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THE HINDU

TNAU reintroduces old varieties of seeds

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University is reintroducing old varieties of seeds, and launching new varieties to meet farmers' demands. Vice-Chancellor K. Ramasamy told The Hindu that earlier researchers introduced new varieties by mostly considering the increase in yield. The university has now reintroduced 'Paiyur I' paddy variety for the yield, and also the straw. Because the farmers needed it to feed the cattle, he said.

The State Government giving away cattle free of cost has increased the need for fodder, and this variety comes in handy. The institution has reintroduced the 'CR 1009' variety in the Delta districts because of its ability to withstand inundation during monsoon.

The latest releases were not just responsive to fertilizer alone, Mr. Ramasamy said. Farmers needed seeds that were drought resistant, pest resistant, and adaptable to different agro-climatic conditions.

The university was taking up seed processing to ensure that the new varieties met the farmers' expectation.

Another aspect that the university has been concentrating on was the synchronised maturity where the crops mature at the same time, enabling farmers to save on labour, and harvesting cost. This applies to pulses too.

In conducting the trials, the university was taking farmers' as partners as it wants them to try the new varieties. It supports them with a buy-back system wherein the university will buy the seeds from farmers.

This way, the university will be able to cut down the time taken to introduce new varieties from seven to five years, he said.

***University to buy back seeds from farmers
It will help introduce new varieties too***

Enriched soil enhances productivity

An enriched soil has withstood the vagaries of monsoon and a depleting ground water table to provide an enviable sugarcane yield in a farm in Puliangudi of Tirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu. Sustained attention given to soil health using organic inputs has enabled V. Antonisamy reap 65 to 70 tonnes of sugarcane per acre in his farm.

Explaining the methodology adopted to enhance soil quality, Mr. Antonisamy, who has been raising sugarcane in the same field for the past 23 years, says that trenches of 1.5 foot depth are created in the field soon after harvest and filled with organic waste. The sugarcane shoots are cut to uniform size and water is supplied to the compost through drips.



Legume seeds are planted along the margins of the trench at the rate of 30 kg per acre and watered for 45 days using drips. The legumes grow to a height of around four feet and prevent sunlight falling on the shoots, stunting their growth. Besides absorbing nitrogen in their roots, the legumes also bring down the temperature by 4 degree Celsius, says Mr. Antonisamy. “Low temperature and high humidity prevent the entry of maggots. This obviates the need to use pesticides.”

One-time weeding is adopted to remove the legumes, which are then mixed with soil and placed supportive of the bundles along the row of sugarcane shoots. The mix of soil with legume creates an atmosphere conducive for the growth of micro nutrients. Water is again supplied through drips to strengthen the support provided by uprooted legumes. Now, sunlight falls on the sugarcane, facilitating its growth.

After 120 days, the hanging leaves are removed from sugarcane and left to compost near the root. Besides retaining soil’s moisture, this practice also enhances multiplication of micro organisms. The internode of the sugarcane has an average length of 15 cm and the sheath is not rough.

Mr. Antonisamy does not claim that no pest attacks his farm. “The good ones take care of the bad ones. For example, the Mealybug is eaten by another pest which is not harmful. But the robust nature of the crop has ensured that there is no migration of pests or insects from abutting farms.” A normal sugarcane in the farm has over 20 internodes and weighs

three kg. It grows up to 10 feet in height. Ten shoots grow in a pit, separated by two feet from the other. The airy aisles enable a person to walk in between rows of sugarcane without any hindrance. The difference in temperature in the aisle and outside is tangible. The drippers ensure that the soil is always kept wet.

Mr. Antonisamy does not sell the cane to sugar mills but produces jaggery for sale through various outlets, including the ones dealing with organic products. Soil and jaggery samples are sent to laboratories in various places for testing annually. Results from the tests conducted at the Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysuru, and Shri M. M. Murugappa Chettiar Research Centre, Chennai, show a higher content of soil organic carbon, against the desired level of one to 1.5 per cent, and 80 per cent of sucrose content in sugarcane. The results say that presence of metals and organochlorine pesticides are below detectable limit and coliform or yeast is zero.

Endorsing Mr. Antonisamy's claim of higher yield, the Joint Director of Agriculture, Tirunelveli, C. Chandrasekaran, says that it is possible by enhancing the soil's carbon-nitrogen ratio through use of the right agents. According to him, the maximum yield of sugarcane in the district reported elsewhere is 35 tonnes per acre. The Department of Agriculture rewards and recognises record yield in paddy, millets and oilseeds but that is not the case with sugarcane. P. Gomathinayagam, a recipient of Srishti Samman and an expert in natural farming, cautions that higher productivity and income could be achieved only through sustained hard work over a period. Beginners should have an alternative source of income before plunging into organic or natural farming.

More details can be had from Mr. V. Antonisamy at 53 Chinthamani, Puliangudi, Tirunelveli District, 627 855. Phone: 9942979141.

Farmer reaps rich with greenhouse technology



A farmer of Erakudi in Uppliyapuram block has shown the way in increasing cultivation using greenhouse. She has been cultivating 1,000 square metre area under the greenhouse concept.

N. Vijayasanthi, the farmer, had set up the greenhouse at an estimate of Rs.11 lakh which included a subsidy of Rs. 4.50 lakh. “It was a great opportunity for us in utilising the greenhouse concept with the cooperation of the Horticulture Department,” she says.

She said that the poly greenhouse has been enabling her to get more yield through good cultivation practices. “Free from pest attack, insects and diseases, the crop is well protected,” she said. She has cultivated tomato and planted 2,000 seedlings, with a duration of 70 days, in the house. She is confident of reaping at least one tonne in every three days once the crop is ready for harvest. “An assured market for tomato in the local area has been an encouraging factor for me,” she said.

Ms. Vijayasanthi said that the poly greenhouse has been facilitating a steady growth with an assured harvest. “Tomato is prone to damage during heavy rain but the greenhouse protects it from such loss,” she explains. Further, the growth of weeds is controlled to a great extent while economy is assured in using fertiliser.

The family members are involved in adopting latest technique. Her husband, N. Narendran, said crop rotation technique was the secret of their success. Before raising tomato, they had cultivated ‘kudamilagai’ – (capsium) both red and yellow. “The shift to tomato is bound to enrich the texture of soil,” he said. They have planned to cultivate rose as the third crop.

Nellai to get 2,480 green houses

The State Government has sanctioned 2,480 solar-powered green houses to be built for the poor of the district during the current fiscal, District Collector M. Karunakaran has said.

Speaking to reporters here on Tuesday after inspecting the ongoing development works around Maanur, Azhagiypandiapuram, Melaneelithanallur and Sankarankovil areas, Dr. Karunakaran said the project on Chief Minister’s solar-powered green houses, which were being built with the government’s assistance, was progressing well and hence the Tamil Nadu Government had approved the district’s good work by sanctioning 2,480 green houses for the current fiscal.

The District Rural Development Agency, which was constructing the houses, had so far built 27,426 green houses for the rural poor and the houses for Sri Lankan refugees under Indra Awas Yojana at the cost of Rs. 370.78 crore since 2011.

Moreover, administrative sanction for constructing 5,000 houses in the villages around Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project on an outlay of Rs. 150 crore had been given.

“The sale of highly subsidized Amma Cement to help the poor has evoked good response as 1,30,800 cement bags have been sold in the district,” he said.

As many as 415 road works had been completed on an outlay of Rs. 126.34 crore over the past four years and Rs. 110.42 crore had been spent for strengthening 8,582 infrastructure facilities in rural areas under the Tamil Nadu Village Habitations Improvement (THAI) Scheme since 2011.

“We’re according highest priority for the construction of individual household toilets in every house to completely wipe out the practice of open defecation. Toilets have been built in 86,248 houses in the district over the past four years at a cost of Rs. 100.07 crore,” said Dr. Karunakaran, who gave away cheques for Rs. 5,000 under ‘Puthu Vaazhvu’ scheme to 750 beneficiaries on Tuesday for toilet construction in addition to the State Government’s assistance of Rs. 12,000.

