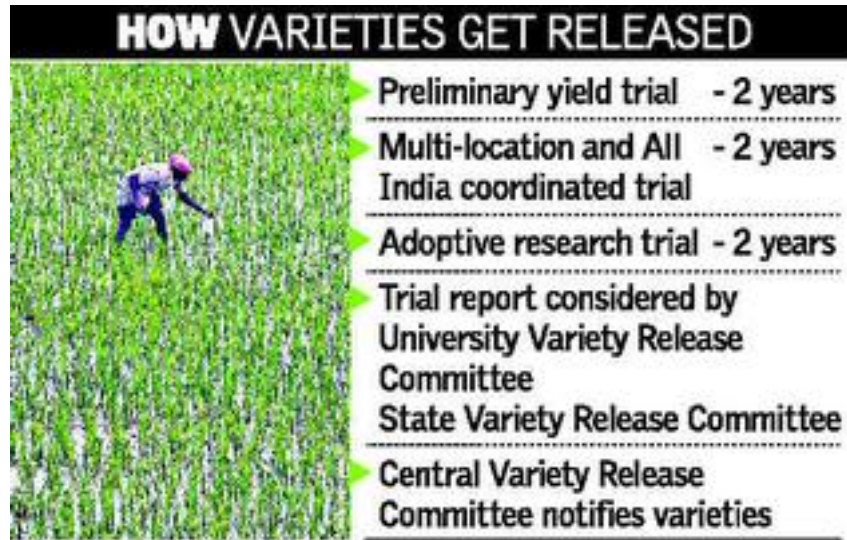


16-06-2015

THE HINDU

TNAU calls for post-release monitoring to boost production



Tamil Nadu Agriculture University (TNAU) has appealed to the State Agriculture Department for effectively monitoring the performance of newly released varieties and also those that are in cultivation.

The appeal, made at the recently concluded scientific workers' conference, comes in the wake of reports that the varieties the Central Government de-notified continue to be cultivated.

With reference the paddy variety ADT 27, the University pointed out that though the Central Government de-notified the variety in 1970 it had to repeat the de-notification in 1991.

The Government de-notifies a variety because the production has not been at the expected level or there is a better variety available in the market or for other similar reasons.

Once a variety – seed or propagating material if its banana or sugarcane – the Agriculture Department withdraws the same from market. In short, it is similar to using a product post its expiry date but without side effects.

The University says in the absence of a proper communication from the State Agriculture Department, the University is unable to identify the varieties that are poor in performance and initiate measures for de-notification. And, also stop seed production of those varieties.

This, at the macro level, hurts the agriculture production, farmers' income also the State's agriculture output, as farmers could have used better yielding variety.

The University says it wants to prepare a list of varieties to be de-notified, crop-wise so as to take up breeding new varieties and eliminate the 'seed garbage' in the production chain.

The release of a new variety starts with plant breeders conducting preliminary yield trial for two years, multi-location trial for two more years and adoptive research trial for another two years. Based on the study conducted during the trial period, the breeders submit a proposal to the University, which convenes its Variety Release Committee.

It then forwards the proposal to the State Variety Release Committee, which sends it to the Central Variety Release Committee for notification.

This notification is state-wise, the University says, explaining that a variety release is State-specific. If other states want the release of a variety released in Tamil Nadu for them, they will have to approach the Central Variety Release Committee for specific notification.




Once notified, the State Agriculture Department gets the breeder seed from the university, prepares foundation seed and then gets it certified from the Seed Certification Department for release to farmers.

Unclear MRL rules to hit pesticide enforcement

FSSAI has not prescribed MRL of pesticides used in vegetables imported from other States

The absence of Maximum Residue Levels (MRL) prescribed by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) for pesticides used on various crops poses a major hurdle for the Kerala government in addressing the pesticide safety of vegetables imported from other States.

The FSSAI has not prescribed MRL of various pesticides for chilly, curry leaf, amaranthus, coriander leaf, mint, and capsicum, items for which Kerala largely depends on neighbouring States. This would pose legal hurdles in preventing the import of pesticide-contaminated vegetables, according to experts.

<h1>PESTICIDE SAFETY OF VEGETABLES</h1>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No prescribed MRL* ▪ Chilly, curry leaf, amaranthus, coriander leaf, mint, capsicum 	<h2>Pesticide residues found</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cypermethrin ▪ Fenvalerate ▪ Cyhalothrin ▪ Profenofos ▪ Triazophos 	<h2>MRL PRESCRIBED</h2> <p>Cypermethrin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cabbage, brinjal, bhindi <p>Fenvalerate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cauliflower, brinjal, okra <p>Profenofos</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not fixed for any vegetable 	<h2>Chilly (MRL prescribed)</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chlorpyrifos ▪ Phosalone ▪ Ethion  <p>8 pesticides detected in chilly samples</p>
	<p>The absence of MRL for pesticides used on various vegetables is a stumbling block to our efforts to enforce the food safety rules.</p>  <p>P. RAJENDRAN Vice Chancellor, Kerala Agricultural University</p>		

MRL is the maximum amount of pesticide residue legally permitted on food. The MRL value is fixed on the basis of a rigorous evaluation of each pesticide legally authorised. It acts as an indicator of the correct use of pesticides, and ensures compliance with legal requirements for low residues on unprocessed food.

Of the eight pesticides detected in samples of chilly, only three, Chlorpyrifos, Phosalone, and Ethion have the MRL prescribed by the FSSAI. However, pesticide residue analysis of samples have revealed the presence of Cypermethrin, Fenvalerate, and Cyhalothrin, as well as Profenofos and Triazophos, two pesticides banned in Kerala since 2011.

Cypermethrin and Fenvalerate are neurotoxic, can trigger respiratory diseases, skin disorders, affect the immune system, and are possible human carcinogens.

For Cypermethrin, the FSSAI has prescribed MRL only for cabbage, brinjal, and bhindi while Fenvalerate has prescribed MRL only for cauliflower, brinjal, and okra. For Profenofos, the FSSAI has not fixed MRL for any vegetable.

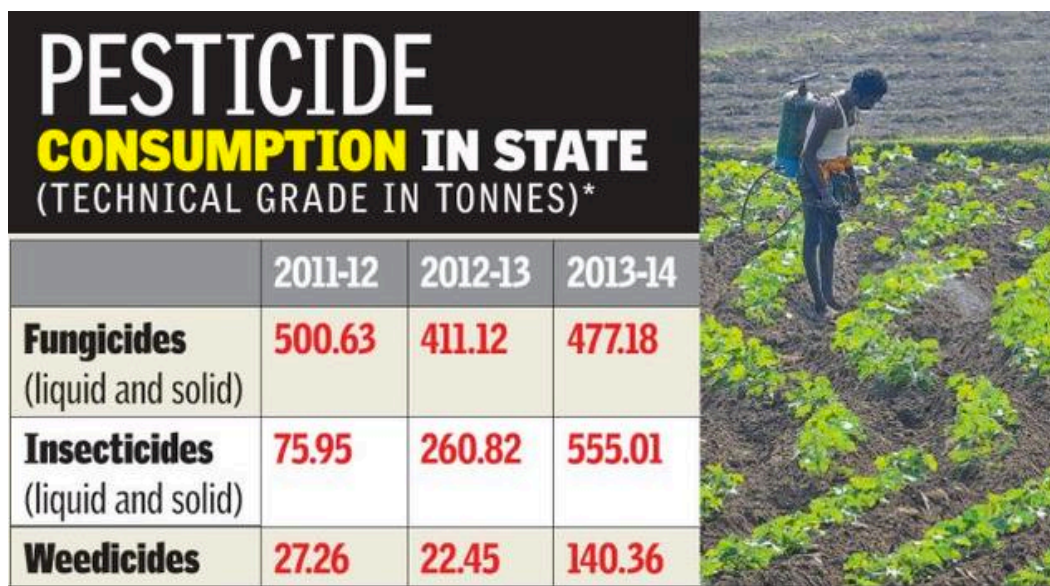
The absence of MRL for pesticides used on various vegetables is a stumbling block to efforts to enforce the food safety rules, says P. Rajendran, Vice Chancellor, Kerala Agricultural University. The Pesticide Residue Research and Analytical Laboratory under the KAU uses European Union standards for analysis in cases where the MRL has not been prescribed by the FSSAI. “But this is only an indicator and does not permit legal intervention to check the import of pesticide-ridden vegetables,” says a scientist.

