Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) will organise a two-day State workshop for revision of farming practices on June 5 and 6. Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan will inaugurate the workshop.

The revision of package of practices (PoP), done at an interval of three to four years, is an important exercise incorporating research findings and recommendations of expert groups.

“The main agenda of the 2015 revision is to completely eliminate hazardous chemicals from the package and propose safer alternatives,” said KAU Vice Chancellor P. Rajendran.

“We are also presenting a set of recommendations for organic farming as the State is set to be declared fully organic in 2016,” Dr. Rajendran said. – Staff Reporter

## **Farmers advised to avoid excess cereals feed for cows**

Excess cereals feed for cows might cause sub acute ruminal acidosis (SARA) leading to decreased milk output and farmers have been advised to go in for a supplementary feed evolved by the Tamil Nadu University for Veterinary and Animal Sciences.

A note from the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Hans Roever campus near here, issued on Wednesday said the supplementary feed, known as TANUVAS Grand, should be administered at the rate of 20 ml a day for two months.

The note said that abundant availability of cereals in villages such as Brahmadesam in Veppanthattai block had partly resulted in acidosis. Daily milk yield improved at least by 500 millilitre a day because of the TANUVAS Grand, according to the note.

### **Horticulture expo showcases Khammam's potential**



The flower and fruit show organised by the Department of Horticulture here on Wednesday has turned out to be an enlightening experience for the visitors apart from providing them a visual treat.

The event was organised at Sardar Patel Stadium grounds here as part of the Telangana Formation Day fete. The locally grown popular varieties of mangoes were kept on display at the show. Incidentally, the district is a leading producer of mangoes in the entire Telangana State.

A wide variety of flowers including gerbera, gladiolus, rose and carnation brought from Bangalore and other places were displayed at the show. Marigold and jasmine are being grown in open air cultivation mode in some pockets of Sattupalli, Aswaraopeta, and other mandals in Khammam division.

The exhibition also highlighted the enormous potential of the district, which is endowed with suitable agro-climatic conditions, for flower, fruit and vegetable cultivation in adherence to green house technology. It is a well-timed initiative aimed at creating awareness on new techniques to cultivate floriculture and horticulture crops besides developing aesthetic sense among the denizens of the town, remarked Vamshi, a visitor.

Such initiatives will help motivate people take up gardening as well as cultivation of floriculture and horticulture crops, he hoped.

### **Forest watchers observe fast**

Tamil Nadu Forest Department staff from across the State staged a fast in Valaparai on Wednesday demanding improved working conditions.

The protesters included watchers, anti-poaching staff, elephant trackers and those in a few other ranks.

About 100 of them went on a fast in front of the Labour Inspector's office demanding the State government to regularise the services of those working for over 10 years.

### **Recruitment**

At the time of their recruitment, the government had promised them a minimum of Rs. 6,750 a month but what they earned was far less from the promised sum.

Considering the rise in prices of essential commodities and the years of service in the department, the government should provide permanent employment, they demanded.

### **Time-scale pay**

The forest staff also demanded that those employees who were made permanent a few years ago continued to get consolidated pay and not time-scale pay.

They wanted the government to constitute a team within a week to look into their demands.

### **Okkoota hopes agricultural college will be set up this year**

The Ballari-based Agriculture College Horata Okkoota is hopeful of the State government conceding its demand to set up an agriculture college at Hagari Agricultural Research Station, near Ballari, in the current academic year.

“Following positive assurances from H.K. Patil, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, of getting Rs.10 crore from the Hyderabad-Karnataka Region Development Board and the Development Commissioner agreeing to sanction an additional Rs. 35 crore, we hope that the college will be established and start functioning this year,” S. Pannaraj, convenor of the okkoota, told presspersons here on Tuesday.

Mr. Pannaraj said that Mr. Patil, who is also the chairman of a Cabinet Sub-Committee for Implementation of Article 371 (J) in Hyderabad-Karnataka, had taken a keen interest in the matter. He had also held a meeting with Development Commissioner Latha Rao to convince her about the need to set up the college and got her assurance to release Rs. 35 crore from the Karnataka Mining Environment Restoration Corporation, for which she is also the chairperson.

Mr. Pannaraj also said that Mr. Patil had spoken to Vice-Chancellor of University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur, to get the college enlisted in CET counselling and to start courses from this year itself.

