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# THE HINDU

## **Flower show begins tomorrow**

The Agriculture Department in co-sponsorship with the Tourism Department is hosting the 29<sup>th</sup> edition of 'Flower and Farm Fiesta 2015' from March 6 to 8 at AFT Grounds.

Exotic varieties of foliage and flowering plants from different parts of the country will be on show. Besides, the Agriculture Department's own green house grown products will be displayed.

Vegetables and fruits will be an added attraction in an event which is designed to entertain and educate farmers, youth and the general public. Chief Minister N. Rangasamy is scheduled to launch the event.

Partner institutions include the National Horticulture Board, Bengaluru, Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology, Thanjavur, Sugarcane Research Station, Cuddalore, Vegetable Research Station, Palur, PAJANCOA and Research Institute, Karaikal, National Horticulture Mission, Puducherry, KVK, Puducherry, Agriculture Technology Management Agency, Puducherry.

The event is a platform for research institutions to showcase technological developments in floriculture for the benefit of farming community and visiting public. Various competitions are being organised and prizes given for each event.

The other objectives include showcasing products of entrepreneurs, publicising schemes of the Agriculture Department and allied sectors and providing a competitive platform to motivate farmers, students and the public.

The forum also seeks to provide an extension platform to educate the rural and urban people in technical knowhow on horticultural front, facilitate buyer and seller meets in marketing agricultural and horticultural inputs and designing marketing strategies.

## Farm ponds becoming popular in Marungapuri



Farm ponds have come to the rescue of farmers in Marungapuri block in irrigating their fields . The union has as many as 49 village panchayats and the number of farm ponds being set up is continuously on the rise.

A number of farmers have benefited through the farm pond scheme and most of them have raised paddy utilising the water realised during the last monsoon. M.Natarajan, a farmer, said the improvement in groundwater level due to the percolation of water was one of the major benefits of the pond set up in his field during 2013-14.

“Utilising the water realised on an area of 400 square metres, I could harvest 80 bags of paddy by irrigating about 2.5 acres of land,” he said. Timely rain during the last season has also, to some extent, benefited the crop.

Apart from raising paddy, he has also been using the pond for rearing fish. “It gives them an additional source of income,” says T.V.Manoharan, Block Development Officer, Marungapuri.

The official said the union accounted for the most number of village panchayats in the district. The soil is suited for setting up farm ponds. So far, 182 farm ponds have been set up at an estimate of Rs.1.23 crore.

While about 100 of them have been set up at individual farms, the others were on panchayat lands. All these works have been executed under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme,” he said. According to Agriculture Department officials, each pond could irrigate about two acres and about 200 acres have been covered so far.

While the average rainfall of Marungapuri block was 917.6 mm, it received 396.5 mm in 2013, and 623.10 mm in 2014.

Mr. Manoharan said that plans were afoot for setting up about 60 more farm ponds in the block during 2015-16. Major village panchayats where the farm ponds have been set up include Alampatti, Thethur, Usilampatti, Thalampadi, Sevalpatti, Maniyamkurichi, and Malampatti.

### **Farmers introduced to use of bio pesticides**

Around 100 farmers from five blocks of the district took part in a one-day awareness programme on usage of bio pesticides in crops at Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Virinjipuram recently.

Farmers from Gudiyatham, Alangayam, Kaniyambadi, Katpadi and K.V. Kuppam participated in the programme that was jointly organised by the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), Bengaluru and KVK, a press release said. M. Pandiyan, professor and head, Agricultural Research Station (ARS) and KVK spoke on the importance of farm yard manure for maintaining soil health and its role in organic agriculture.

Farmers were advised to enrich the farm yard manure, poultry waste, and leaf litters with bio pesticides before application for effective pest control. Prophylactic application of bio control agents such as “Pseudomonas” and “Trichoderma viride” can control crop diseases.

Many crops such as tomato, brinjal, gourds, banana and crossandra cultivated in Vellore were affected by nematodes. This can be better managed by use of bio control agent “Paecilomyces lilacinus,” the release said.