To understand the health hazard caused by pesticide residue, it is essential to have MRL standards fixed for various pesticide-commodity combinations.

EU has a comprehensive database of pesticide-commodity combinations, covering even the dietary habits of immigrant communities. It has MRL standards for various pesticides used on red amaranthus, largely used by the immigrant Malayali community.

The FSSAI has initiated the process for fixing MRL of 18 pesticides used on various crops. But this is a complex time-consuming process, often taking up to two years, according to experts.

Pesticide on your plate: use of toxic chemicals peaks in State



75 per cent of pesticides used belong to Yellow category

As Kerala grapples with the spectre of poisoned vegetables from across its borders, use of chemical pesticides in the State has peaked.

Figures from the Department of Agriculture paint a grim picture. Pesticide consumption in the State rose to 1,173.62 tonnes (technical grade) during 2013-14 against 694.91 tonnes during 2012-13, even though the State's declared aim is to switch to wholly organic agriculture by 2016.

The latest numbers show that Kerala's pesticide consumption nearly doubled from 605.03 tonnes during 2011-12 even though the gross sown area in the State has more or less stagnated around 26 lakh hectares.

Sources claimed that about 75 per cent of the pesticides being used in the State belonged to the Yellow category, meaning that the State was deploying the most toxic of the permitted categories.

The Red category pesticides have been banned in the State though allegations persist that the pesticides are freely available even now.

Among pesticides, weedicides have come to be used in large quantities over the three years in review.

“Shortage and high cost of labour are forcing farmers and even householders to resort to the use of weedicides,” said an official of the Department of Agriculture.

The use of weedicides rose from 27.26 tonnes during 2011-12 to 140.36 tonnes during 2013-14. Their use dipped to 22.45 tonnes during 2012-13.

“With increasing incidence of life-threatening diseases in the State being linked to pesticide residues in agricultural produce, Kerala is taking too big a risk,” sources said.

Kerala Agricultural University’s Director of Extension P.V. Balachandran, however, said that the use of chemical pesticides in food crops in the State had come down drastically. He said that eco-friendly methods, including bio-controls, had found acceptance among farmers in the State.

The peak in pesticide consumption could be because of the increasing use of such chemicals in non-food crops, he added.

Sources in the Agriculture Department said costs of new pesticides were prohibitive and farmers tended to use cheaper pesticides such as lambdacyhalothrin, quinalphos, cypermethrin, fenvalarate and glyphosate, which is a widely-used weedicide.

A senior official of the Department of Agriculture too pointed to the increasing tendency among farmers in the State to use the safer Green category pesticides.

Data circulated at a recent meeting of officials from various departments that discussed the issue of pesticide residue in vegetables showed that Kerala consumed 65 tonnes of the insecticide chlorpyrifos between 2011-12 and 2013-14.

Use of quinalphos, another insecticide, during the same period was 59 tonnes. The figures also said that during the same period, 52 tonnes of new pesticide, chlorantraniliprole (Green category), was used.

Banned pesticides not being sold in Tirupur

Joint Director of Agriculture R. Kanagasabhai told *The Hindu* Officials on Monday that no banned products have been recovered from shops selling pesticides in the district so far.

Officials of departments of agriculture and horticulture have completed intensive checks at 192 pesticides suppliers/retailers outlets functioning in the district.

Pesticides or pesticide formulations that are banned in the country like aldrin, calcium cyanide and carbofuron, were neither sold or stocked, he said.

An awareness programme among farmers on the use of 'restricted pesticides' has begun.

Officials pointed out that 28 pesticides, and four pesticide formulations were banned for manufacture, import, or use in the country.

We have briefed the retailers/suppliers the list of seven pesticides which are withdrawn from the country, said the officials.

With indiscriminate use of some of the 'restricted pesticides' (the pesticides that could be used in one crop but could not be applied on another) by farmers said to be causing health concerns in different parts of the country, the agriculture department officials here had commenced an awareness campaign against usage of such chemicals.

The officials said that a 'restricted pesticide' like monocrotophos could be used in crops like cotton and coconut, whereas it could not be used in vegetables.

Recently, Kerala's Commissioner of Food Safety T.V. Anupama has stated that the studies conducted in that State has indicated high levels of pesticides in vegetables.

Such pesticide contents could trigger cancer in human beings, the officials added.

Rs. 118 cr. released for crop loss

A sum of Rs. 118 crore has been released by the National Agricultural Crop Insurance Company towards compensation for the loss in 'samba' crop in 2013-14.

The compensation will be disbursed to farmers through the primary agricultural cooperative credit societies, said an official release here on Monday.

Farmers facing any difficulty in getting their relief, can contact the cooperative officials by dialling 8122752855, 9444248543, 9443411235, or 9443277335, the release added.

Refresher course for fertilizer dealers

The Department of Agriculture organised a refresher course on 'Fertilizer Control Order 1985' and 'Insecticides Act 1968' for the fertilizer retail dealers in the city recently.

N. Elango, Joint Director of Agriculture, presided over the programme.

M. Sekar, Assistant Director of Agriculture, spoke at length on the salient features of 'Essential Commodities Act 1955', 'Fertilizer Control Order 1985', 'Insecticides Act 1968'.

M. Ekambaram, Deputy Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Anantharaman, Deputy Manager, Coromandel Fertilizers Limited, Arulmani, Field Officer, IFFCO and Madhavan, Field Officer, KRIBHCO, also spoke.

Delay in issue of soil health cards may not serve purpose

The distribution of soil health cards to farmers of Indervelli mandal in Adilabad district would have made sense had it been distributed before the commencement of the kharif season. Given the forecast of a dismal monsoon, the information on soil texture in a given area and related recommendations on use of fertilizers and nutrients contained in the cards would be of no use to ryots if there is any further delay.

Indervelli mandal is among the three mandals in Telangana (Thimmajipet in Mahabubnagar and Gajwel in Medak being the others) that has been selected for a pilot project by the Union government to conduct a survey of soil texture under its nationwide ambitious Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme aimed at reducing agriculture investment and increasing productivity. Scientists from the National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Pattern (NBSSLUP), Nagpur, collected 20,000 soil samples for soil fertility sampling and mapping in January this year,

intending to ready the cards in May itself. “We will complete the process of computerisation of information and distribution of cards in another fortnight or so,” asserts an official of the Agriculture Department as he concedes there was a delay in information being sent to Adilabad from the laboratory in Bengaluru. “The information will still be useful to the farmers,” he adds. The Agriculture Department is also likely to face a daunting task in making illiterate farmers understand the utility value of the SHC data as the latter are almost completely unaware of the scheme. Kinaka Sheku, the mahajan of Keslapur village in Indervelli mandal, for example, feigns ignorance when asked whether he knows about SHC. “I remember the officers collecting soil sample from my brother’s field. But I do not know what the purpose was,” he recalls.

“It will not be difficult. We will help out farmers,” says Indervelli Mandal Agriculture Officer K. Kailash.

Meanwhile, the Agriculture Department is aiming at collecting nearly 80,000 soil samples from across the district by September for determining texture. “In the coming three years, all the samples in the district would have been analysed,” hopes the Agriculture official.