### **Diversification key to dairy sector development**

To provide technical knowhow and scientific interventions by Guru Angad Dev Veterinary & Animal Sciences University the first technical seminar of newly formed “Dairy Welfare Association” was held recently at Varsity campus Ludhiana. Dr AS Nanda, Vice Chancellor, GADVASU was the chief guest. In his inaugural address he emphasized on the need of diversification both in agriculture as well as in dairy sector.

Value addition of milk in the form of paneer, khoa, etc is a must to reap the maximum benefits from dairy farming. Dr Nanda revealed that shortly the university is going to start “Kisan school” at district level where the university will earmark a progressive farmer who will further impart and demonstrate the new interventions and technologies to other farmers of the area.

He said that buffaloes are our black gold and need to be preserved and improved, so buffalo farming should also be promoted. He further highlighted the menace of stray animals, and suggested that every farmer must be knowledge sufficient in such a way that no animal becomes infertile. Dr Nanda further revealed that the university has launched area

specific mineral mixture for the benefits of the farmers. He also shared role of service provider universities with contribution of Vet Varsity in publication, health management and different indoor and outdoor services. While addressing the gathering Sh. Jagdeep Singh Ansal, President Dairy Welfare Association highlighted the constraints and challenges of dairy farmers at field level like loan, climate disorder, variable prices of produce and quality control measures.

He assured the gathering that this association will try to resolve all the problems on priority basis. Sh SukhHarpreet Singh Rode, Member, Board of Management of GADVASU highlighted the importance of scientific knowledge and role of Varsity in imparting the same.

Dr H.K. Verma, Director Extension education, GADVASU revealed how GADVASU is striving its best to uplift the socio-economic status of the livestock farmers through various knowledge dissemination modes like training, camps, literature publications etc.

### **A favourable season for Adilabad tribal ryots**



*With banks extending enhanced crop loans to almost all the tribal farmers, their dependence on moneylenders has gone down considerably*

This kharif, the enthusiasm of poor tribal farmers to till their undulating hilly lands in Adilabad's agency area will be doubled, thanks to a decreased dependence on private moneylenders. The Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Utnoor, has ensured that banks operating in the tribal belt extend crop loans in tune with the scale of finance instead of a lowly sum usually based on the assessment of the bank officials in a given area.

The ITDA, under its Project Officer R.V. Karnan, has also ensured that banks give loans to all farmers who have been given rights on forest lands under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. This will ensure crop loans to a few thousand uncovered tribal farmers for the first time this season. There are about 40 commercial banks operating in the district, but the Telangana Grameen Bank (TGB) with its 93 branches, half of them being in the agency area, accounts for disbursement of about 40 per cent of the crop loan target under the annual credit plan. Its customer base, however, is even higher at close to 60 per cent.

The crop loan target set for Adilabad district during the current year is Rs. 2,533 crore as against the last year's Rs. 2,280 crore. The TGB's share in this comes to about Rs. 1,200 crore as against the last year's Rs. 917 crore. "We are giving minimum of Rs. 20,000 and a maximum of Rs. 50,000 as crop loan to tribal farmers. We are organising loan melas for the benefit of the uncovered farmers every Thursday as per the understanding with the ITDA and hope to reach saturation level by the end of the season," said TGB Adilabad Regional Manager P.R.V. Ramchander Rao.

"The move will certainly remove disparity in financial assistance between non-tribal and tribal farmers. Besides, the dependence of the latter on private financiers and middlemen will decrease considerably," he adds as he concurs with the opinion held by the ITDA Project Officer.

The fact of poor gullible tribal farmers getting sucked into the deadly vortex of private financing has become more real and threatening as some micro finance companies have entered the field. One such company started its operations in Jainoor and Sirpur (U) mandals in March.



## **APTDC to organise AP-TEC 2015 from tomorrow**

Director of Central Tobacco Research Institute (CTRI) Dr. Damodar Reddy has said that the Andhra Pradesh Technology Development & Promotion Centre (APTDC) is going to organise two-day AP-TEC 2015 — an exhibition on technologies for modern agriculture from June 5 at ICAR-CTRI old office, Rajahmundry.

Addressing media conference along with Dr. Suman Kalyani, senior scientist of CTRI on Wednesday, Dr. Reddy said that this exhibition was being organised for the benefit of farming community of Andhra Pradesh. A broad spectrum of farmers, industry and officials from government departments and companies will participate in mega event. The objective of this exhibition is to provide a platform for knowledge sharing and updating the stakeholders on the latest developments in the field of agricultural value chains.