B. Narayanasamy, principal scientist (extension), IIHR listed the technologies available for horticultural crops, the release added.

### **Emergency summer action plan in place for Chittoor**

The Chittoor district administration on Wednesday launched the strategic summer action plan to counter irrigation water scarcity and fodder crisis in villages in the next four months.

District Water Management Agency (DWMA) Project Director S. Rajasekhar Naidu held an emergency review meeting with officials of agriculture, horticulture, sericulture and animal husbandry departments at the Collectorate here and took stock of the prevailing conditions at the field level in the allied sectors. The meeting discussed steps to salvage tomato cultivation in over 6,000 hectares in the district through drip irrigation.

The action plan includes repairs to bore-wells and supply of water to affected areas using tankers. The DWMA official directed officials to come out with an action plan by Saturday. He said steps were initiated on a war footing to overcome shortage of fodder in the western mandals, by procuring stocks from Srikalahasti and other eastern mandals, and from the neighbouring Nellore district. The officials were also told to extensively tour rural areas.

### **‘Use biotechnology to boost farming’**

A workshop on ‘Biotechnology tools for agricultural and agri-entrepreneurial development’ was held at the Kerala Agricultural University here on Thursday.

Addressing the workshop, KAU Vice-Chancellor P. Rajendran called for optimum use of emerging technologies for sustaining agriculture. “Farmers should get educated about technological advancements in agriculture. Biotechnology and nanotechnology are transforming agriculture.

“Biotechnology tools should be used to expedite plant growth, prevent infestation of pests and enhance productivity. Despite wide use of biotechnology in medical and veterinary fields, its application in agriculture is viewed sceptically. This should change,” he added.

T. R. Gopalakrishnan, Director of Research, presided. Director of Extension P. V. Balachandran inaugurated the sale of tissue culture planting material. P. A. Valsala and Deepu Mathew also spoke.

The workshop was organised by the Centre for Plant Biotechnology and Molecular Biology of the KAU as a follow-up to a recent two-day national seminar on ‘New frontiers in agricultural biotechnology.

### **Hi-tech agriculture**

The workshop proposed that biotechnology should be given priority for promoting high-tech agriculture.

Possibilities in nanobiotechnology should be explored. Production of disease-free planting material should be explored using biotechnology tools such as ELISA test and secondary metabolite production.

Diagnostic tools should be developed for estimation of Daflatoxin in pepper and ginger, added the workshop.

The speakers included Asok Giri, senior scientist, NCC, Pune; A. Seema, senior scientist, Centre for Materials and Electronics; Achyuth Sankar, computational biologist; and Nataraja Karaba, crop physiologist.

### **Lack of funding plagues farm tele-counselling**

Lack of financial support from the government threatens to derail Karshaka Santhwanam, a helpline service launched by the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) to offer technical advice on problems faced by farmers.

The university is struggling to maintain the advisory support service that had gained wide acceptance among farmers for its quick and effective response, including diagnosis of plant diseases and technical assistance for issues related to soil health, fertilizer application, pest control, seed selection, enhancement of crop production, and water conservation.

Ever since it was introduced in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, and Pathanamthitta districts in 2008-09 with funds from the Rashtriya Krishi

Vikas Yojana (RKVY), thousands of farmers and State and Central government agencies including the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute, State Horticulture Mission and Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council, Keralam have availed of the service which depends on a core team of scientists operating from College of Agriculture, Vellayani.

The government used the services of this project to evaluate the functioning of poly houses in the State. Within an year of operation, Karshaka Santhwanam became a flagship project under RKVY, triggering the demand for augmentation and extension of the service to other districts.

In 2012, KAU submitted a Rs.2.6-crore proposal to the government to scale up the service by networking all the Regional Research Stations under KAU. The proposal, however, failed to materialise and KAU decided to go it alone.