Construction of school buildings had been completed on an outlay of Rs. 7.18 crore and another Rs. 20.60 crore had been spent for renovating 3,887 government buildings.

“We’ve successfully persuaded the MPs and the MLAs to release funds to the tune of Rs. 357 crore from their constituency or local area development scheme fund for undertaking various development works,” informed the Collector. “Precisely, we’ve completed 1,53,775 works on an outlay of Rs. 1,625.26 crore between 2011-2012 and 2015-2016”.

“Sale of Amma Cement to help the poor has evoked good response as 1,30,800 cement bags have been sold”

Two-day jackfruit mela from Saturday



Farmers will be given information on jackfruit cultivation.—File PHOTO: H.S. MANJUNATH

A two-day jackfruit mela will begin at Krishi Vigyan Kendra on the premises of College of Fisheries, Yekkur, from June 27.

There will be demonstrations on making food items from jackfruit. Value-added products of jackfruit, saplings of jackfruit and varieties of jackfruit will be on sale.

The mela would begin from 11 a.m. on Saturday. Srinath Dixit, regional project director, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Hebbal, Bengaluru, will release a handbook.

S.D. Sampath Samrajya, president, Krishik Samaj, Mangaluru will deliver the key-note address. Raviraj Shetty, Assistant Professor, College of Horticulture, Moodigere, would speak on future for jackfruit and opportunities for marketing at 2 p.m.

Ravi Kumar, secretary, Halasu Belegarara Sangha, Toobugere, Doddaballapur, will speak on activities of jackfruit farmers' associations.

The demonstration of jackfruit food products will be held on Sunday in the forenoon. Farmers will be given information on jackfruit cultivation, a release said.

It will be held at Krishi Vigyan Kendra on the premises of College of Fisheries, Yekkur

Cuts to Food Act

Biraj Patnaik's observations on the procurement scam in Chhattisgarh and the removal of pulses from the PDS are worrisome, as is the cut in Centrally sponsored schemes ("[Cutting the Food Act to the bone](#)", June 24). However, my criticism is: Centrally sponsored schemes are being wound up precisely to give States flexibility to spend more money in an effective manner.

One cannot look at the fund cut alone and complain, but wait to see what States do with higher fiscal transfers; this is also because agriculture and health are state subjects. Restricting MSP can cause shortage, but the writer does not specify which crops. What if they were for bumper crops over the last few years which are now rotting in FCI godowns? Half-baked knowledge does not make good criticism.

To say that winding up AAY is akin to insulting Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee is a strange argument. Are we to pursue with welfare schemes no matter how broken they are, just because a beloved *neta* launched them? While blaming Prime Minister Narendra Modi for being authoritarian, analysts such as Mr. Patnaik are often quick to change their stand when he gives more leeway to States that are reluctant to implement the NFSA. This leeway is welcome because NFSA is largely unworkable, focusses on the wrong goods and will not eliminate nutrition problems which have more to do with sanitation and pulses or vegetable scarcity.

Accent on increasing pulses production

The seeds sown by the M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation over the last one year are now bearing fruits. In 2016, most of the panchayats in Tamil Nadu will become pulses panchayat, Dr. Swaminathan said.

The work done by the Foundation at Edaiyapatti panchayat in Pudukottai has been effective and now this place is being christened as 'Pulses Panchayat'. "Pulses do not require much water so we have now started pleading with panchayats to increase their production through community involvement," Dr. Swaminathan said while delivering his address on 'Importance of sustainable modern agricultural practices for making India a Food Sovereign Country' at an event organised by the Andhra Chamber of Commerce.

The year 2016 has been declared as International Year of Pulses, he said, adding that Tamil Nadu already has large number of pulses like toor dhal. Currently, India imports four million tones of pulses.

Dr. Swaminathan also pointed out food safety has now become important after the Maggie episode. "People are becoming conscious about their health," he said. V. L. Indira Dutt, President of the Andhra Chamber of Commerce, said: "A more scientific farm policy is the need of the hour to determine proper usage of available resources like land and waterto produce the required quantum of agro products on an annual basis."

"Guaranteed purchase policy as practiced in the western countries to buy the produce from the farmers at scientifically determined prices would also go a long way in enhancing agricultural production in India," she said.

TNAU students bag rank in exam for admission to doctoral programmes

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University students M. Mallik (Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics) and Rahul Nashipudi (Department of Floriculture and Landscape Gardening) have secured the first rank in the All-India Examination for admission to the doctoral programmes of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research and State Agricultural Universities for 2015-16, says a press release from the institution.

Categories

Twenty-six students from the university have been selected under various categories, the release adds.

Nagapattinam farmers get first phase of kuruvai package

A sum of Rs. 75 lakh has been sanctioned to the district in the first phase of kuruvai package and the amount is being credited to the savings accounts of farmers through the primary agricultural banks, said S. Palanisamy, Collector.

Addressing farmers at Thalai Gnaiyiru where he inspected the cultivation of kuruvai crop, the Collector said it had been planed to bring 24,000 acres of land under kuruvai cultivation in various parts of the district in the first phase.

He said the district administration had planned to introduce "System of Rice Intensification" method to farmers so as to ensure maximum use of available waters for

irrigation. He appealed to farmers of Vennar to go in for pulses or green manure, as “kuruvai” could not be raised in the area due to poor groundwater storage.

The Collector said Rs. 10.49 crore had been allocated to the district under the kuruvai package. The district administration has set up a cell for extending adequate assistance to farmers.

Those in need of any machinery for transplanting the nurseries or seeds could contact the cell by dialling 04365-253096 or 73730-88006, he said. .

Rs. 10.49 crore has been allocated to the district under the package.

557 hectares under kuruvai cultivation at Ambagarathur

A total of 557 hectares has been brought under kuruvai cultivation in the district during the current season and a good part of the area is located in Ambagarathur commune, according to official sources.

Farmers have raised the crop using the community borewell, because of non-discharge of waters from the Mettur dam for the current season, sources said.

Farmers have raised 'PKM 9' variety on 503.81 hectares, ADT 45 in 31.63 hectares, and ADT 43nin 22.12 hectares.

While Ambagarathur accounts for a large area under “kuruvai” cultivation, the crop has been raised in Nedungadu and Tirunallar areas.

The Agriculture Department has been sanctioning subsidised seeds at the rate of Rs. 10 a kg to farmers under the Crop Protection Technology scheme.

***The crop has been raised in Nedungadu and Tirunallar areas
Subsidised seeds being given at the rate of Rs. 10 a kg***

38 seed villages to come up in Tirupur

To promote multiplication of quality seeds

The Department of Agriculture is all set to constitute 38 ‘seed villages’ in the district to promote multiplication of seeds.

Under the project, 120 tonnes of high yielding seeds of paddy, millets, pulses, and oil seeds will be distributed at subsidised rates to farmers.

The seeds would either be sown for raising crops, or used to multiply them as certified seeds.

The seed villages will come up where there is irrigation facility, and the climate is conducive to raise the crop for more than one season.

Self sufficiency

“The seed village will ensure self sufficiency in production and distribution of good quality seeds. It can help achieve an increase in the yield by around 15 per cent,” said Joint Director of Agriculture R. Kanagasabai.

The department has earmarked Rs. 21.2 lakh towards subsidising the cost of seeds. About 11 tonnes of foundation seeds of paddy, and pulses will be given to farmers.

“Subsidies at the rate of Rs. 10 a kg for paddy seeds, and Rs. 15 a kg for pulses will be borne by the department,” said Mr. Kanagasabai.

Similarly, the subsidy for certified seeds of paddy, millets, pulses, and oil seeds are fixed at different slabs.

The farmers, who are to be involved in this venture, will be given training during the time of sowing, flowering, and harvesting.

‘Sowing complete on 20 p.c. of targeted area in Kalaburagi district’

Despite a shortfall in rain, farmers in Kalaburagi district have completed sowing on 20 per cent of the targeted 5.7 lakh hectares, according to Mohammad Jilani Mokashi, Joint Director of Agriculture.