## **Bihar: An unlikely corn revolution**



Sometime in early 2010, Railway Ministry officials in New Delhi began noting a sudden increase in demand for empty wagons from Bihar. Adding to their curiosity was it being courtesy a single commodity — maize (corn) — transported out of the state. Till 2006-07, hardly 40-50 rail rakes, each carrying 2,600 tonnes of maize, were getting loaded annually from three sidings at Khagaria, Mansi and Naugachia. But over the next 6-7 years, these had risen to 500-550 rakes, while being moved from 16-odd railway sidings across central and eastern Bihar.

“The Railway Board people were surprised to see such a jump in dry bulk cargo volumes ex-Bihar, that too from just maize. They were, then, naturally keen to know what was happening,” recalls BK Anand, Director & Business Head (Grains and Oilseeds) at Cargill India Pvt. Ltd. Behind this unusual spurt in freight traffic was a little-reported story of a corn revolution in an unlikely state.

Bihar, of course, always had the potential to be an agricultural powerhouse, given its naturally fertile soil and the abundant water resources from the Ganga and its tributaries crisscrossing the state. Moreover, the scope for growing high-yielding maize during the rabi season – planting in October-December and harvesting in April-June – was recognised even back in the 1960s. The long cropping duration, mild temperatures with clear skies, absence of flooding, and low pest and disease infestation during this period allowed farmers to obtain yields at least twice that from the regular post-monsoon kharif season.

### **Express Recipes: Beat the heat with Aam Panna**



Prepared with raw mangoes.

Aam Panna is known to prevent many heat related ailments including heat stroke.

It also helps you stay hydrated and is rich in Vitamin C.

### **Ingredients for Aam Panna**

Raw mango – 500 grams

Sugar – 500 grams

Mint leaves – 1 cup

Sweet tulsi leaves – 1/2 cup (optional)

Salt – 2 tsp Black salt – 2 tsp

Roasted cumin – 2 tsp

Black pepper – 1 or 2 tsp

Cardamom – 7 to 8

Ginger – 1 inch piece

### **Method**

\* Wash the mangoes and cut it in small chunks.

\* Take one big vessel and place mango chunks, chopped ginger, cardamom, black pepper and 1/2 cup water into it. Cover and place it over flame for heating. After it simmers, cook for 4 to 5 more minutes on medium flame. Check the mangoes, pulp has turned soft now. Turn off the flame now. Take out the cooked pulp in a bowl.

\* Take sugar and 1 cup water in a vessel to make sugar syrup. Cook on low flame until sugar melts.

\* Place mint leaves, tulsi leaves, mango pulp, cumin seeds, plain salt, black salt in the mixture jar and ground to make a paste. Now add this paste in sugar syrup and allow it to cook. Check the sugar syrup now. If it has turned gooey in texture then panna is ready. Turn off the flame.

\* Allow the mango panna to cool. Strain the panna, when it cools. Ground the thick masala granules again in the mixture grinder left over the sieve. Add that again in the panna.

\* Mango panna is ready, store it in a bottle and use whenever you want.

\* Whenever you wish to have it, take 2 to 3 tbsp mango panna in a glass, add water and some ice to it and the mango panna is ready to be served. It can be stored in refrigerator for 2 to 3 months. If you want to store it outside in a room then mix 1 tsp sodium benzoate into it and stir really well. After this, it can be stored for up to 5 to 6 months.



# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## **Agriculture dept unprepared for Kharif?**

With the southwest monsoon expected to hit north coastal AP in another eight days, the district administration is gearing up to meet the requirements of farmers for the kharif crop. However, not even half the amount of fertilisers required by the ryots has been dispatched to the mandal headquarters in the district.

In a notification issued here on Wednesday, the district agricultural department said they have transported basic fertilisers such as Zinc Sulphate and Boron and Gypsum to all the mandals from where the farmers could collect them at subsidised rates.

However, of the required 1,000 tonnes of Zinc Sulphate, only 250 tonnes would be sold to the farmers locally at a cost of Rs 19,200 per tonne as against the actual cost of Rs 38,400 per tonne. In the case of Boron, the authorities said that though the requirement was 30 tonnes, only 7.5 tonnes was available for distribution to ryots and would be made available at a cost of Rs 40,750 per tonne as against the actual cost of Rs 81,500 per tonne.

Regarding Gypsum, the authorities said that only 233 tonnes was available

against the requirement of 800 tonnes and would be sold for Rs 1,436 per tonne as against the actual price of Rs 2,872 a tonne.