### **Another proposal**

Another proposal to set up regional call centres instead of a single contact point was also not sanctioned. The state Plan for the year 2014-15 allocated Rs.5 lakh for Karshaka Sathwanam but the university is yet to receive the funds. The tele counselling service is currently limping along on a Rs.1,00,000 advance from KAU.

Says Principal Investigator Sam Kurunthottickal, “We receive an average of 30 calls every day from farmers across the State and even expatriates with farms in the State. Some farmers send emails with attached photos depicting specific problems. Without funds, it will be difficult to arrange field visits and carry out detailed investigations. The project may not continue beyond March 2015 unless the Government offers support.”

### **Minor bridge coming up**



The Marungapuri Panchayat Union has planned to construct a minor bridge across the Paalar at the foot of the Nedumalai Hills on the borders of Tiruchi - Dindigul districts.



Villagers of Thethoor and Malaiyandikovilpatti require this facility since the river runs at the middle of these two villages.

A panchayat union elementary school and an anganwadi are located at Malaiyandikovilpatti on the other side of the river and obviously villagers of Thethoor, with a population of 1,500, have to cross the river for their daily routine covering a distance of three km.

As the river is bone dry now, residents can cross it without any difficulty. But, during floods or monsoon, the villages are cut off till the waters recede.

During such crisis, villagers Thethoor have to take a detour through Usilampatti and Kalathupatti to reach Malayandikudipatti covering an additional distance of five km.

According to official sources, the Marungapuri union has sought Rs. 1.50 crore under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

The plan includes approach road for the bridge on both sides of the river for a total length of two km and the bridge for a length of about 25 metres. It will have three spans of diameter of six metres each.

The administrative sanction has been accorded by the Rural Development Department and the proposal has been under process for technical sanction. The work would be taken up after fund was sanctioned, sources said.

### **Biotechnology centre set up at farm**

The district panchayat has established a Biotechnology centre at the District Agricultural Farm at Karimbam near Taliparamba for bringing under a single roof the farm's tissue cultural lab and its production of bio-microbial products required for organic farming.

Announcing this at a press meet here, district panchayat president K.A. Sarala said that Agricultural Minister K.P. Mohanan would inaugurate the facility on March 7. The facility was developed at a cost of Rs. 2 crore, she said. Prof. Sarala said that the tissue culture laboratory had been started to meet the shortage of planting materials in the region. The plantlets of plantains being produced at the lab were in great demand, she said. Bio-microbial products such as trichoderma and pseudomonas produced at the farm are being sold like hotcakes, she said. The Biotechnology Centre set up at the farm would co-ordinate these activities, she said. The new facility at the farm has 4 growth rooms, a culture transfer area, rooms for preparing the medium and storeroom, she informed.

### **Farmers' Mekadatu protest tomorrow**

The Cauvery Urimai Meetpu Kuzhu (Cauvery Rights retrieval group) said it would stage a blockade at Mekadatu, the site of the proposed dam by Karnataka, on Saturday. The farmers will march from Denkanikottai and cross into Karnataka, said P.Maniarasan, Convenor, Cauvery Urimai Meetpu Kuzhu here on Thursday.

Mr. Maniarasan told presspersons that a team of farmers had visited the Mekadatu Ondigunda region in February.

“Excess water from Kabini, Krishnarajasagar and Arkavathy reservoirs flowed down as Cauvery at Mekadatu Ondigunda. It was this water that flowed into Mettur and was used both for drinking and agriculture in Tamil Nadu.”

According to him, the dam would allow for holding 50 tmc water, and a similar dam in Rasimanal would hold an equal quantum of water.

This would affect irrigation in 12 districts and drinking water for 19 districts in the State.

Alleging that the State government has not done anything in this regard, Mr. Maniarasan said no all-party meeting was convened or no attempts were made to take it up with the Centre.

The only way was to stage a blockade at the site, Mr.Maniarasan said. On Saturday, farmers from across the Delta and Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri will convene at Denkanikottai and march across the border.