In Medak district, Gajwel mandal was selected as the pilot project for Land Resource Inventory, but the soil health cards have not been distributed so far. According to P. Sravan Kumar, Assistant Director, Agriculture, who’s looking after this activity at Gajwel, samples were tested from as many as 70,000 survey numbers. Data analysis is complete and the results have been uploaded online. Printed format of the data is also ready.

Farmers warned of crop diseases

CPCRI devises ways to ward off diseases caused by pests during monsoon

With monsoon projected to remain erratic this season, the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) has called upon farmers to check rain-related diseases of coconut, areca nut and cocoa, caused by invasive pests.

The Centre has asked agricultural research institutes to alert farmers to possible crop loss, CPCRI director P. Chowdappa told a press conference here on Monday. The CPCRI has come out with timely and effective pest-control measures and manure applications to arrest the loss, he said.

Fungi attack

Areca nut, coconut, and cocoa crops could be affected by ‘mahali’ (fruit rot), bud rot, and black pod respectively because the atmosphere is ideal for fungi multiplication during monsoon. To protect coconut palms from fungi attack, the damaged spindle has to be removed and the wound should be swabbed with fungicide — mancozeb 5 gm in 300 ml water — and covered with a polythene sheet till new bud emerges.

Preventive measures

Dead palms should be destroyed. Immediate control measures are needed to save affected palms as they succumb to the disease very fast. The diseases are mostly prevalent in hilly hamlets where the CPCRI has begun preventive measures to ward off threat from the fungi *Phytophthora palmivora* that causes bud rot.

To contain ‘mahali’ in areca, Bordeaux mixture should be sprayed well before rain picks up momentum. The pesticide could be used to check black pod in cocoa too, Dr. Chowdappa said. Expressing concern over the shortfall of rain in June, he called

Agriculture workshop

A three-day agriculture workshop ‘Kanal – 2015’ will be held at Parassinikkadavu here from June 19 under the aegis of the Farm Information Bureau (FIB). The workshop would have various sessions focusing on achievements in the agricultural sector, role of the media in agricultural extension and agriculture and social media, FIB informed on Monday. Rural Development Minister K.C. Joseph would inaugurate the workshop at the Vismaya Park at Parassinikkadavu at 5 p.m. on June 19. Agriculture Minister would also participate in the inaugural function. -
Special Correspondent

Organic drive modelled on total literacy campaign

The district administration will coordinate efforts to spread organic production of vegetables and launch a drive to achieve the goal of total organic cultivation on the model of the successful total literacy campaign.

District Collector M. G. Rajamaickam said here on Monday that the aim of the efforts would be to make Ernakulam the first fully organic district in the State. He was speaking at a meeting of officials from various departments and Greater Cochin Development Authority on the production of safe-to-eat vegetables in the

district. The meeting was convened by the district administration under the aegis of GCDA.

One of the steps should be to cultivate the entire uncultivated area available under public ownership in the district, the Collector said. Participation of government offices and voluntary agencies would be enlisted for the programme.

Various organisations in the district working in the field of organic agriculture would be brought under one umbrella for proper coordination and monitoring of the efforts. An official statement said that Agri Press of the Ernakulam Press Club would cooperate with the campaign.

Laboratories would be established to examine whether vegetables and other produces in the district are free of pesticide residues. The laboratory would be used to test vegetables reaching the Ernakulam district for pesticide residues.

Special outlets will be opened at the EEC market at Maradu for sale of organically-grown vegetables and fruits. GCDA, which has launched its own efforts to grow vegetables and fruits will be a strong presence in the campaign. N. Venugopal, Chairman, said that registration facilities would be launched soon for those wishing to participate in the organic agriculture campaign.

The Development Authority has convened a meeting of stakeholders and those wishing to join the campaign on June 19. The Department of Agriculture has been instructed to draw up a brief plan for the implementation of the programme and to submit a report on various schemes and subsidies available to such efforts.

K. X. Jessy, Deputy Director, Agriculture; Deputy Director, Dairy Development Department Georgekutty Jacob and Fisheries Deputy Director K. M. Elias were among those who participated in the meeting at the GCDA conference hall on Monday.

Farmers seek compensation

Farmers showing affected black gram crop at the Tuticorin Collectorate on Monday.— Photo: N. Rajesh

Farmers belonging to Tamiraparani River Water Protection Federation have sought the intervention of the district administration to distribute seeds and subsidised urea as compensation for lack gram crops damaged owing to unseasonal rains this summer.

Showing the damaged crop at the Collectorate here on Monday, C. Nainar Kulasekaran, founder of the federation, claimed that black gram crop cultivated on

2,165 acres near Srivaikuntam kaspā irrigation tank suffered damage and the farmers suffered losses to the tune of Rs. 6 crore. The farmers were expecting yield of two to three quintals per acre.

Currently, there was a demand for black gram which fetched Rs.10,000 per quintal in the market, he said. He submitted a petition to Collector M. Ravikumar seeking compensation for farmers and immediate release of water from the Tamiraparani for 'kar' season.

Food awareness programme from June 18

The Mysuru Zilla Panchayat and the Food and Civil Supplies Department have chalked out a year-long programme to create awareness among people about judicious consumption of food, food safety and other related issues from June 18th. People would be educated about judicious use of food, apart from developing a food discipline to ensure better health.

Anganawadi workers, health workers and teachers would be told about nutritious food to be distributed among children at anganawadis, children at schools and pregnant women.

B. Pushpa Amaranath, president of the Mysuru Zilla Panchayat, Chief Executive Officer of the zilla panchayat P.A. Gopal and Deputy Director of Food and Civil Supplies Department told presspersons here on Monday that consumption of unsafe food would cause many diseases, ranging from diarrhoea to various forms of cancer. Food-borne disease outbreaks would have devastating impact on the economy. The zilla panchayat and the Food Department felt the need to conduct an awareness programme all through the year, she said.

Ms. Pushpa said that a large quantity of food was being wasted in marriages and other functions. People should learn to get served with only the required amount of food. While many people were struggling to get a meal, several others were wasting the food, she said. Farmers would also be informed about various schemes of the government which would help them in agriculture. About 10 per cent of foodgrains produced in the country was being wasted owing to lack of storage facility. Food experts and scientists from different organisations working in the field of food technology were involved in the programme. Dinesh Gundu Rao, Food and Civil Supplies Minister, will inaugurate the function at Maharaja government junior college at 11 a.m. Mr.Srinivas Prasad, Minister for Revenue would take part in the programme.

In anticipation of better monsoon



The pre-monsoon spell in April and May has raised the hopes of farmers in perennially drought-prone Kolar district. Though the April and May rain and hail storm caused huge damage to crops including mango and tomato, the farmers in general have started readying their fields for sowing.

The fact that the district has received more rain than traditional rainfall also enhances farmers hopes. While traditional average rainfall in the district is 133.60 mm, the district has received 234.20 mm rain till May this year.

The target for monsoon sowing is 1.02 lakh hectare- 93, 290 hectare rain fed and 8,710 hectare irrigation-based.

However, sowing activities were completed in only 338 hectare land because of lack of rain. But according to Agriculture Department sources, Kolar in Bayaluseeme region can expect rain for sowing only after month of July.

Preparations

The Agriculture Department is gearing up to supply required seeds and fertilizers to the farmers. The demand for various sowing seeds is 9,940 quintal and 2,120 quintal has already been supplied to the needy farmers, sources said.

Taluk-wise sowing target

Bangarpet - 23,630 hectare

Kolar - 19,115 ha.

Malur – 16,055 ha.

Mulbagal - 26,075 ha.

Srinivasapur – 17,125 ha.