The authorities also said there was not just a deficit in the availability of fertilizers but also in the quantity of seeds required. According to officials, there was a requirement of 1.10 lakh acres of paddy this Kharif season for which the seeds requirement was 28,000 quintals. The authorities said there was a nearly 20% deficit as far as the seeds availability was concerned.

With the pre-monsoon showers coming at the right time and farmers in a hurry to begin planting by the second week of June, any further delays in the supply of fertilisers and seeds could prove to be a major dampener for the farming community.

However, the district administration said that according to statistics, farmers in coastal AP were amongst the highest users of fertilizers across the country and the deficit was because of excessive usage. Keeping this in mind, the administration was trying to cut down on the supply of fertilisers.

"We are speaking to the farmers and trying to prevent them from using excessive fertilisers. As for the deficit, it is not as bad as it looks. It can be overcome over if the farmers cut down on usage and we are supplied with 20% more stock," said district collector N Yuvaraj.

## THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

### **Ready to tackle deficient monsoon: Agri Minister**

The Agriculture Ministry is likely to announce the minimum support price (MSP) for key crops over the next two weeks, while it has sufficient stocks of pulses and willing to import more to quell prices that have risen nearly 64 per cent since last year.



“The announcement of MSP is not delayed I feel, we will announce it over the next two weeks,” Agriculture Minister, Radha Mohan Singh, said at an event held here on Tuesday to highlight the Ministry’s achievements over the last one year.

For a man tasked with guiding a sector that registered near-flat growth in 2014-15, Singh appeared assured about the Centre’s ability to tackle a ‘deficient’ southwest monsoon’ – predicted at 88 per cent of the 50-year long period average of 89 cm predicted by the Met agency – and keep the prices in check.

### **Foodgrain bowl**

The foodgrain bowl across the northwest region – Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh – is likely to be hit hardest according to the Indian Meteorological Department’s (IMD) second long range forecast of the four-month monsoon.

“There will be some losses if there is deficient rain but we are confident of our policies in order to ensure minimum damage to the sector and the economy,” Singh said.

## **Contingency plans**

The Government has prepared contingency plans for 580 districts and is working with States and agriculture bodies to address the situation. A new crop insurance policy is also being worked on to be brought in by the end of the year.

“We faced a drought when we came to power but worked hard to minimise the damage. Losses in production were not huge and we will use our earlier experience this time...There are alternate seed varieties available if there is deficient rain and the drought management panel is monitoring the situation,” he added.

## **Monsoon onset**

The monsoon onset over Kerala has been already delayed and will make a landfall only by June 5 and officials have blamed the El Nino weather phenomenon. Timely onset is pivotal for sowing Kharif crops like rice and soyabean across India where 60 per cent of cultivable land is rain-fed.

Poor monsoon over last Kharif season and inclement weather through the harvest period of Rabi season had resulted in decline in foodgrains production to 251.12 million tonnes (mt) in 2014-15 from a record 265.04 mt registered in the previous crop year (July-June).

While the Government had ample supply of rice and wheat, Singh said that there are concerns over pulses but the Ministry has been working on ways to supplement domestic supply through imports.

“We imported a record 4.5mt of pulses last year and are ready to import more when required. We are working on raising pulses and oilseeds production,” he said, adding that data on States’ requirements is collated.

## **Sugar body sees record output similar to 2006-07**

Sugarcane crushing operations are set to come to a close and mills across the country, the world’s second largest sugar producer, have produced 279.57 lakh tonnes (lt) of the sweetener between October 1 and May 31.

Output is likely to match the record production of 283.61 lt achieved in 2006-07, according to the industry association.



This latest estimate released by the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) on Wednesday is 16.3 per cent higher than the 240.49 lt produced over the same period in the 2013-14 season (October-September).

“...It is estimated that sugar production for the full season of 2014-15 would be around 283 lt, similar to that in 2006-07, which was then the highest ever produced in the history of the Indian sugar sector,” said an ISMA statement.

Domestic consumption is pegged at 248 lt and sugar prices having fallen to their lowest since 2009 at 12 cents/lb. ISMA estimated a likely stock of 103 lt at the end of the season, higher than the normative requirement of 60 lt the Government required in the initial months of the new season.

Mills have moved 5.58 lt for raw and white sugar exports this season, of which 3 lt of raws were exported under the incentive scheme. “It is expected that not more than 2 lt of sugar would get exported during the remaining period,” the statement said.