Participating in the quarterly vigilance committee review meeting here on Wednesday, he said that the rain was not widespread and there was a 27 per cent shortfall. While taluks like Chincholi, Sedam and Chitapur received moderate to good rainfall, there was a severe shortfall in Jewargi, Afzalpur and Kalaburagi. Sowing had started in Chincholi, Sedam and Chitapur and it was yet to pick up in Jewargi, Afzalpur, Aland and Kalaburgi taluks.

The former Union Minister M. Mallikarjun Kharge, who was presiding over the meeting, wanted to know the contingency plans if the same situation continued and also wanted to know the availability of seeds and fertilizer.

Mr. Mokashi said there was no shortage of seeds or fertilizer and there was enough stock to meet the demand.

Mr. Kharge expressed surprise over the Agriculture Department sending seeds for quality testing at a laboratory at Gangavati in Koppal district and spending Rs. 15 lakh for the purpose.

Regional Commissioner Aditya Amlan Biswas, who is also the secretary of the Hyderabad Karnataka Region Development Board (HKRDB), said the board was ready

to sanction Rs. 20 lakh for the laboratory in Kalaburagi city and asked the Agriculture Department to submit a proposal.

No shortage of seeds or fertilizer: official

Kharge criticises decline in lending to agriculture

The former Union Minister and Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha M. Mallikarjun Kharge has expressed displeasure over the decline in priority sector lending by banks and the abnormal increase in lending to the non-priority sector in 2014-15 compared with the previous year.

Presiding over the quarterly vigilance committee review meeting here on Wednesday, he said while the advances made to housing and education sectors falling under the priority sector had come down from Rs. 763 crore in 2013-14 to Rs. 699 crore in 2014-15, the increase in advances made to the agriculture sector was only notional. The agriculture advances had gone up from Rs. 3,315 crore in 2013-14 to Rs. 3,362 crore in 2014-15, Mr. Kharge said, and added that the increase was only notional if the inflation was taken into consideration. It included the re-conversion of existing loans and banks had also not provided details of the fresh loans extended to the farming sector in 2014-15.

Mr. Kharge said the failure to increase lending to the agriculture sector would have a cascading effect on the rural economy and have a disastrous effect on agriculture production too. The lead bank officers, who were present, had no answers to the questions of Mr. Kharge and other MLAs on why there was a reduction in housing and education loans. However, they said that steps would be initiated to increase the lending for agriculture and other priority sectors this year.

Minister of State for Medical Education Sharanprakash Patil did not agree with the figures provided by the lead bank officials about the opening of bank accounts under the Prime Minister Jan Dhan Yojna and said the total number of no-frills accounts also included the accounts opened for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Act earlier.

Farmers approaching private lenders for loans

With the commencement of the rainy season, farmers are bracing up by completing tilling of their land .

However, the disbursement of loans by banks has not yet begun and is expected to take some more time due to various reasons, including the current auditing of loan accounts by senior officials. On the other hand, the district has received an amount of Rs. 241.57 crore as half payment of the second instalment of loan waiver as promised by the State government. The amount is expected to be credited to the respective banks by Thursday.

According to sources, it would take another five days for the banks to commence the loan disbursement for the farmers whose loan waiver was promised by the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) during the elections.

Meanwhile, as there is no alternative, the farmers are approaching private money lenders for loans as they have to start farming activity. “The interest rates charged by money lenders are very high ranging from Rs. 3 to Rs. 5 per Rs. 100 every month. Another interesting factor is that even the seeds and fertilizer shop owners are offering them loan without charging now.

They would charge both principal and interest after the harvest of crop. The traders are having two types of advantages in the process. They would get their product sold and also get an interest on the business turnover,” said K Narasimha Rama Sharma, a farmer from Ismailkhanpet.

However, the banks are doing regular business with farmers who took loans on their own and are not linked to the loan waiver scheme. Loans are being extended to them.

The authorities put Rs. 1,997.25 crore as agriculture loan target for the current financial year, of which Rs. 1,248 crore would be extended to farmers for Kharif and Rs.748 crore for Rabi. About four lakh farmers are expected to get benefitted by the crop loan.

60+ Vayadhinile!





Ophthalmologist Dr.G. Natchiar and educationist Premalatha Panneerselvam are less known for their green house revolution.

Some films inspire us to go the distance. The Malayalam movie *How Old Are You* and its Tamil remake *36 Vayadhinile* were liked by people not only because they were comeback films of Manju Warrier and Jyothika but also because it helped people to change the way they look at things. In the film, the protagonist finds her niche and respect in her family and society after she successfully meets a challenging order of supplying organic vegetables to a marriage party. When celebrities on or off screen boost an idea, they inspire people and often set off a transformation.

But for Dr.G.Natchiar, Director Emeritus at Aravind Eye Care Systems and Mrs.Premalatha Panneerselvam, the founder of Mahatma group of schools in Madurai, taking up farming was a dream long nurtured and they would certainly love more people to know and see their lush biodynamic farms – a result of sheer passion and labour of years. They are Madurai's stars for whom life has come full circle because both belong to agricultural families.

"I am back to my roots, you will find me less in the hospital now," laughs Dr.Natchiar, who after many debates with the family earmarked two acres for organic gardening within the Aurolab campus, a state-of-the-art products manufacturing facility of AECS at Veerapanchan. The year was 2005.

"I had no scientific training but followed my instincts and interest and started planting a variety of trees," she says. Today, her family, staff, friends and visitors to Aurolab marvel at her "blossoming property" spread over 70 acres now and buzzing with butterflies and birds.

As we walk around the coconut, banana and mango orchards, the aroma garden with every type of jasmine, the organic garden of champa in 30 different colours and endless

fields of vegetables, fruits and grains, Dr.Natchiar shares how creating, running and maintaining a farm is a lifestyle.

Unless she is travelling, Dr.Natchiar, is at the Aurofarm everyday at 8.30 a.m. to oversee the requirements of her plants – fondly she calls them babies – and the dozen permanent farmers whom she has hired and the other daily wagers who come depending on the load of work. “After taking a round, I assign them the day’s task,” she says with pride reflecting her intense love for what she enjoys doing the most -- gardening and farming.

She zips around on her battery-operated two-wheeler and inspects every field personally. “Everything produced here is 100 per cent organic and the yield caters to about 40 per cent requirement of our hospital and staff canteens,” she informs, and asserts, “I am into this not for selling the produce and making money. I want more people to learn about growing strategies and eat organic.”

It was only after attending series of workshops, interacting with local farmers and researching on eco-friendly farming techniques that Dr.Natchiar could initiate a system that is regenerative to the soil, flora and fauna that are part of the farm ecosystem and the benefactors of the food grown here. “I have learnt from mistakes and now I understand every plant’s requirements and how and why business models should not be compared to farming models,” she says of organic farming still not becoming a financially viable option.

For Dr.Natchiar it is purely a heart warming relationship between her and nature. Farming makes my heart sing and I am focussing all my energy on it now, she says. “All you need is planning and hard work,” she says.

Likewise, no matter howsoever much tired she is after the day’s or week’s work, Premalatha Panneerselvam finds farming cool and spends all her evenings and Sundays in her organic farm adjoining her school’s residential campus at Alagar Koil. “I find my inner peace here, she says, taking me to her favourite spot under a banyan tree, one of the seven trees that stood tall among the shrubs and bushes on the 50-odd acres she bought a quarter Century ago in Ayathampatti village.

We had to accommodate our growing number of students and planned a residential school for them here at the foothills. The land was strewn with rocks, stones and pebbles and we had to clear the area to raise our buildings. About 15 acres was set aside for farming and for the past eight years Premalatha has been growing a variety of plants using only organic practices. The monthly yield of fruits and vegetables from the farm not only meets the demand of all the school canteens but also saves her an expense of nearly Rs.One lakh every month. Some produce is also in excess which we sell at a discount to our teachers and other staff or in the market at a nominal rate,” she says.