Getting ready for Kharif sowing



Farmers preparing lands for sowing in Vijayapura.

After pre-monsoon showers, both the farmers and the Agriculture Department is ready for the Kharif sowing.

According to sources, the Kharif showing normally starts from second weak of May but due to the delay in monsoon, the sowing is expected to commence from last weak of this month.

“The district has received scattered rains, but full rain is expected within a weak which would enable the farmers to take up sowing operations extensively”, said an official.

Meanwhile, the farmers have already prepared lands for cultivation, and only waiting for the rains. The official said that the Department this year has set the targeted sowing area of 4.32 lakh hectare for Kharif in Vijayapura.

Of the total targeted area, Toor has highest share with 1.83 lakh hectare which is close to fifty per cent of the total targeted showing area for Kharif season.

“Though over the years, Toor cultivation has been constantly increasing, however now, it apparently has reached the saturation limit. At the most, this year, the Toor would be cultivated in a maximum of 2 lakh hectare,” the official said.

The reason for the increasing attraction for Toor is believed to be higher revenue within a short-period. “The market price for Toor has been encouraging for the farmers, moreover, several pest-resistant varieties have also been developed by the Universities, which are helpful for the farmers”, the officials said.

The other crops are: Bajra (millet) which is targeted to be sown in 77,500 hectares, Groundnut in 24,500 hectare, sunflower in 21,000 hectare, Cotton 10,500 hectares and Green gram in 14,500 hectares.

The officials informed that the Department has already procured and stored adequate quantity of fertilizers and seeds.

“There is no shortage of seeds and fertilizers. The only things required now is a good spell of rain.”

KAU questions safety of vegetables from TN

Calls for independent pesticide residue tests

Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) has refuted the contention by the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) that the vegetables sent to Kerala by farmers in the neighbouring State were free of pesticide residue.

KAU Vice Chancellor P. Rajendran said periodic testing had revealed excessive levels of pesticide residue in vegetables from Tamil Nadu. The tests, he said, were carried out using sophisticated equipment at Pesticide Residue Research and Analytical Laboratory at College of Agriculture, Vellayani. “It is clear that the government of Tamil Nadu and the TNAU are trying to protect the interests of farmers in the State who sell their produce in Kerala”, he said. He was responding to a statement by TNAU Vice Chancellor K. Ramasamy seeking to allay fears of the reported toxic content in vegetables grown and sent to Kerala from the State.

‘Provide quality seeds to farmers’

The CPI Legislature Party has, on Monday, addressed a letter to the Chief Minister, K. Chandrasekhar Rao, urging him to make available good quality seeds and fertilisers to farmers of the State. The party’s floor leader, R. Ravindrakumar, has asked Mr. Rao to curb the problem of spurious seeds and fertilisers, besides increasing awareness among farmers about suitability of land for various crops.

Good rainfall in Adilabad brings cheer to farmers



About 24 mandals in Adilabad district received rainfall in excess of 6.4 cm reviving hopes of a good yield this season.– Photo: S. Harpal Singh

Nearly half of Adilabad district, 24 out of 52 mandals, received rainfall in excess of the normal 6.4 cm at the start of monsoon reviving hopes of a good crop season ahead. There was good rainfall in Asifabad and Nirmal Revenue divisions with Sirpur (T) and Bejjur recording 15 cm and 13 cm respectively until 8 a.m. on Monday.

The highest rainfall of about 19 cm was however recorded in Bhainsa while Dilawarpur recorded nearly 17 cm. The district’s average rainfall was pegged at 7.5 cm which is categorised as normal.

Though the rainfall heralds good augury, the farming community, or at least a section of it may not be able to recoup from the losses it has accumulated due to crop failure during the last two seasons. A large extent of land continues to be fallow even at this stage as there were no takers of the land on lease.

Meanwhile, the rainfall has brought much relief from the tormenting day temperatures for the common man. The humidity of nearly 85 per cent however, did not provide relief from sweating.

Go natural for pearly whites



You can use strawberries, banana peel or even coconut oil to get sparkling white teeth, but try these options only after proper research.

STRAWBERRIES



Claim: Mash up a ripe strawberry, dip your toothbrush in it and brush carefully over teeth. Within two weeks, your teeth will be whiter.

Dentist's Verdict: True. Strawberries contain citric acid, which can weaken the surface hardness of your teeth. But it also contains the gentler malic acid, and the riper the strawberry becomes, the higher the concentration of malic acid compared to the more harmful citric acid.

So choose a really ripe strawberry, rub it on your teeth and just like exfoliating the skin, it does remove superficial debris. The malic acid won't actually break down the stain molecules, but the surface clean gives your teeth a whiter appearance.

It's a gentle and effective natural whitener.

TURMERIC POWDER

Claim: Mix half a teaspoon of dried turmeric powder with a few drops of water and stir to create a thick paste. Dip your toothbrush in (it will be stained yellow) and clean teeth.

The usual cleaning time of two to three minutes is doubled, because of the time it takes to rinse the yellow from your teeth and gums. The abrasive qualities of the bright yellow spice (derived from a root) will clean your teeth.

Verdict: False. This is a recipe for disaster. The rule in dentistry is that anything that will stain a white shirt will stain your teeth. All spices stain teeth, but yellow spices are the worst. Far from whitening your teeth, using turmeric will make them even more discoloured.

BANANA PEEL

Claim: High levels of potassium, magnesium and manganese in bananas can help remove stains from teeth.

Simply peel a ripe banana, and rub your teeth with the insides of the peel for about two minutes. After three weeks, your teeth will have whitened.

Verdict: True. If you rub the skin, it can act as a gentle exfoliator and will remove some surface stains, but the banana will not reach inside the pores on the surface of your enamel — so no true 'deep' cleaning will take place.

CIDER VINEGAR

Claim: Rinsing with apple cider vinegar (mixed with two parts of water) will make teeth whiter and protect teeth and gums from bacteria.

Verdict: False. Cider vinegar is a favourite of ‘detox’ devotees. Once swallowed, it mixes with pancreatic secretions in the intestines and turns alkaline, but when it hits your teeth, it is an acid, albeit a weak one. This makes the enamel on your teeth less resistant to damage — like wetting a chalk and then scraping off the surface.

COCONUT OIL

Claim: A 3,000-year-old Ayurvedic way to clean teeth is to swish a tablespoon of oil (usually coconut, sesame or olive oil) around your mouth for 20 minutes every morning. The coconut oil sticks to the oil in the cell membranes of any bacteria in your mouth, so when you spit it out, you are ridding your mouth of unwanted microorganisms. Used by stars, including Gwyneth Paltrow, who claim it whitens teeth and improves complexion.

Verdict: False. There is no scientific evidence at all that ‘oil pulling’, as it’s called, will whiten teeth, or even remove bacteria. It’s possible that the act of swishing the oil around your mouth will dislodge some bacteria or debris, so followed by a careful brushing session, your teeth may look cleaner. But no science shows that oil pulling will make your teeth any whiter.

 *The Indian* **EXPRESS**

Irrigation: Spending up amid slow coverage growth



Following the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission, the Central government decided to increase the share of states in the overall government finances.

However, a report prepared by Kotak shows that while the states' expenditure on irrigation has jumped from around Rs 20,000 crore in 2000 to over Rs 98,000 crore in 2014, there has been a limited increase in the net irrigated area.