## **Different situation**

ISMA contended that the situation in 2006-07 was better and the season ended with 110 lt of stocks, which the Centre helped clear.

Among the measures it took were the creation of a 50-lt buffer stock in two tranches over a two-year period, incentives on sugar exports for 60 lt, and interest-free loans amounting to Rs 3,800 crore in the 2007-08 season.

Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan earlier this week said a buffer stock was not being considered by the Ministry.

For the 2014-15 season, mills owe farmers Rs 22,000 crore and it was the fifth consecutive year of surplus production. Farmers are unlikely to reduce their cane area and prices in both the domestic and global markets have fallen to their lowest levels in the last six-seven years.

“This has worsened the financial health of the sugar industry, due to which banks are not coming forward to lend further loans...The Government should immediately come out with some substantial assistance for sugarcane farmers and the industry,” it said.

## **State-wise output**

Mills in Maharashtra, the country’s largest sugar producing State, have produced 104.75 lt of sugar, 28 lt higher than at the same time in 2013-14. Mills in Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka have recorded output of 70.9 lt and 48.99 lt, 6 lt and 8 lt higher respectively.

Mills in Tamil Nadu, which has a special crushing season between August and September, have produced 10 lt so far, lower than the 11.8 lt registered at the same time last season. Overall, only 19 mills were crushing cane as of Wednesday.

## Dealing with drought

The Centre says it has a plan in place to tackle a deficient monsoon. But is it the right one?

Throughout India's history, there have been years when the monsoon has been good, and years when it has not.

This year is likely to be one of the worse ones, with the Indian Meteorological Department revising its rainfall forecast to "deficient". Although the IMD's early forecast, made in April, has erred often, its later forecasts, made in June and revised in July, have been getting far more accurate over the years (last year, its June forecast was skewed only for the North-West region), which means the country is looking at a very real possibility of a second successive drought year. Are we prepared for it?

The Centre says it is. Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh has said his ministry has prepared detailed contingency plans for 580 districts and that there are adequate buffer stocks of foodgrain to meet any shortage.

However, the response is primarily geared towards mitigating the impact on agricultural output. If one uses agricultural output and inflation as yardsticks, one could even argue that these measures are successful.

Last year, despite a drought, and despite the fact that the key agrarian states of Punjab and Haryana had the worst monsoon in half-a-century, agricultural output actually grew, albeit a marginal 0.2 per cent.

Food inflation, too, was just 5.44 per cent, compared to the over 15 per cent food inflation witnessed in the previous bad drought year of 2009-10, when rainfall was only 77 per cent of normal.

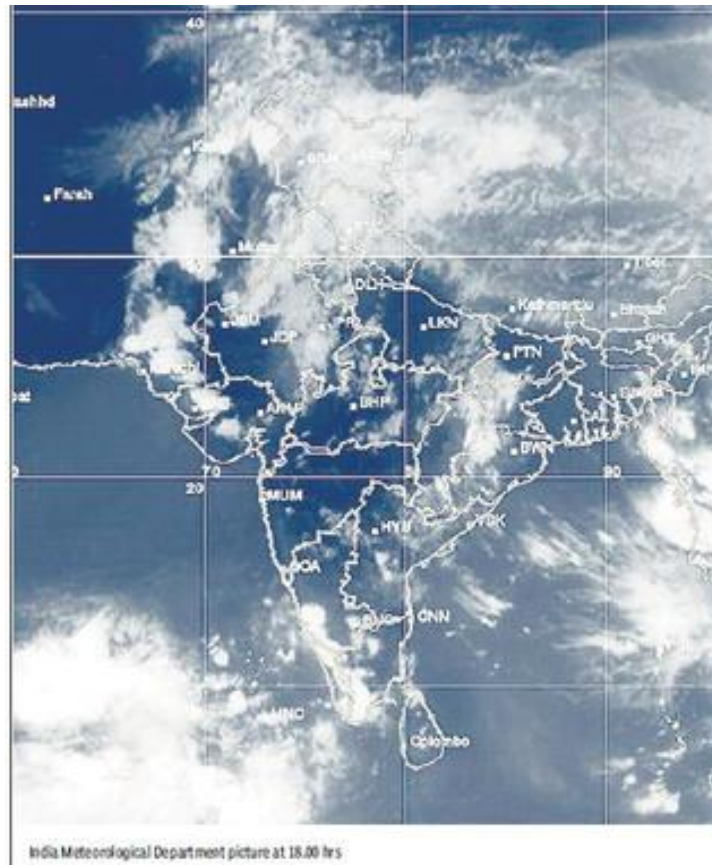
This was because high-output, commercial agricultural states like UP, Punjab and Haryana no longer depend on the monsoon. While a second dry year might stretch even their irrigation ecosystem, the distress of the poorer and marginal farmers in the rainfed areas of the States is likely to get acute.