There is an indescribable happiness in seeing your plants grow and flower. To feel the texture of the fruits and vegetables is a different kind of joy, says Premalatha as we walk through her multiple gardens looking at the bounty. Rows of leafy plants growing in

orderly abundance reveal the wealth that can only be measured by physical labour of clearing, planting and harvesting and the physical growth of the fauna. Her zero-budget farming with home-grown vermicomposting and bio-pesticides is seductive.

Premalatha has been regularly reading about and practicing G.Nammazhvar's agro-techniques. "With professionals like us having the wisdom and knowledge base, passion is good enough to turn around such zero-budget farming," she says. She also understands farming, leave alone organic, many not be an easy choice for many. But hopes and advocates that more people get motivated and start doing it within their home compounds, in their small balconies or terraces, kitchen gardens or backyards, sufficient for their family's needs.

Both Dr.Natchiar and Premalatha share a vision for a sustainable food system. That is, the food we eat should be fresh, nutritious and taste delicious and should be grown in harmony with nature. It is this thinking that makes them the true 'FarmHers' belonging to a period when organic farming was hardly considered an option and even less talked about.

Farm facts:

"I proved myself as an ophthalmologist but never felt proud as one. But now at my Aurofarm I feel very proud each time my plants produce something. I can show off as a farmer now." Dr.G.Natchiar

At Aurofarm you will find over 10,000 trees including 450 mango trees, 300 coconut trees, tamarind, coriander, curry leaves, timber and almond trees; Vegetables such as lady's finger, brinjal, cluster beans, bitter, bottle and snake gourd, pumpkin, spinach; Fruits such as black and goose berries, sapota, banana; Flowers including jasmine, manoranjitam, mullai, parijatam, bougainvillea, oleander; Paddy fields that yield 200 bags of rice every year. The farm is fenced by mehndi trees about 20 acres are fed by the Dewatts system that is 51,000 litres of waste water from the kitchen, staff quarters and washrooms are treated for use in the fields, water from the Aurolab is also recycled besides the usage of ground water. Another highlight at the Aurofarm is the 20 feet deep rain water fed quarry used for fish breeding.

"If I had not started a school, I would have surely done farming. I want to turn green ideas into meaningful action for the larger benefit of all". Premalatha Panneerselvam.

The Mahatma-Azhagar campus farm is fenced with teak wood trees all around and has over 200 mango trees, 400 coconut trees besides several other flowering and locally grown trees, banana, papaya, gooseberry, jackfruit, sapota, custard apple, lemon and neem trees. Spinach, tomatoes, brinjal, carrot, drumstick, cluster beans, lady's finger, groundnut, guava, custard apple are grown in abundance. Seed dispersal, multiple-cropping, drip irrigation practiced at the farm that also boasts of a small poultry and six milching cows. Apart from the two-dozen farmers working here, ten labourers are

exclusively deployed to clear the land of stones regularly. Given the location of the site at the foothills, every spell of rain leads to soil erosion.

Another record jump in Siruvani level

For the second day on Wednesday, the water level in the Siruvani Reservoir rose sharply to stand at 27.06 feet. The full reservoir level is 49.50 feet. According to sources in the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board and the Coimbatore Corporation, from the Tuesday morning's level of 17.88 feet, the level rose to 27.06 feet, an increase of 9.18 feet. Tuesday morning's water level was an increase of 8.58 ft.

The Wednesday's increase was the result of good rain in catchment areas.

Rain lashes many parts of Kanyakumari

Flood alert for villages near Kuzhithurai Tamirabharani river

Rain lashed many parts of Kanyakumari district on Tuesday night and on Wednesday morning.

Nagercoil town experienced heavy rain for 45 minutes, which left the main thoroughfares water-logged, affecting free flow of traffic on Wednesday morning. Schoolchildren and office-goers were the worst affected.

Balamore, a hilly region, recorded the maximum rainfall of 33.5 mm till 8.30 a.m.

Aralvoimozhi, Thovalai, Kozhiporvilai, Kurunthancode, Colachel, Eraniel, Anaikkidangu, Mayiladi, Kottaram and Kannimar experienced intermittent rain on Tuesday night.

Due to heavy rain in the hills and catchment areas of waterbodies, the inflow into Perunchani dam increased to 1,823 cusecs and the level stood at 75.75 feet against its total height of 77 feet on Wednesday.

A quantum of 300 cusecs was released through sluice gates and excess water of 2,000 cusecs into Kuzhithurai Tamirabharani river.

The authorities issued a flood alert to the people living in villages along the river course. The people were asked to move to safety, PWD sources said.

Officials are closely monitoring the situation in Perunchani dam, and bathing was banned in Tirparappu waterfalls.

The inflow into Pechiparai dam was 1,073 cusecs. The water level was 42 feet (total height 48 feet).

The level in Chitrar I was 17.15 feet (total height 18 feet).

Valliyar, Paraliar and Suchindram Pazhayar rivers are brimming.

Rainfall recorded at various places in the district is (in mm): Pechiparai – 22.8, Perunchani – 24.6, Chitrar I – 18, Chitrar II – 19.4, Eraniel – 11.2, Anaikkidangu – 9.2, Colachel – 18.2, Kurunthancode – 9.6, Adayamadai – 4, Kozhiporvilai – 10.4, Puthananai – 25, Nagercoil – 8.8, Boothapandi – 5.2, Surulode – 15, Kannimar – 18.5, Mayiladi – 9.2 and Mukkadal – 20.

El Nino may have only a minor impact

LESSONS FROM THE PAST

The last four El Nino years saw farm output fall by an average of 8% across all major crops

MAJOR PRODUCTION LOSS

➔ **Groundnut:** fell by an average of **33%**

INCREASE IN PRODUCTION

➔ **Cotton:** Long sowing time led to **rise in acreage**

➔ **Sugarcane:** recorded average increase of **20.5%** as **90% to 95%** of area is under irrigation

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

2014-15: 199.9 million tonnes

2015-16: 190.9 million tonnes (4.5% fall in output)



Paddy, maize, groundnut, and castor likely to see low yield, says report.

This year's farm output may fall by only around 4.5 per cent despite the projection of a strong El Nino year by the India Meteorological Department, says a recent report. During the previous El Nino years, farm production fell by an average of 8% across all major crops. A normal monsoon, however, could lead to a 0.6-% growth, the report says.

The report by brokerage house Edelweiss has found that over the last four El Nino years (1997, 2002, 2006 and 2009), production fell by an average of 8 per cent compared to the production in the previous years, across all major crops. However, some crops suffered more than others.

“Major production loss is observed in groundnut followed by moong, castor seed, bajra, sesame, jowar, maize and paddy. The increase in production of cotton is mainly attributed to an increase in acreage due to its long sowing window as compared to other crops. Sugarcane has done well even during El Nino years as almost 90-95% of cane area is under irrigation across the country,” the report says.

Groundnut production, for example, fell by an average of 33 per cent across these four years compared to sugar, which saw an average increase of 20.5 per cent.

However, this year will not see such a drastic fall in production despite it being subject to a strong El Nino effect, according to the report. The report forecasts 2015-16 agricultural production to be 190.9 million tonnes compared to 199.9 million tonnes in 2014-15, a fall of 4.5 per cent. Here, too, some crops will suffer more than others.

Sugarcane not rain-dependent

“In the case of a below-normal monsoon we would be forced to downsize our production prospects. Cotton has an advantage of the longest sowing window, sugarcane is hardly rain dependent as most of it is grown in irrigated regions and urad will do well in terms of yields with lower rains. However, crops like paddy, maize, groundnut, guar, castor, tur, moong and bajra would suffer due to lower yields,” the report says.

While the IMD has forecast a deficient monsoon, private weather company Skymet has maintained that this year will see a normal monsoon. June so far has seen 16 per cent more rainfall than the average. In the event of a normal monsoon, the report predicts an average increase of 0.6 per cent overall, with only castor seed, rice, bajra and sugar seeing a fall in production levels.

However, the report pegs this as more to do with acreage under these crops rather than productivity levels. “Acreage under paddy, bajra and castor are likely to shrink this year. Higher returns from other competitive crops will keep the trend of shifting acreage from bajra to other crops ongoing for this season as well. While, poor returns fetched from castor last year will result in a drop in acreage,” the report says

Maharashtra receives 80% of month's rainfall at onset

The ambitious 'Jalyukta Shivar' scheme, meant for water conservation, reaps good result, agriculture official asserts.