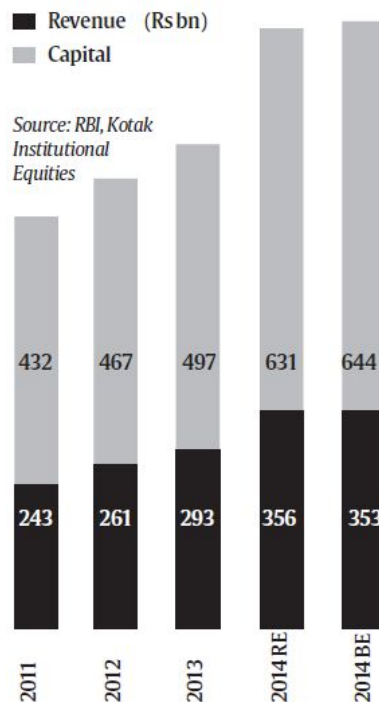
The report states that capital expenditure by states needs a closer look, especially, as they will play an increasingly larger role in economic development and overall government spending given their larger share of overall government finances.

* Rs6,75,000 crore Aggregate spend on irrigation by state governments over the last ten years between FY06 and FY15.

* 10.3%: Compounded annual growth in state government's spend on irrigation between FY06 and FY15

* 1.3% is the compounded annual growth rate in total irrigated area between FY96 and FY11. According to the agriculture census data, there has only been a marginal rise from 37% to 45% in the sown area being irrigated now.

* Rs3,600 crore: Total outlay by the Central government for FY16 Budget estimate under various schemes for irrigation. States are primarily responsible for irrigation as water is a state subject.





THE TIMES OF INDIA

Coconut farmers seek relief for cyclone loss

The coconut farmers in Cuddalore and Villupuram districts have urged the state and Union governments to provide adequate compensation for the loss of plantation in the 2011 Thane cyclone that ravaged Puducherry and two other districts of Tamil Nadu.

They demanded a compensation of 3,000 per tree per annum for a period of eight years from January 2012 till the seedlings of the newly-planted saplings start yielding. They substantiated their demand for compensation for eight years pointing out that a coconut tree starts bearing nuts only after five years.

The farmers said the Tamil Nadu government provided monetary assistance to cut and remove damaged trees (500 per tree) and maintain plantation for five years, distributed coconut seedlings for replanting and inputs for replanting and distributed pulses and oil seeds. They pointed out that the government did not compensate the loss they suffered in the cyclone.

They said an expert group constituted by the Coconut Development Board assessed the extent of damage and prepared a report. The board sought horticulture commissioner of the Union government a financial assistance of 55.37 crore based on the report. The group assessed that cyclone damaged 1.93 lakh trees in Cuddalore district and 88,550 trees in Villupuram district. It concluded that cyclone roughly affected 11 crore nuts.

However Tamil Nadu agriculture department, which enumerated the actual extent of damage, concluded that cyclone affected 1.6 lakh trees in Cuddalore district and 48,522 in Villupuram district. It arrived at a compensation of 24 crore. Moreover unlike the Coconut development board that recommended compensation for five years the Tamil Nadu government decided to reduce the compensation for yield loss to three years after it distributed pulses and oil seeds for two years (2012-13 and 2013-14).

Accordingly the government submitted a proposal to Union government seeking funds to compensate yield loss. But the farmers did not receive compensation even

after the government submitted its proposal more than one year ago and more than three and half years after the cyclone ravaged the region.

An ex-serviceman and a former panchayat president (Kudikadu), Cuddalore district P Senthamaraikannan lodged a complaint with the National human rights commission seeking adequate compensation for farmers for the yield loss. The commission forwarded the complaint to the Union home ministry, which in turn referred the issue to the Tamil Nadu government additional chief secretary (revenue).

"The Union home ministry referred the issue to the Tamil Nadu government in October last year. Since then there is no further information from the Union and state governments. We approached Tamil Nadu agriculture director on June 9 this year insisting him to expedite the process of extending compensation to the Thane-affected farmers," said Senthamaraikannan, who is also a coconut farmer.

Govt likely to declare state disaster-hit

Bihar is likely to be declared disaster-hit as the state disaster management department (DMD) has already sent a proposal to the state government in this regard.

The DMD has taken this decision in the light of the RBI directive, which says that loans given to farmers by various banks can be rescheduled only when a state is declared disaster-hit. Incidentally, unseasonal rain and hailstorm in March and April have caused widespread damage to standing crops in Bihar and the farmers now rue their lot.

"The state government had already asked various bank branches in the state to reschedule the loans to the farmers in cyclone-hit districts and later also in the districts which were hit by unseasonal rain and hailstorm.

But, despite the state government directive, the banks did not show any leniency and are pressurizing the farmers to repay their loans. The farmers, who are a worried lot, failed to do so and appealed to the state government for relief," said state disaster management principal secretary Vyasji here on Monday.

"Keeping the farmers' plight in view, the state agriculture department and DMD again appealed to the banks to reschedule the farmers' loans. Various bank authorities, however, expressed their inability to initiate any move in this direction

on the pretext of RBI guidelines. No bank will reschedule the loans unless there is a notification from the state government declaring Bihar disaster-hit," he added.

According to the RBI sources, the restructured period for repayment of any loan may be 3 to 5 years in case of short-term crop loans.

However, if the damage arising out of the calamity is severe, banks may, at their discretion, extend the period of repayment ranging up to 7 years and in extreme cases of hardship, up to 10 years in consultation with the State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC).

It may be mentioned that the state was hit by unseasonal rain and hailstorm in March-April and even as its farmers counted their losses, a cyclonic storm hit the northeastern districts like Purnia, Kishanganj, Araria, Forbesganj, Darbhanga, Madhepura and Saharsa on April 21, killing around 60 persons and incurring crop loss in over 18 lakh hectares.

Incidentally, the state IMD has also asked the state government and the DMD authorities to prepare a contingency plan keeping the delayed monsoon and deficient rain predicted this year.

No noodles barred: Leading down the 'lead' path

Medicine has always made heavy weather over the presence of heavy metals in the body. Heavy metal poisoning occurs when it builds up in the body over a period of months or years. The controversy over noodles now brings our attention to lead poisoning.

Lead is a metal that humans have been mining for generations as it is found in the earth crust. Lead was once a key ingredient in paint, pipes, pottery, roofing, batteries and even some cosmetics and toys. Until recently, the common cause of ubiquitous exposure was inhaled lead from the leaded gasoline used in automobiles. Thankfully, the availability of "unleaded gas" has spared us this "occupational exposure". In urban settings, the copper plumbing, soldered with lead, can contaminate household drinking water. The pretty glazes (lead) in "porcelain" can be leached (passed onto when in contact for long) into food and can add up over time. Similarly, "kohl" eyeliners and colorful toys (manufactured under unregulated conditions) can bring lead into your system.

Lead unfortunately is a stubborn contaminant, for once it gets into food, it cannot always be completely removed by washing or other steps (USFDA).

How could it get into the noodles, if it really did? Maybe the way they are

processed? Maybe the water used to manufacture was contaminated? Whilst none of the food additives used in wheat noodles support lead, some components like onion powder or wheat flour which come from agricultural sources were admixed? Maybe even the packaging? Who knows? Who knows if there were really contaminated?

Another important question being asked is what are the symptoms of lead poisoning. In children, lead loading affects the nervous system leading to developmental and learning disabilities.

This is of utmost importance since kids love their noodles and it can have far-reaching consequences. Non-specific signs like appetite and weight loss, sluggishness and fatigue are common but the hallmark symptom is abdominal colic and constipation. Reduced fertility, abortion, high blood pressure and headaches with memory loss are some of the symptoms in adults.

Lead poisoning however is hard to detect since patients are usually asymptomatic until high levels build up unless of course there is a high degree of suspicion. No safe threshold for lead exposure has been enunciated, indicating that there is no known sufficiently small amount of lead that will NOT cause some kind of harm to the body.

Estimating blood lead levels, detecting changes in the white blood cells (basophilia), visualizing a blue line on the gums and asking for X-rays of bones in children, are some of the clinical tools.