The contours of the economy have changed substantially, both in rural and urban areas, which requires a new kind of policy response aimed at safeguarding livelihoods, not just crops. Despite the fact that agricultural output was not impacted, last year's drought worsened agrarian distress, which was rendered acute by the unseasonal rains.

City-dwellers have had to cope with sudden spikes in vegetable, dairy and animal protein prices, and a sustained surge in pulses and edible oil prices, which strain their budgets more than an increase in basic grain prices.

This calls for a more rounded response, from ensuring adequate credit flow, alternative crop plans and livelihood sustenance for small farmers and landless labour in rural areas, to support for the dairy and animal husbandry sectors, to drinking water management in both rural and urban areas. The supply side has to be managed to minimise impact on urban consumers and food imports need to be handled deftly. Moreover, with five drought years since 2000 and a sixth in the offing, it is time we consider deficient rain as the new normal — and plan accordingly.

### **Conditions favourable for monsoon onset over Kerala, says Met**



Conditions are favourable for the onset of monsoon over Kerala over the next two days, the India Met Department announced on Wednesday evening.

This is likely to coincide with the formation of a low-pressure area over the Lakshadweep area and neighbourhood, which will help pull in the monsoon winds towards the coast.

International models had hinted about a helpful environment for the onset evolving in the upper levels of the atmosphere as well.

### **Likely storm**

This will be evidenced in the formation of the 'low' over Lakshadweep.

Some of the models are suggesting that the 'low' would move north parallel to the coast and intensify into a depression or even a tropical cyclone.

The US Climate Prediction Centre cited model predictions suggesting the formation of the 'low' during the week ending June 9 and its development into a storm in the Arabian Sea.

If this were to be the case, the system would take the monsoon all along the coast towards Mumbai-Gujarat by June 10/June 11.

Some other models say that the system will head towards Karachi in Pakistan, helping push some rain into southwest and adjoining west Rajasthan. A storm forming during the onset of the monsoon and moving over sea means that it would use up available moisture and waste a better part of it as rain over the waters.

### **Not ideal**

It would take sometime for the monsoon to recoup its energy and rustle up enough moisture to make the next big move towards inland.

The monsoon does better with a conventional 'low' that moves slowly along the West Coast, ensuring that the rains reach out into adjoining peninsular interior.

### **Rains for East**

The scene is likely to shift to Bay eastern where a likely 'low' is predicted to move towards Myanmar-Bangladesh and dump rain there.

Parts of north-eastern India and Gangetic West Bengal also stand to benefit. But mainland India will have to sit out.

## Coconut oil slips on higher arrivals



The coconut oil market – both in Kerala and Tamil Nadu – continues to witness a declining trend as it registered a drop of ₹1,000 a quintal in the last 10 days.

It is reported that coconut oil price in Kerala has come down to ₹12,200 this week, registering a crash of ₹700/quintal from last week while the fall was ₹1,000 in Tamil Nadu at ₹11,500.

Copra prices also lost the steam at ₹8,400/quintal against ₹8,900 quoted last week in Kerala and in Tamil Nadu, the figure touched ₹8,000 from ₹8,500. Thalath Mahmood, Director, Coconut Oil Merchants Association (COMA), said that the market has started sliding down and the drop is expected to continue further.

According to the trade, the coconut oil market is likely to settle down at ₹10,000 especially with good arrivals and availability from all the production centres including from Lakshadweep and the Andamans with the commencement of the harvest season, he said. However, upcountry buyers and corporates are keeping away from the market even at this low price levels on anticipation of a further fall.

Bharat Khona, former board member of COMA, said that the price drop has reflected in the loose oil market in Tamil Nadu which stood at ₹1,700 for 15 kg from ₹1,850 quoted last week.

### **Govt raises minimum import price for arecanuts**

The government has raised the minimum import price (MIP) for areca nuts by more than a third (38 per cent) to shield domestic growers against a surge in imports from neighbouring countries, such as Bangladesh and Nepal.

The MIP has been raised to ₹162 a kg from ₹110 with immediate effect, a Commerce & Industry Ministry release said.