Monsoon has set in satisfactorily in Maharashtra, with the state receiving 80 per cent rainfall of the month, at the very beginning of the season.

An official at agriculture department said the onset of monsoon has brought cheer, amid predictions of inadequate rainfall this year.

“Some parts of Marathwada are yet to receive rains, but farmers are hopeful to have good crops this year. The state government is also glad to see the ambitious 'Jalyukta Shivar' scheme, meant for water conservation, getting good result,” the official said.

According to government figures, the total rainfall so far was 178 mm, which is 80 per cent of the average rainfall in the month of June.

Apart from Mumbai and Konkan regions, western Maharashtra and Vidarbha have received good downpour. Areas in Marathwada like Beed, Latur, Osmanabad are yet to receive satisfactory rainfall in the season.

“It is a good beginning for the season. Mumbai, Vidarbha is receiving good rains. However, the Marathwada region needs to catch up a little more,” Transport Minister Diwakar Raote, who hails from Marathwada, said.

The minister further said the farmers have started sowing and are hoping better crops this time after drought for four consecutive years.

“The state has received 109 per cent of normal rainfall in the season. Last year around this time, the percentage was as low as 31. We are hoping farmers will benefit from the timely rain. Though the predictions for this year were worrying, figures indicate a good beginning,” he said.

A CMO official said the ‘*Jalyukta Shivar*’ scheme is working very well, and that the check dams are getting filled with rain water. This will also recharge the ground water level. “We are aiming to include more villages under the scheme next year,” he added.

Farmers urged to get their irrigation pumpsets regularised

B.Y. Raghavendra, Shikaripur MLA, has called upon the farmers to get their irrigation pumpsets regularised.

Inaugurating a programme organised by the Mangaluru Electricity Supply Company (Mescom) at Shikaripur on Tuesday to distribute compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) bulbs for below the poverty line families under the “Belaku” scheme for free, he said, there were more than 8,000 unauthorised irrigation pumpsets in Shivamogga district. Regularisation of pumpsets would help Mescom mobilise resources and strengthen the power supply infrastructure, extend quality service and prevent electricity mishaps.

Mr. Raghavendra stressed the need to create awareness among farmers about the importance of getting unauthorised pumpsets regularised. It was unfortunate that the incidents of loss of life and property due to electrocution were happening in rural areas very frequently. The Mescom officials should make use of advanced technology to ensure safety of electricity consumers. Usage of CFL bulbs, which were energy-efficient, should be popularised, he said.

Regional Engineer of Mescom Mujeeb Ahmed was present.

Monsoon off to good start in Maharashtra, sowing of crops up 64% in a week

Sowing of crops in Maharashtra has increased nearly 64 per cent in the past week on the back of healthy rains across the state.

Rainfall figures updated on Wednesday show that nearly two-thirds of the state has recorded more than normal rainfall. With heavy showers drenching some of the driest regions in the state, sowing of kharif crops including cotton and soyabean has picked up. Agriculture Minister Eknath Khadse claimed on Wednesday that sowing on 70 per cent area marked for kharif planting (142.05 lakh hectares) for 2015-16 was complete.

An earlier report submitted to the government on June 19 had shown that sowing was done on 6 per cent of the targeted area.

“The sowing so far has been encouraging,” the minister said. “Sowing of almost all cereals, pulses, and food grains with the exception of rice has picked up immensely,” Khadse said.

Figures reveal that 239 out of 355 talukas in Maharashtra had so far witnessed above average rains. In another 61 talukas, the monsoon had so far clocked 75-100 per cent of the average. In the remaining 14 talukas, the rainfall recorded was 25-50 per cent of the average.

Good rains are also bringing dividends for the government’s pet water conservation initiative, Jalyukt Shivar.

Crop failures because of successive droughts and unseasonal rains have deepened the agrarian crisis in Maharashtra, which has already witnessed the highest number of farmer suicides in the country.

State Chief Secretary Swadhin Kshatriya had earlier said that good rainfall in the first leg of the season had raised hopes of a good monsoon.

The Indian Meteorological Department is, however, yet to upgrade its monsoon forecast, which stands at 88 per cent, which indicates a poor monsoon.

Despite the rainfall, the government will continue with its plans to allow cloud seeding experiments, Khadse said. Two firms have shown interest in cloud seeding.

“Their bids are being examined,” the minister said. “We also have an offer from another firm that wants to use rocket launchers to induce rain on experimental basis at no cost to the government. We might allow this too. Plans for both will be finalised in two to three days.

Khadse also announced that the government will hold an “Agriculture Week” from July 1. State officials will be tasked with the responsibility of reaching out to individual farmers during the week. Replicating the [Narendra Modi](#) government’s income-based farm insurance, Khadse said the state government will pay Rs 12 per year as premium for 1.35 crore farmers.

Khadse warns banks over crop loans

Mumbai: Agriculture Minister Eknath Khadse lashed out at nationalised banks for being “lax” on the issue of loans to stressed farmers. Facing flak over rising farmer suicides, the Fadnavis government had earlier announced restructuring of farm loans for a five-year period.

But Khadse said that nationalised banks were still disinterested in the initiative. “Many of the state cooperative banks are facing financial crisis. The Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB), the apex cooperative bank in the state, has sought government guarantee against the restructured farm loans. Most nationalised banks have been uncooperative so far,” Khadse said.

Claiming that he had already had a word with Union Finance Minister [Arun Jaitley](#) in this context, Khadse indicated that the state government might even file criminal complaints against such banks. On Wednesday evening, a meeting of bankers was held to discuss the farm crisis, which was chaired by CM Devendra Fadnavis and attended by Khadse.

Maharashtra receives bountiful rains, monsoon sets in

With bountiful rains, monsoon has set in satisfactorily in Maharashtra with the state receiving 80 per cent rainfall of the month at the very beginning of the season.

An official at agriculture department said the onset of monsoon has brought cheer amid predictions that it was going to be inadequate this year.

“Some parts of Marathwada are yet to receive rains but farmers are hopeful to have good crops this year. The state government is also glad to see the ambitious Jalyukta Shivar scheme, meant for water conservation, getting good result,” the official said.

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The minister further said the farmers have started sowing and are hoping better crops this time after drought for four consecutive years.

State's dry region Marathwada was badly hit by farmer suicides after Vidarbha. "The state has received 109 per cent of normal rainfall in the season. Last year around this time, the percentage was as low as 31. We are hoping farmers will benefit from the timely rain. Though the prediction this year was worrisome, figures indicate a good beginning," the official said.

A CMO official said the 'Jalyukta Shivar' scheme is working very well, adding, "the check dams are filling with rain water and other water resources created. This will also recharge the ground water level. We are aiming to include more villages under the scheme next year."

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Oslo creates world's first 'highway' to protect endangered bees



From flower emblazoned cemeteries to rooftop gardens and balconies, Norway's capital Oslo is creating a "bee highway" to protect endangered pollinators essential to food production.

"We are constantly reshaping our environment to meet our needs, forgetting that other species also live in it," Agnes Lyche Melvaer, head of the Bybi, an environmental group supporting urban bees, which is leading the project.

"To correct that we need to return places to them to live and feed," she explained, sitting on a bench in a lush city centre square bursting with early Nordic summer growth.

With its sunflowers, marigolds and other nectar-bearing flowers planted by bee-loving locals and school children, Abel's Garden was until recently covered only in grass but is now a floral "feeding station" for bees.

Oslo's "bee highway" aims to give the insects a safe passage through the city, lined with relays providing food and shelter -- the first such system in the world, according to the organisers.

Participants in the project -- state bodies, companies, associations and private individuals -- are invited to post their contribution on a website www.polli.no, which maps out the bees' route across the city.

On the twelfth floor of an ultra modern office block in the capital's chic business district on the edge of Oslo fjord, a major accountancy firm has covered parts of its terrace in brightly flowering Sedum plants and two bee hives.