The treatment is Chelation therapy - a method by which certain oral or injected drugs (chemicals), bind with the intoxicating metal (both in the blood but importantly also with the metal which is stubbornly deposited in the organs) and form a non-toxic complex which is then urinated out of the body. This has to be under supervision and is expensive.

All said and done, until the curtain comes down on the Maggi controversy, for now, we have mastered the "ABCD" of lead poisoning.

(Dr Hemant Thacker is a consultant physician and cardiometabolic specialist attached to south Mumbai hospitals. His email address is dochpt@gmail.com)

Govt to farmer: Don't sow until after onset of monsoon

To safeguard the interests of farmers in the face of forecast of a not-so-good monsoon, the state agriculture department has released certain guidelines for all

major kharif crops like cotton, soyabean, pigeon pea or tur, green gram or mung, black gram or urad in Vidarbha through the two division offices. The department also has a contingency plan in place in case of failure of monsoon or extended dry spells.

This year the department has set specific targets for the krishi sevaks to cover a minimum 100 hectare area and reach the guidelines and contingency plan to farmers. It is also stressing on water conservation under Jalyukta Shivar campaign of Fadnavis government to protect the crops in case of less or erratic rains. The first important guideline is not to sow until after onset of monsoon and until the area has received at least 65-100 mm rainfall.

The joint director of Amravati division (covering five districts of Amravati, Akola, Buldhana, Washim and Yavatmal) S Sardar told TOI the department was ensuring that the farmers followed all in situ (in soil) conservation practices so that even with scarce rains, resowing could be avoided. Farmers should also follow the broad based furrows (BBF) method of cultivation for soyabean and other crops except cotton.

"The government is giving 50% subsidy on rotavator, the machine used for BBF, which costs about Rs80,000. Intercropping is another method known to farmers but not practiced so well. Krishi sevaks will ensure farmers used this method," said Sardar.

Joint director Nagpur division Vijay Gawhate said that though earlier there was prediction of dry spells during the season, the latest forecast has given a better picture. Farmers should just follow water conservation techniques that allow retention of maximum water within the soil, he said. "If there is very little rain till July 25, then farmers should cultivate just tur.

The rice belt of Gadchiroli, Chandrapur, Gondia and Bhandara districts will need special measures to avoid huge loss in case of scanty rains. Gawhate said farmers could go in for use of broadcasting method instead of nursery and transplantation method for paddy. For this they should soak the seeds in water for at least 24 hours before sowing. Farmers should not take hybrid or Bt cotton on light and medium soils.

Total expected area under soyabean in Nagpur division is 3.65 lakh ha while that of cotton is 6 lakh ha and 8.10 lakh under cotton. In Amravati division, of the 32

lakh hectare kharif area, 15 lakh ha will be under soyabean and 10 lakh under cotton and 10% under green or black gram.

Contingency plan

- * No sowing until 65mm to 100mm rainfall has occurred
- * No change in variety of kharif crops needed
- * In situ water conservation techniques
- * If enough rainfall occurs sowing can be done till July 7, if less rains happen till July 15 farmers should totally avoid green and black gram
- * In case of very scanty rains by July 16, farmers should also avoid jowar as foodgrain but it can be taken for fodder
- * In case of scarce rains till July, cotton farmers should go for desi varieties rather than hybrids or Bt
- * Soyabean farmers should try to use own seeds instead of buying from market. This will save cost in case of resowing
- * Soyabean sowing should also be done after grading and germination test
- * Soyabean - tur should be grown as intercrops in 6:1 or 4:1 ratio
- * In case of less rains, paddy farmers should go for staggered nurseries in three phases to avoid wastage of entire crop. They should also opt for SRI method of cultivation
- * Orange growers should make arrangement for protective irrigation

Circle rate for agricultural land may go up to 1.5 crore per acre

NEW DELHI: The revenue department is preparing a proposal to revise the circle rate for agricultural land in the city. The existing circle rate— the minimum rate at which a property can be registered— of Rs 53 lakh per acre is much lower than the market value. This may be hiked up to Rs 1 crore-Rs 1.5 crore per acre.

This is for the first time since 2008 that such a proposal is being prepared. The move is seen as a measure to boost the state's revenue besides empowering the

land owner who will be in a position to get higher compensation if the circle rate goes up, sources said.

Plans are also afoot to make way for a differential circle rate to cater to the various categories of flats. As of now, there are flat rates for different categories of houses like DDA, cooperative housing societies and flats for commercial use by private builders and multi-storey flats irrespective of the area they are located in. For instance, there is a flat circle rate of Rs 76,200 per sq m for a 100sq m DDA flat, be it in Vasant Kunj, Vikas Puri or Rohini.

However, the circle rates for residential plots in colonies (from A to H municipal valuation categories) are unlikely to be revised for now. The last revision wherein a 20% average hike was introduced was in September 2014.

A formal proposal is learnt to have been sent to deputy CM Manish Sisodia who is also the minister in-charge of revenue.

The reason why circle rates were never revised after 2008 lies in the fact that no one ever bothered to push for a revision as this helped keep the compensation rates low in case of land acquisition for development projects. The circle rate forms the basis of fixing the compensation amount for acquired land.

According to the 2008 notification, the circle rate for normal agricultural land was Rs 53 lakh per acre and for riverbed land between forward bunds was Rs 17.60 lakh per acre. "On the ground, the same land is pitched at a much higher market value. An acre of normal agricultural land is selling for anywhere between Rs 1 crore and Rs 3 crore. Hence the need for a revision in rates. Based on all these factors, the proposed revision has been kept between Rs 1 crore and Rs 1.5 crore," said a revenue department official.

Last year when Delhi was under President's rule, the city administration had notified a revised structure of circle rate that spells a hike of 20% over the existing one across the municipal valuation colony categories from A to H. While this was aimed at giving a boost to revenue collections, the stamp duty collection failed to show any upward trend as transactions remained low.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

The flare-up in pulses



India has been facing a growing shortfall in pulses, with annual output running perpetually short of demand

With a 15 per cent year-on-year rise for April, pulses have been one of very few components of the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) which have shown inflationary tendencies in recent months. The index itself dipped by 0.25 per cent in May. Pulses — which make up a staple component in Indian cooking — have soared on seasonal shortages in recent months. Retail prices of tur (arhar) dal averaged Rs. 91/kg on an all-India basis this May, compared with Rs. 70 a year ago.

The price rise in some markets in the South has been as high as 52 per cent. Prices of urad dal have averaged Rs. 91, against Rs. 69 in the same time last year.

Pulses, such as chana and moong, are up to a lower degree, trading about 25 and 10 per cent higher compared with the same period last year. But the flare-up in pulses cannot be attributed to seasonal factors alone. Instead, prices seem to be responding to a sharp drop in pulses output this year. Recent estimates by the

Agriculture Ministry have slashed the pulses output for 2014-15 to 17.38 million tonnes. This is over two million tonnes short of the 19.5-million-tonne target initially set for the year. It also represents a good 12 per cent drop from the actual output for 2013-14. Pulses are largely grown as a rabi crop in India, with the season accounting for two-thirds of the annual crop.

This time around, unseasonal rains in major growing states of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh have contributed to heavy crop losses and a sharp decline in the final output. Tur dal, gram and moong have witnessed sharp cutbacks in output.

Supply fails to keep up

But this year's weather-related troubles have only aggravated India's long-term supply deficit in pulses. The country has been facing a growing shortfall in pulses in recent years, with annual output running perpetually short of demand. In recent years, the country has witnessed a significant shift in the consumption pattern of households, away from the carbohydrate-rich cereals to the protein-rich pulses.

Rising incomes have essentially prompted households to temper their cereal intake while increasing their protein intake which, in a vegetarian diet, is represented mainly by pulses. The burgeoning demand for pulses, however, hasn't been met with an equivalent production response.