### **SAFTA pact issues**

According to the government, imports from India's South Asian neighbours have shot up as import duties are low under the South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) pact.

“The government has received representations from various representatives of areca nuts industry against unabated import of the nuts from neighbouring countries that have taken advantage of low import duty provided under SAFTA,” the release said.

Arecanut is grown in Karnataka, Kerala, West Bengal, Assam among other States.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has also advised its field offices to stringently adhere to the quality specifications of areca nuts before clearing import consignments.

### **Industry welcomes**

Meanwhile, the move to increase minimum import price has come as a relief to the stakeholders in the arecanut sector.

Welcoming this move of the Government, K Padmanabha, President of the Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (Campco) Ltd, told *BusinessLine* that the MIP will help stabilise the arecanut market in the country.

A major portion of the commodity was imported from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, he said.

Quoting the recent developments in the arecanut market, Padmanabha said the price of red variety of arecanut had come down from ₹420 a kg to ₹335 in the last one-and-a-half months.

Srinivasa Achar, President, All-India Arecanut Growers' Association, said that the country produces around 5.5 lakh tonnes of arecanut a year. Karnataka produces around 40 per cent of the country's production.

### **Import data**

In a recent reply to the Dakshina Kannada MP, Nalin Kumar Kateel, in Lok Sabha, the Commerce Ministry said that the country imported 73,953 tonnes of arecanut in 2011-12; 99,701 tonnes in 2012-13 and 80,478 tonnes in 2013-14.

According to the provisional figures available for April-December of 2014-15, the country imported 79,005 tonnes of arecanut. A major portion of this came from Bangladesh (32,680 tonnes) and Sri Lanka (24,848 tonnes).

On Wednesday, the price of old stocks of white arecanut stood at ₹348 a kg and new stocks of white arecanut at ₹248 in Mangalore APMC.

### **Agri sector stocks wilt on weak monsoon forecast**

The stocks of most seed and fertiliser makers lost 3-5 per cent in trade on Wednesday. This follows the downward revision of the south-west monsoon forecast by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The IMD, on Tuesday, said it expected rainfall during the June-September season to be 88 per cent of the long period average (LPA). This is lower than the preliminary forecast made in April, when it estimated monsoon rainfall to be 93 per cent of the LPA. The long period average is the average rainfall received during the 1951-2000 period.

But, does poor monsoon mean bad news for seed and fertiliser sales? Not quite. An analysis of historical data suggests that consumption of key agri inputs — fertilisers, seeds and pesticides don't directly respond to the south-west monsoon rainfall pattern. Consider the years 2002, 2004 and 2009

when the monsoon rainfall was significantly below normal. Yet, sales of fertilisers and seeds remained resilient during these years.

### **Kaveri Seeds' show**

For instance, in 2009, when the country faced the worst drought since 1972, with monsoon rainfall being 21 per cent below normal, the distribution of certified seeds increased by about 8 per cent to almost 28 lakh tonnes. Thus, revenues of Kaveri Seed, a leading player in cotton hybrid seeds, grew by about 32 per cent in 2009-10. The company's operating profit jumped about 23 per cent that year.

Likewise, fertiliser sales also rose 6 per cent in 2009. This is because, farmers purchase agri inputs — seeds and fertilisers — ahead of the actual onset of the monsoon rainfall. Also, the huge subsidy provided by the government on fertilisers, particularly urea (subsidy is about three-fourth the cost of manufacturing), has helped sustain the growth momentum.

### **Affects complex variants**

Companies such as Chambal Fertilizers & Chemicals and Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilizers which produce urea have thus been insulated from the vagaries of the monsoon and managed to clock healthy profit growth in 2009-10. However, a deficient monsoon may have a marginal impact on sales of complex (phosphatic and potassic) fertilisers, prices for which have been decontrolled since April 2010. Coromandel International and Gujarat State Fertilisers Company are among the key players in the complex fertilisers space.

### **Turmeric edges up on low arrivals**

Spot turmeric prices increased slightly at Erode markets due to low arrivals.