It houses some 45,000 worker bees, busily unaware of their smart-suited office counterparts enjoying their lunch just metres away.

"One should see it as a sign that companies are also taking responsibility for preserving biodiversity," said accountant and bee-keeping enthusiast Marie Skjelbred.

She convinced her employer to co-finance the project to the tune of 400,000 kroner (\$51,348, 46,000 euros) along with the owners of the building.

"The workers live about 60 days," she explained with a glint in her eye.

"During their lives, they don't produce more than a spoon of honey," she added, before turning to her accountancy skills to do the maths.

"If we did their job, paid at the minimum wage, a pot of honey would cost \$182,000."

Although Norwegian bees may not be as seriously threatened by intensive agriculture and pesticides as bees in the US or other European countries, a third of the country's 200 wild bee species are nonetheless considered endangered.

And that is cause for concern for humans since 30 to 40 percent of food production requires pollination, a service provided for free by the insects which according to a 2005 Franco-German study is worth an estimated 153 billion euros.

Christian Steel at the Norwegian Biodiversity Network, which brings together the country's professional and amateur biologists, supports the initiative but condemns the "short term policies" of Norwegian authorities.

"The government seems to hide behind these kinds of private initiatives, while pursuing in parallel a policy of promoting intensive agriculture which leads to the death of many bees," he lamented.

"Agriculture is completely dependent on pollinators to maintain food production just as insects are dependent on diverse agriculture to survive. It's a mutual dependence," he added.

The mass destruction of bee populations around the world has already forced farmers in the Chinese province of Sichuan to pollinate plants by hand, and in the US some farmers are left with no choice but to rent hives transported cross-country by truck to pollinate crops.

But in Abel's Garden in Oslo, Agnes Lyche Melvaer says she has faith in the "butterfly effect".

"If we manage to solve a global problem locally it's conceivable that this local solution will work elsewhere too."

Agri varsity advises coconut farmers to harvest now as prices may fall in 2 weeks

COIMBATORE: Farmers in the state have been advised to harvest and sell coconut and copra immediately since their prices are likely to fall within next two weeks.

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) has informed the farmers that coconut and copra products have already begun arriving from Kerala and will start arriving from Karnataka in July. They predict that the price of coconut will fall by 1,000 to 2000 per tonne and copra by 2 to 4 per kg in the next one month.

The prevailing price of coconut in the government regulated Avalpoondurai market is 23,000 a tonne or 13 to 14 per nut. Copra is priced at 78 to 82 per kg. According to Agro Marketing Intelligence and Business Promotion Centre (AMI & BPC) of TNAU, the prices are likely to fall to 21,000 a tonne for coconuts and 78 to 80 per kg of copra. "The fall in price is because, coconut and copra has already started arriving from Kerala," said a TNAU official.

"They will start arriving from Karanataka from next month, which will cause the prices to fall further," said a statement from the university.

They say the price of copra has already fallen from 100 to 80 per kg in the last three months because of increased availability and slugging demand for coconut oil in the market.

Tamil Nadu has topped the country in coconut production with 4.76 million tonnes last year. It is cultivated across 0.46 million hectares in the state. The coconut producing districts in the state are mainly Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Thanjavur, Dindigul, Kanyakumari, Vellore and Theni.

India is the third largest coconut producer in the world with an area of 2.14 million hectares accounting for a production of 14.91 million tonnes. Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka are the major producers of coconut contributing 83%, both in total area and production, of the country.

Nabard begin inspections of 3 DCCBs

The National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) has begun inspection in district central cooperative banks (DCCBs) of Nagpur, Wardha and Buldhana. Based on the report, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will take a decision on reviving the three cooperatives now closed down.

The move brings good news for the banks but comes late for this year. By the time RBI gives its green signal, the DCCBs may miss this sowing season. The DCCBs are primarily set up for providing crop loans to farmers and have a major share in this business. Absence of DCCBs also hits farm loan disbursal in the affected districts. The DCCBs had repeatedly reminded NABARD to hold the inspection early.

During the exercise it will be ascertained as to how much amount will the banks need as assistance to meet the capital adequacy requirements. Though a combined package of centre and state has been granted for the three beleaguered banks last year, these cooperatives may need more funds according to the current position. "Based on the inspection centre and state may provide the funds," said a source in one of the banks.

Based on the NABARD report, the RBI will have to take a decision. The banks will be revived only after RBI approves the move. It may take at least 2-3 weeks for the inspection to complete. "By this time the sowing season will almost end," the source said.

Greenhouse gases: India fourth biggest emitter, but lags far behind top three

As the global community gears up for the crucial Paris climate summit, the World Resources Institute (WRI) — a global research organization — has come out with its latest analyses of the country-wise emissions of climate-damaging greenhouse gases. It

shows India despite being the fourth largest carbon emitter continues to be far behind the other three top big emitters in terms of per capita emission.

Though the data, released by the WRI, cannot be used as an excuse by India for not acting against its emission, such figures will certainly give the country an upper hand while negotiating for a global climate deal. India invariably uses the 'per capita' yardstick while insisting on more comprehensive actions from rich nations.

However, developing countries like China, Mexico and Brazil too are way ahead of India in terms of their per capita contribution to the overall emissions. And, this is the reason why a section within the government in India has time and again argued not to compare the country's action with that of the Chinese goal.

The WRI analysis is based on data from its Climate Analysis Indicators Tool (CAIT) that has recently released its emission figures for the year 2012. It also came out with details as how the various economic sectors have contributed to the overall emission.

"Per capita emissions are still distributed unequally", it said, pointing out that the per person emissions still vary among the top 10 emitters, with the United States' per capita emissions eight times that of India.

According to the figures, the largest emitters contribute a majority of global emissions as the top 10 emitters contribute over 72% of global greenhouse gas emissions (excluding land use change and forestry). On the other hand, the lowest 100 emitters contribute less than 3%.

"While universal climate action is necessary, significant mitigation actions are needed by the largest emitters, taking into account that they have different capacities to do so", said the WRI in its document, carrying info-graphs on country-wise emission data.

It shows the energy sector is the dominant source of greenhouse gas emissions. It contributes more than 75% of global emissions. "A rapid transformation of the energy sector by 2050, as the G7 (top rich countries) suggested in their recent announcement, is necessary to avoid the worst impacts of climate change", it said.

The analysis also shows that emission sources vary by country. While the energy sector dominates, industrial emissions in China contribute more than 3% of global emissions and new data from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) indicate that agriculture contributes a notable share of Brazil's and Australia's emissions.

"Mitigation policy options that countries pursue should therefore align with their national circumstances", the WRI suggested while sharing and analyzing those figures.

Six of the top 10 emitters are developing countries. According to the data, China contributes approximately 25% of global emissions, making it the top emitter. India, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico and Iran are also contributing relatively large shares of global emissions as their economies grow.

Call to encourage farming among schoolchildren

TRICHY: As we are quickly heading to the future, urbanisation and the modernisation have taken a toll on agriculture in almost all parts of the country. Reiterating the need to protect agriculture, a private firm gave away farming kits to children to encourage farming.

Tractors and farm equipment limited (TAFE) launched "FarmDost", an initiative to motivate children farming at St Vestry's Anglo Indian School in the city on Wednesday. The initiative also aimed to make children realize the indispensable role of farmers in the nation's growth.

"A chat with the students from a school in Chennai was instrumental for initiating the movement. Replying to a question about from where the rice came, the students shocked everyone by saying the rice came from the departmental store," an official from TAFE, who launched the project said.

In order to incite interest, they reached out to 12,000 school children by distributing their farm kits, which contains seeds, coco peat, a friendship agreement, a sticker, an instruction manual and letters to the students and their parents, requesting their child's involvement in this initiative.

The officials said their aim is to encourage people from all ages to step into the shoes of a farmer for a short time. They added, the idea stemmed from the thought that if people find it hard to take care of just one crop that grows in one square foot of land, they would truly realize the pain of a farmer who maintain thousands of crop.