After increasing from 13.3 million tonnes to about 18.2 million tonnes between 2005-06 and 2010-11, pulses output has since stagnated at between 18 and 19 million tonnes. The output estimated for 2014-15 is, in fact, much the same as levels four years ago.

Though the Centre does announce a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for key pulses each year, pulses are not covered by the procurement mechanism of the Food Corporation of India as is the case with rice or wheat.

Shortfalls in market price vis-à-vis MSPs are supposed to be stemmed through market intervention by NAFED, Central Warehousing Corporation and so on, which often don't prove as effective.

Though India is the largest global producer of pulses, it is the most prodigious consumer too. Thus, the expanding domestic shortage of pulses has been met mainly through imports. India imports peas from Canada, Russia and the US, chana from Australia and Russia, moong and urad from Myanmar and tur dal from Tanzania, Myanmar, and Mozambique.

In 2014-15, India is estimated to have shipped in 4.6 million tonnes of pulses to supplement the 17.4-million-tonne domestic crop, a fifth of the year's requirement. With the domestic requirements in mind, pulses imports have been permitted at zero duty, with this concession recently extended until September 2015.

However, meeting domestic shortfalls in pulses through imports is not necessarily an economical option. Despite generally bearish trends in agri commodities, global prices for quite a few pulses (urad, moong, tur) had firmed up to levels above Indian prices in recent months.

Given India's sizeable consumption needs, news of crop failure in India usually leads to global prices of key pulses spiking. Therefore, though the shortfall may be bridged through imports, domestic prices of key pulses appear likely to remain firm in the months ahead.

Cotton wilts on weak demand

Cotton has been on the decline due to weak demand from domestic mills. Moreover, slow buying by ginners also pushed down *kapas* or raw cotton.

Traders said that progress of monsoon so far is good in cotton growing areas in Gujarat and farmers are hopeful of good rains. Gujarat Sankar-6 cotton declined ₹200 to ₹34,200-700 per candy of 356 kg. About 5,000 bales (of 170 kg) arrived in Gujarat and 11,000 bales arrived in India.

Kapas was down ₹5 to ₹880-925 for a *maund* of 20 kg and gin delivery *kapas* stood at ₹930-945. Cottonseed lost ₹5 to ₹420-435. Almost 345 lakh bales have arrived in the market so far this year and export demand was not high.

Spices exports touch ₹14,900 cr in FY15

Indian spices exports touched ₹14,899.68 crore in FY15 against ₹13,735.39 crore in the previous fiscal on the back of robust global demand.

Chilli, mint and mint products, cumin, spice oils and oleoresins, pepper, turmeric, coriander, small cardamom, curry powder/paste and fenugreek contributed substantially to the spice export basket, as the demand scaled up phenomenally at the global level.



A total of 8,93,920 tonnes of spices and spice products valued at ₹14,899.68 crore (\$2,432.85 million) were exported, registering a 9 per cent increase in volume and 8 per cent in rupee terms and 7 per cent in dollar terms in value against 8,17,250 tonnes in FY14.

The export figure also exceeded the target of 7,55,000 tonnes.

“Increased demand for Indian spices in the international market is a testimony to their unmatched quality and escalating faith in their sustainability,” said A Jayathilak, Chairman, Spices Board.

Chilli continued to maintain the lead in the export basket, accounting for 347,000 tonnes in quantity and ₹3,517 crore in value.

Mint and mint products also earned substantial foreign exchange worth ₹2689 crore through exports of 25,750 tonnes.

In terms of volume, chilli was followed by cumin with an export quantity of 1,55,500 tonnes earning a foreign exchange worth ₹1,838 crore.

Pepper contributed significantly to export earnings by bringing home ₹1208 crore with a corresponding export volume of 21,450 tonnes.

Value-added products

Value-added spice products such as spice oils and oleoresins notched a significant high with figures of 11,475 tonnes and ₹1,910 crore.

Turmeric too continued to make great strides with an export volume of 86,000 tonnes, which translated into an earning of ₹744.35 crore.

Coriander was another major spice with a huge demand in foreign markets.

By exporting 46,000 tonnes, it fetched ₹498 crore while curry powder/paste contributed to the exchequer with a tidy amount of ₹476 crore through export of 24,650 tonnes. “Indian spices are not only lucrative products for the national exchequer but have also become a trusted global brand. The challenge for us is to give a huge impetus to their exports and sustain their quality and flavour”, Jayathilak said.

Trusted brand

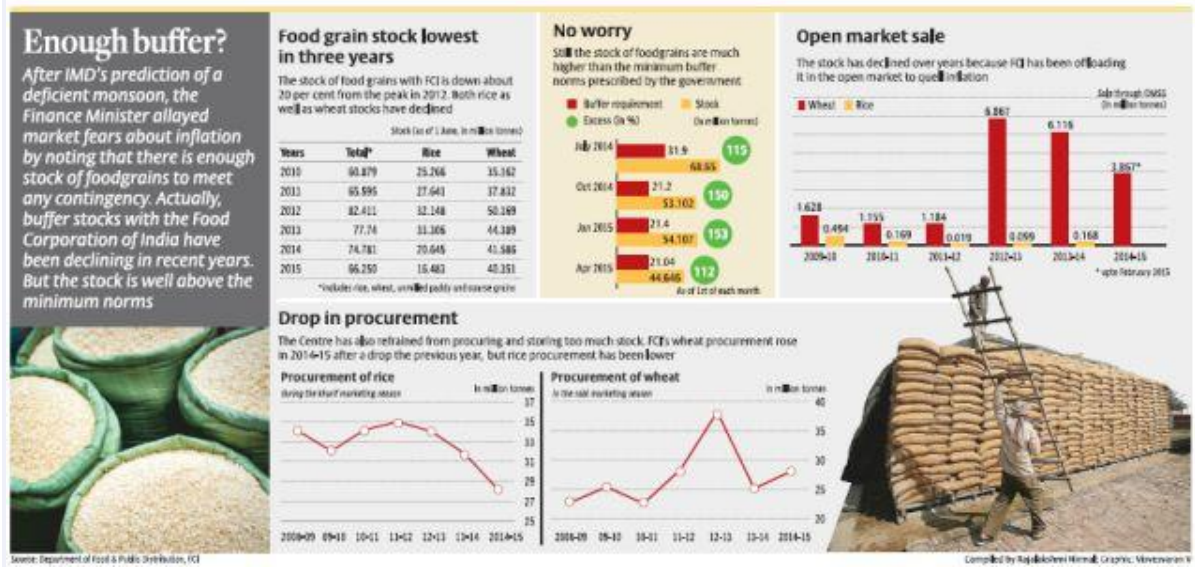
Small cardamom, stood at 3,795 tonnes that earned a foreign exchange pegged at ₹498 crore.

However, large cardamom’s export value surged substantially to ₹84.03 crore compared to ₹79.61 crore.

Ginger, nutmeg and mace, fennel, fenugreek, garlic, celery and other seed spices (mustard, aniseed, bishops weed, dillseed, etc) also chipped in significantly in bolstering exports.

India foodgrain stocks: Is there enough buffer?

After IMD's prediction of a deficient monsoon, the Finance Minister allayed market fears about inflation by noting that there is enough stock of foodgrains to meet any contingency. Actually buffer stocks with the Food Corporation of India have been declining in recent years. But the stock is well above the minimum norms.



Surplus powder stocks to keep milk prices stable in North

As prices of staples, such as pulses rise to alarming levels alongside those of most vegetables and fruits, consumers in Northern India are likely to be spared from paying more for milk over the year.

While Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), which owns brand 'Amul', hiked rates across the segment by ₹2/litre in Gujarat earlier this month, cooperative and private dairy players in the North told *BusinessLine* that with large stocks available, a price hike can be ruled out.