“On Wednesday, 4,500 bags of turmeric arrived for sale. The traders quoted slightly increased price and procured 2,200 bags for their local requirements. Still the traders have not received any upcountry demand,” said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

The finger turmeric in the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association and Regulated Market Committee increased by ₹100 a quintal and the root variety by ₹50. But prices for both the varieties decreased by ₹100 in the



Erode Cooperative Marketing Society and Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger turmeric was sold at ₹5,396-8,039 a quintal; the root variety ₹5,236-7,329. Of the arrival of 2,057 bags, 840 were sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger turmeric traded at ₹6,281-7,681; the root variety ₹6,190-7,369. Of the 813 bags offered, 698 were traded.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger turmeric fetched ₹6,659-7,489 and the root variety ₹6,209-7,339. All the 1,245 bags found takers.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger turmeric went for ₹6,379-7,359; the root variety ₹6,198-7,278. Of the arrival of 440 bags, 411 were sold

## Business Standard

**Delayed monsoon to cut area under paddy, boost cotton: M Prabhakara Rao**



A substantial shift in cropping pattern towards cotton and pulses is expected in the ensuing kharif season influenced by market factors and monsoon uncertainties, according to **Mandava Prabhakara Rao**, president of the

National Seed Association of India (NSA), an umbrella organisation of the Indian seed companies.

"We expect the cotton acreage to be all-time high or at the record high levels of 12.5 million hectare (ha) sown last year. Also, a decline of two to three million ha in paddy area is likely this year," he says.

Rao, who is also the managing director of Hyderabad-based **Nuziveedu Seeds Limited** (NSL), shared with **B Dasarath Reddy** the seed industry's perspective on how the kharif is going to pan out. Excerpts from an interview:

### **What would a delayed monsoon mean to the seed industry?**

We received two to three monsoon forecasts in opposite directions before the latest one telling us it would be a delayed one. Despite the late onset, sowing will take off once the rains start in June and, therefore, the seed industry is not unduly worried over this delay. In a large country like ours, a 10 per cent shortfall in some parts or the other are common even in a normal year.

### **How are these uncertainties going to play out in the ensuing kharif season?**

Cotton sowing area will go up, especially in Telangana and Maharashtra, and also on the whole because it withstands deficient rainfall conditions better than other crops. The crop area would be either higher or at the record high level of 12.5 million hectares last year.

Though cotton prices were not attractive in the earlier crop cycle period, these have started picking up in the past couple of months. In Karnataka, the maize crop might go up at the cost of cotton if rains are sufficient, while we expect a rise in Bengal gram and chillies in Andhra Pradesh. The area under pulses, grown across states, would go up substantially as the prices are very high.

Going by the monsoon forecast, we expect a decline of two to three million ha in paddy area, normally sown in 45 mn ha. Paddy prices are also low.

Soybean acreage might also come down, as prices were not good last year, and a part of this area could shift to cotton and maize. Overall, a 10 to 15 percentage shift in the cropping area under different crops is a normal phenomena every year.

**How do you visualise the influence of market prices in determining the farmers's choice regarding various crops in this kharif?**

Agriculture commodity prices world over were down till last year and our country was no exception as far as major crops like maize, soya been and wheat are concerned. As the prices of most of these commodities are bottomed out, we expect better prices for cotton, maize and soya bean next year. However, the sugar situation is still bleak.

Also, we have been seeing reports of subdued off take in rural India with regard to farm implements and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) goods etc. So, farmers may not have sufficient resources or they may be unwilling to take greater risks when it comes to investing in crops. As seed is a basic requirement, we foresee no adverse impact on the industry even under these conditions.

**Is the seed industry, which faces intense competition, able to price the product to get enough margins?**

The industry, by and large, has been able to pass the rise in costs on to the customers by around 10 per cent every year except in the case of Bt cotton, whose price remained the same for the past four years.

The states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, which regulate the price of Bt cotton seed, refused to allow any rise in prices this year, too. So, the companies continue to sell the seed at the prices fixed four years ago across India.

While the Telangana government had slashed the royalty component to Rs 50 from Rs 90 on each pocket while transferring the benefit to the seed producer, the high court stayed the orders in favour of the technology owner Monsanto.

So, the industry could not get any relief this year. We want the prices to be

revised at least next year as the companies are not in a position to absorb the increased costs of production.

**Is the industry asking for any policy support from the central government?**

Recently, we have made a representation to the Union agriculture ministry seeking a level-playing field for the private sector with regard to pulses and oil seeds. The industry was unable to participate in pulses and oil seeds as they are sold at subsidised rates to farmers by the government entities.

As a result, farmers are growing the same old low-yielding varieties every year as there was no incentive for research and development. We only wanted the government to give cash subsidy directly to the farmers, allowing them to buy the seed in the open market depending on his choice. The government is taking steps in this direction.