The movement would also reach Coimbatore, Madurai and Chennai in the following days. All participates are expected to click pictures of their farming process at regular intervals and post it on www.FarmDost.com. The pictures will later be promoted on their Facebook page- "Be a FarmDost". The top three students from each city will be awarded the "Best FarmDost student award".

Onions, tomatoes now at cheaper prices

Tomatoes and onions will be available at the city rythu bazaars at cheaper prices than the market. The marketing department on Wednesday launched 'Mana Vooru Mana Kuragayalu' (our village, our vegetables) programme by opening a stall at the

Mehdipatnam rythu bazaar, where tomatoes were sold at Rs 24 a kg and onions at Rs 21 a kg on Wednesday.

Launching the programme, marketing and irrigation minister T Harish Rao said that the opening of the counter was an effort by the government to ensure availability of tomatoes and onions at reasonable prices for consumers in the city. "Normally around this time of the year, prices of vegetables start rising. This is part of the government effort to control the prices," he said.

Counters for sale of these vegetables will be opened in 45 to 50 locations near major office complexes and in some residential localities across the city in the next four to five days, he said.

Harish Rao, who was accompanied by agriculture minister Pocharam Srinivas Reddy, said that the government was purchasing good quality onions from Nasik in Maharashtra while tomatoes were being procured in bulk from the Bowenpally market yard.

He also said that the government was on the lookout for locations in the city where additional rythu bazaars could be set up. He added that the existing rythu bazaars, including the one at Mehdiapatnam, will be modernized so that the produce can be sold in hygienic surroundings. Adequate parking for customers would also be provided.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

As monsoon rains drench Gujarat, sowing picks up



With the South-West monsoon covering most parts of Gujarat, the kharif sowing in the State has gained momentum with area under pulses showing a sharp increase over last year.

According to the latest data released by the State Agriculture Department, total area covered under kharif sowing till June 22 stood at 13.44 million hectares – 43 per cent higher than corresponding last year's 9,38,000 hectares.

Pulses acreage up

Overall kharif pulses sowing in the State stood at 27,600 hectares, against 6,800 hectares reported during same time last year. However, area under urad witnessed sharp surge of 612 per cent to 5,700 hectares .

Similarly, tur sowing jumped by 276 per cent to 19,200 hectares, and moong sowing was up by 200 per cent at 2,400 hectares.

Growers said that pulses were preferred by small and poor farmers mainly because of lower cultivation costs when compared to cotton or groundnut. The rise in pulses area is seen as an indication of the crop reclaiming its lost significance in the State.

In 2003-04, the area under kharif pulses was 6,77,900 hectares which had fallen to 3,99,000 hectares last year.

Oilseeds too surge

Among the oilseeds, area under groundnut has increased to 3,70,900 hectares against 3,32,000 last year, while that of sesame seed has increased to 5,600 hectares from 3,500 hectares.

Notably, soyabean sowing has shown a significant surge this year with area covered under kharif sowing till June 22 at 15,600 hectares, which is 1,600 per cent more than last year's 900 hectares.

For soyabean also, the cost of cultivation is seen much lower, almost similar to that of pulses and sesame.

For sesame, the cost of cultivation is estimated between Rs. 5,700 and Rs. 6,250 an acre, while for soyabean it is Rs. 6,800-7,500. For pulses, it is even less than Rs. 6,500.

Whereas for cotton, the cultivation cost is estimated in the range of Rs. 22,000-24,000 an acre as it involves high labour cost.

Meanwhile, cotton sowing too has showed some increase in the area till the period under review. Against last year, cotton sowing has increased by 42 per cent to 7,62,900 hectares against 5,35,800 hectares reported last year till the same period.

With monsoon being active mainly in Saurashtra and south Gujarat, kharif sowing is set to accelerate in the coming days. Reports from Rajkot said the farmers had already completed sowing of groundnut, cotton and other Kharif crops on about three lakh hectares by last week.

In all, Saurashtra has already received an average of about 25% rains this season due to which several dams were now overflowing.

Monsoon was now progressing towards the north Gujarat districts of Mehsana, Gandhinagar, Banaskantha and Sabarkantha. However, the arid district of Kutch was yet to experience its first heavy rain.

The south Gujarat region has so far received about 14 per cent of the season's rains.

Food safety regulator extends ban on Chinese milk products

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued an advisory extending the ban on imports of dairy products from China, first instituted in September 2008, due to melamine contamination.

“Ban on import of milk and milk products, including chocolates and chocolate products, and candies/confectionaries/food preparations with milk and milk solids as ingredients from China may be extended for a period of one year i.e. up to June 23, 2016, unless the safety risk assessment is undertaken based on availability of credible reports and supporting data in respect of the said products, whichever is earlier,” said the advisory order signed by FSSAI Director RC Sharma.

Queries for review

The subject came up during an FSSAI meeting with officials from the Commerce Ministry, Directorate General of Foreign Trade, External Affairs Ministry, Agriculture Ministry and others held on June 18.

FSSAI CEO YS Malik, according to the order, had put forward queries to the representatives for a review of the matter, which included whether a representation had been made by China to reconsider the ban, whether the Food Authority had sufficient data to reassess safety risks identified when the ban was first put in place and corrective action taken.

Dairy sector officials present stated that China had to provide credible information without which the ban should not be revisited keeping in mind “critically sensitive target consumer groups” like infants.

Government officials highlighted that there was no scientific basis to remove the ban.

GCC to take up marketing of coffee grown in Vizag



The Girijan Co-operative Corporation (GCC) here will take up marketing of coffee grown by Girijan farmers in certain areas in the eastern ghats of the district, such as Araku and Paderu to improve their lives, according to R Kishore Babu, Minister for Tribal Welfare.

He was speaking to reporters here on Wednesday after participating in a one-day workshop to improve the functioning of the GCC. He said the State Government had drawn up a plan with Rs.525 crore to raise coffee plantations at Araku and Paderu to help the Girijan farmers. “The crop will be raised on 1 lakh hectares and it has been identified as a major avenue for achieving tribal welfare in recent times. The GCC will take up marketing of coffee,” he said.

Kishore Babu said an action plan would be drawn up to improve the functioning of the GCC after taking the suggestions of the various stakeholders. The corporation was set up primarily to procure minor forest produce and non-timber forest produce from the agency area and to market them in other parts of the State and country, adding value.

Building capacity

Further, the GCC should also provide essentials to tribals in remote areas at reasonable rates through its depots.

However, the brokers and money-lenders were very active in the agency area and the GCC was found wanting in certain respects, he admitted and added that the workshop was being conducted to set things right. V Krishna Rao, CEO of Kovel Foundation, an NGO active in the agency area of Visakhapatnam district, gave several suggestions. He wanted thorough mapping of the resources in the agency area and further suggested that

the GCC take up procurement of agricultural and horticultural produce as well from the Girijans, as the livelihood patterns had undergone a change.

He said the GCC had identified 25 types of produce but it was not buying them all and there was no mechanism for procuring, for instance, medicinal plants.

Rise in processing costs hits cashew exports

Cashew exports continued to decline in May 2015 compared with the same period last fiscal.

Nearly 70 per cent of the factories in the organised sector have their shutters down from April 1, following substantial increase in the wages of workers by the state government, industry sources in Kollam said. The Kerala Government had hiked the wages of workers by 35 per cent from March 1.

“This, coupled with reduction in incentives for export of cashew in the new foreign trade policy and prevailing high raw nut prices, are the main reasons for the decline in exports”, K Sasi Varma, Executive Director and Secretary, Cashew Export Promotion Council of India (CEPCI), told *BusinessLine*.

During May 2015, India exported 7,407 tonnes of cashew valued at ₹354 crore at an average unit value of ₹498.11 a kg as against 8,928 tonnes valued at ₹391.35 crore at unit value of ₹438.34 a kg in the same month in 2014, he said.

Total exports during Apr-May 2015 stood at 13,194 tonnes valued at ₹641.95 crore at the average unit value of ₹486.55 a kg. In the same period last fiscal it was 16,316 tonnes valued at ₹710.89 crore at unit value of ₹435.70 a kg. However, shipments of salted and roasted kernels and Cashew Nut Shell Liquid (CNSL)/Cardanol have shown an up trend during the first two months.