"There is no reason to raise prices in the Northern market since outlook is stable. There is a slight upward trend in prices, which is natural at this time of the year given the lean season, but our margin structures are fairly protected. That's why this slight price increase of ₹1-1.50/kg over the last month or so will be absorbed," said an official at Mother Dairy.

Milk expenditure

Industry sources estimate that milk is being procured across Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, at around ₹550/kg of fat, up ₹20/kg, and buffalo milk at ₹36-37/litre.

The 'upward trend' is not likely to be passed on to consumers in these States and the Capital, which is significant since the average monthly per capita expenditure on milk is highest in the region.

Data from the 68th National Sample Survey Office's household consumer expenditure survey shows monthly expenditure on milk in both rural/urban areas was the highest in Haryana (₹460.19/₹434.20), followed by Delhi (₹342.93/₹311.88), Punjab (₹330.94/₹357.46), and Rajasthan (₹257.77/₹302.87).

The corresponding rural and urban national average was ₹116.13 and ₹186.47.

“I don't expect anyone to raise milk prices at all this fiscal. There are adequate dairy products available and no exports, there is surplus stock in the market,” said Sandeep Aggarwal, Director, SMC Foods Ltd, a part of the Madhusudan group.

Sluggish shipments

Exports have remained sluggish with global skimmed milk powder (SMP) prices remaining depressed and stagnant demand.

Prices slid to around \$2,000/tonne, compared with \$4,000-4,500 a year ago, while Indian exports, currently in the range of ₹180-210/kg, are rendered uncompetitive internationally against Australian and New Zealand variants at ₹128-140/kg.

The monsoon could be a factor said some industry players, with the deficient rain forecast likely to hit fodder prices. “It depends on the monsoon, and a proper assessment can only be made a month and a half from now. If it's poor, fodder prices will rise and that will impact milk production immediately,” said Sanjay Dhingra, Chairman and Managing Director, Kwalitiy Ltd, owner of the 'Dairy Best' brand.

Aggarwal, however, was optimistic and stated that the monsoon would not be a factor. “This is the off-season and milk will start coming in by August. Whatever deficit there is on account of the monsoon will get covered,” he said.

The Consumer Affairs Ministry data say that the average retail price of milk in Delhi and Chandigarh as of late last week has remained unchanged over the previous year at ₹38/litre, while consumers in Amritsar paid ₹40/litre through the same period.

Average price has risen marginally to ₹34/litre from ₹32 in Jaipur, and from ₹41 to ₹43/litre in Karnal.

Supply concerns lend aroma to cardamom

Cardamom prices were on the rise on fear of delayed supply following non-arrival of the South-West monsoon in Kerala's Idukki district – the main cardamom growing tract in the country.

Arrivals last week declined to around 365 tonnes from about 405 tonnes the previous week.

After mid-May there has not been any rains in the growing regions so far and such a situation could have impact on the crop, such as falling of immature capsules, etc, PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *BusinessLine*.

He said regular buyers were not active in the market. But, small dealers were actively purchasing small volumes and as a result, the entire material arrived in the market was being fully absorbed.

Fear of a fall/delay in supply in the coming weeks because of change in the weather conditions has created a bullish sentiment in the market and that in turn has pushed up the prices by around ₹30 a kg, he said.

According to Ranganathan, a dealer in Bodinayakannur, the arrivals remained squeezed and the fresh crop arrived was small in volume and of medium quality. The delay in monsoon's arrival has created a fear psychosis in the market here and that in turn has aided a price hike.

He said good quality cardamom from the new crop is expected to begin arriving in the market from end-July or early August.

Exporters continued to remain slow because of non-availability of exportable grade 7mm and above material. However, they have bought an estimated 25 tonnes of cardamom last week.

At the Cardamom Planters' Association auction held in Bodinayakannur today, a total of 17.4 tonnes cardamom arrived against 20.6 tonnes last Monday and the entire quantity was traded. The maximum price was at ₹865 a kg and the auction average increased to ₹648 afrom ₹634.47 last Monday.

The individual auction average gained last week and was vacillating between ₹630 and ₹700 a kg.

Total arrivals during the season up to June 13 stood at 20,354 tonnes (20,761 tonnes). The sales were at 19,782 tonnes and 20,047 tonnes respectively.

The auction average as on June 13 was at around ₹660 (₹720) a kg.

Prices of graded varieties (₹/kg): 8mm bold green 975-985; 7-8mm 825-850; 6-7mm 700-720; below 6 mm: 600-625.

Rainfall above normal so far, says Met Dept

Good rainfall has so far been recorded over southern peninsula, central, east and north-east India this summer with over 13 per cent above the normal limit, the Met department today said.

The country as a whole has received 69.6 mm of rainfall overall as compared to normal limit of 61.4 mm from June 1 till date. Until yesterday, the country had received 5 per cent of excess rainfall but the figure rose by 8 per cent today.

After a good spell of rains across the country, the deficit decreased to minus 1 per cent in north-west India while the peninsula recorded normal rainfall and central India registered an 18 per cent of excess precipitation than its normal limit.

The east and the north-east India continued to get excess rainfall of 22 per cent.

According to Skymet, a private forecasting agency, over the week, the South-West monsoon is likely to advance over some more parts of Gujarat, entire Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, parts of Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh this week.

First monsoon system in the Bay of Bengal is also brewing, which may cause good weather activity across the country, particularly in east and central India, the agency added.

Skymet has also given a forecast that over the first half of the week, temperatures in the plains of North India are going to rise but no heat wave is expected.

“The sky will be clear and humidity will increase. Windy conditions are also likely to prevail. However, day temperatures will remain below the 40 degrees Celsius mark and there aren’t any heatwave conditions expected.

“The hills on the other hand will enjoy pleasant weather with occasional light rain. From June 19 onwards, the winds will begin to change from northwesterlies to easterlies, leading to drop in temperatures once again. Rain and thunder shower

activity is expected during this period which is likely to spill over to the next week,” Skymet said.

“Weather activity over central India, particularly over Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra will be subdued during the first half of the week. However, during the second half of the week, fairly widespread rain is expected in the region due to the cyclonic circulation in the Bay of Bengal,” Skymet said.

Business Standard

India's cotton output may drop for 2nd straight year: USDA



India's [cotton](#) production is expected to decline for the second consecutive year to 37.5 million bales in 2015-16 marketing season, due to a likely fall in yields on account of delayed sowing, weather and low price realisation, according to USDA's latest report.

For the 2014-15 marketing season (August-July), the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has forecast cotton output to be 38 million bales while the government has projected 35.3 million bales. One bale is 170 kg of cotton.

"...Production is forecast marginally lower on reduced yields stemming from delayed sowing, weather, and price realisation vis-a-vis other crops," [USDA](#) said in its latest report.

India's cotton production is forecast at 37.5 million on 12 million harvested hectares, it said.

In Gujarat and Maharashtra, [sowing](#) has commenced, but is limited to fields with assured irrigation.

Farmers' planting decision to expand cotton acreage, according to the report, has become difficult as prices of competing crops in various states have dropped.

Farm-gate prices of competing crops such as paddy, cluster bean (guar), soybeans, maize, and sorghum have fallen on an average by 30 per cent since the start of the August 2014 marketing season, it said.

Cotton, a predominantly monsoon-season or kharif crop, is planted from the end of April through September and harvested in the fall and winter.

The Met Department has already forecast that the Southwest Monsoon is expected to be 12 per cent deficient this year.

India accounts for about a third of the global cotton area. The country's two-thirds of cotton are produced in states such as Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Odisha where much of the crop is rain-fed.

The northern zone, which consists of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, produces cotton under irrigated conditions and accounts for about 15 per cent of production.

In South, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu chip in with 30 per cent.