A total 117 tonnes of roasted and salted kernels were shipped out as against 101 tonnes in the same period last year.

Exports of CSNL/Cardanol have shown a substantial increase from 1,022 tonnes to 1,471 tonnes in April-May 2015.

Trade sources said that the demand growth in Indian domestic market is 15 per cent per annum and the prices have been above the international market prices.

As a result, many of the processor-exporters were marketing a good portion in the domestic market at a premium, they said.

A good percentage of the domestic demand of over two lakh tonnes of kernels is met by supplies from the unorganised sector, they said.

Imports of raw cashew nuts (RCN) have also dropped in Apr-May this year to 1,54,962 tonnes valued at ₹1,232.94 crore at a unit value of ₹79.56 a kg.

Raw nut imports fall

As against this, imports in the corresponding period last year were at 1,65,364 tonnes valued at 1,118.10 crore at the unit value of ₹67.61 a kg. Industry sources said shutting down of the factories and the high RCN are the reasons for the fall in its imports. He said the indigenous production of raw nuts continued to remain far below the demand of the processing industry. The prices of raw nuts in the local markets were hovering at around ₹100 a kg.

RCN prices firm up

According to Pankaj N Sampat, a Mumbai-based dealer, reported lower kernel yields, and delays in shipments appears to have forced shellers to pay higher prices to secure supplies of early arrivals.

Consequently, unlike in the past RCN prices have been going up this year in the peak harvesting period of the Northern crops, which contribute 75 per cent of the world output, he added.

Poor quality arrivals pound turmeric

Turmeric prices decreased on Wednesday at erode markets due to arrival of inferior quality produce. Of the arrival of 3,500 bags of turmeric, only 25 were Salem Turmeric variety, which fetched a maximum price of ₹7,300 a quintal. In the Regulated Market Committee, the finger turmeric was down ₹450 and the root variety ₹500. In other markets, the finger turmeric showed an increase of ₹100a quintal .

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety turmeric was sold at ₹4,611-7,398; the root variety ₹4,569-7,009. Of the arrival of 954 bags, 410 were sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger turmeric traded at ₹5,906-6,916; the root variety ₹5,369-6,413. Of the 444 bags offered, 359 were traded.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger turmeric fetched ₹5,929-7,299; the root variety ₹5,619-6,828. Of the arrival of 1,185 bags, 953 were sold.

Monsoon poised to cover whole country in 2 days

The monsoon is expected to cover the entire country in the next two days, an India Meteorological Department update said on Wednesday evening.

This is more than two weeks ahead of the timeline of July 15 when it normally completes its run over the Indian landmass and advances beyond the international border in the North-West.

Frenzied run

The rains covered Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, east Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, entire Jammu and Kashmir, most of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, and parts of Punjab and east Rajasthan in a frenzied run overnight.

This was facilitated mainly by the deep depression that crossed the south Gujarat coast last evening, stood its ground for quite sometime while engaging a western disturbance over north-west India.

The deep depression has weakened one round into a depression by the evening and was located over Ahmedabad and neighbourhood. It is still capable of kicking up a lot of rain over north-west India. Heavy to very heavy rainfall has been warned of in the area during the next two days even as the system keeps moving east-northeast, weakens another round before hitting the foothills of the Himalayas.

'Low' in East

Meanwhile, the low-pressure area over West Bengal (erstwhile Bay of Bengal depression) persisted on Wednesday.

Model predictions suggest that it may flare up as the Arabian Sea-born system loses strength in the foothills. India Met sees the 'low' retracing its track back towards Bihar/Jharkhand and leading another round of rain. Otherwise, the monsoon is forecast to pause for breath after a scorching run over the past two weeks. It may wind down activity drastically during the first week of July.

Most of the peninsula has already started drying up, and there is no forecast yet of any significant weather system taking shape in the neighbouring seas.

Drier westerlies

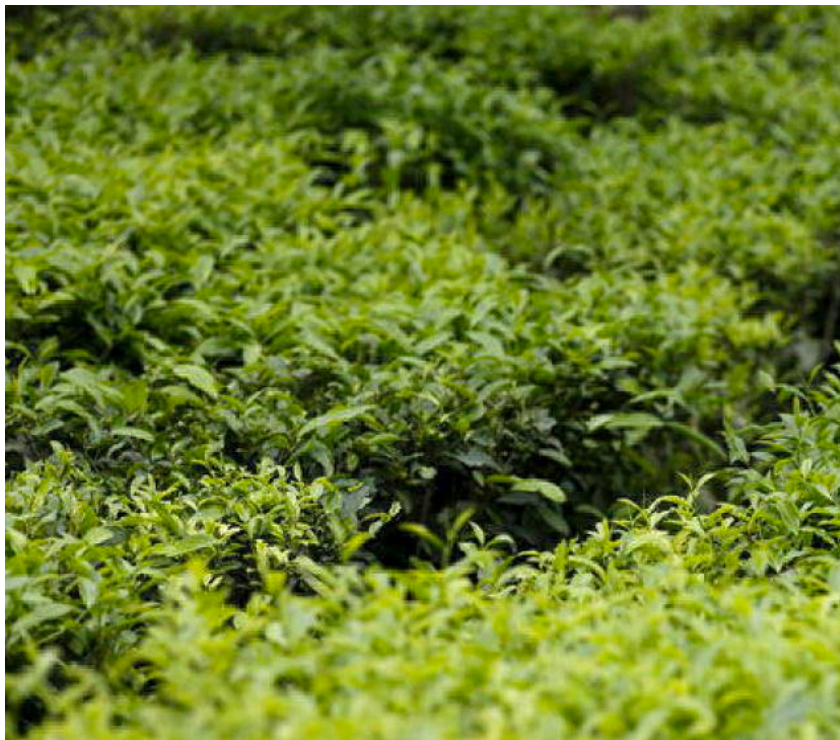
Comparatively barren westerly winds are forecast to fill north and north-west India after the ongoing wet session ends.

Meanwhile, the rain surplus recorded for the country as a whole as on date is 24 per cent – 52 per cent in central India; 32 per cent in south peninsula; 4 per cent in east and north-east India.

The only Met subdivision with a shortage of rainfall is north-west India (-5 per cent). Even here, the extent of deficit has come down by a couple of notches from overnight.

The position should improve over the next two days given the outlook for heavy to heavy rain at many places.

Nilgiri tea sector expects output to stay flat at 14.5 million kg



The unseasonal rains have helped higher harvest of tea in the Nilgiris, the highest tea producing district in South India.

“The supply of green leaf to factories for processing has increased. Tea factories are now working round-the-clock. Accordingly, production of black tea has risen,” Ramesh Bhojarajan, President, Nilgiris Small Tea Growers’ Association, told *BusinessLine*.

Tea companies have informed Tea Board that they produced 1.51 million kg (mkg) last month against 1.07 mkg in May 2014, marking 41.12 per cent growth. The five-year average for May was 1.37 mkg.

Till May, tea companies have reported 6.35 mkg production against 5.63 mkg in the same period of 2014, marking 12.79 per cent growth.

This was 10.63 per cent higher than the five-year average production of 5.74 mkg for the period.

Production is also on the rise this month. However, given the prediction of a less than normal monsoon, tea companies have projected a lower output between July and September compared to last year and an average production between October and December.

Consequently, tea companies have informed Tea Board that the overall production this year will be around 14.5 mkg – almost the same level of 14.7 mkg of last year. The five-year average production is 14.2 mkg.

Business Standard

Monsoon good so far, govt still ready with contingency plan: Y S Chowdary

The government is ready with a contingency plan despite an above normal monsoon so far, and [Agriculture Ministry](#) has been asked to take care of any situation if rains remain deficient going forward, Minister of Science & Technology [Y S Chowdary](#) said today.

"Monsoon definitely not only revived but it is very encouraging. In few pockets, there may have some issues but across the country it is going to be very good.

"Government is ready with contingency plan in some states.