### **The differentiated impacts of climate change**

Last time we considered climate change impacts from an Indian perspective and why it would make sense for us to act. But climate change is a global phenomenon caused by all of us in differing extents and affecting all of us in different ways.

This is an important point. Understanding the differentiated impacts of climate change will help us understand why so little has been done so far. Impact here is defined by the IPCC, a group of 800+ of the world's leading climate scientists, as the intersection of risk, vulnerability and adaptation. An example may help: a very hot day, well above 100°F, is manageable if one can stay indoors in cold air conditioning. However, if one has an arduous manual job performed outdoors, a series of such days could prove fatal. The former is low impact while the latter is high impact.

The prisoner's dilemma provides a great framework to understand (in)action on climate change. This is a game in game theory that shows why two rational individuals might not cooperate, even if it may be in their best interests to do so. The rules are as follows: Two prisoners are in two cells unable to talk together. They know this: if both keep silent, they

both get off. If prisoner A squeals, but prisoner B is silent, prisoner A gets off and gets perks, while prisoner B goes to jail for 5 years and vice versa. If both squeal, they both go to jail for 2 years. Long story short, they both squeal, most of the time.

Climate change is a prisoner's dilemma with horns and on steroids. If we, the world, cooperate, or arrest climate change, we all get a wonderful place to live. If we don't, for some of us, our way of life ends. But wait, there's more. If we don't cooperate, we all don't go to the same kind of prison - some of us stay out, some go to hell, some to a low security prison. Whether or not we will cooperate will depend (a) on how much it costs us, and (b) how much we gain by cooperating. The first step to solving this dilemma is to understand the payoffs (impacts) of key players in cooperating.

In Climate Change, the key players together constitute more than 50% of the world GDP, population and CO2 emissions. They are the US, China, the European Union and India.

Let's start with the US. The US is geographically and politically very diverse. California and the US Southwest are and will be hit hardest by the changing climate. Much like India, they will become drier, so households and agriculture will be sorely beset. The rich and famous in Hollywood already spend crores of rupees a year in buying water. Forest fires, encouraged by increasing drought and heat, burned 9.2 million acres of forest in 2012 (roughly the size of Kerala) with rising risks to health and property. So it's not surprising that Arnold Schwarzenegger, erstwhile Terminator and current governor of California, is a committed climate change fighter.

Moving to the East Coast: Hurricane Sandy that hit the US in 2012 left behind \$60 billion in property damage and 150 deaths in its wake. The Northeast will be pounded by heavy rainfall and powerful storms as the climate warms leaving expensive infrastructure and the urban poor vulnerable to flooding and its aftermath.

The rest of the US will be affected by climate change but manageably so and many parts like the Midwest might even benefit with longer crop growing cycles and nicer weather. The Great plains of America is home to oil companies and oil-derived wealth and the fracking (getting oil & gas from shale rock) revolution - they will not want to give that up easily to lessen climate change especially as they are not impacted too much.

While President Obama and politicians from the badly impacted regions may push for climate action, the political process in the US prevents them from delivering substantive action.

On to China.

China is a powerful country with 1.3 billion mouths to feed and a third of its workforce in agriculture. Dust storms now bombard the capital,



frequent droughts have begun to plague agriculture, floods and storms threaten the prosperous south-eastern cities and the air is thick with haze. Heat waves threaten the urban Chinese and incidence of dengue is set to increase. Many of China's glaciers are predicted to disappear by 2050 further impacting agriculture, especially in the dryer north. China has woken up to the dangers of climate change and in typical Chinese fashion, has started to act. From next to nothing, China has the largest installed wind power capacity today and is targeting 70 GW of solar installations by 2017. It is the world's largest solar panel manufacturer. China has been building another great wall - one made of trees to prevent sandstorms over Beijing.

Next time, we will look at the European Union and revisit India and see where that leaves us in solving the prisoner's dilemma, and the climate problem.

*Climaction is a fortnightly column that is published in MetroPlus Weekend on alternate Fridays. The next article in this series will appear on March 20. Feedback and questions may be e-mailed to [climaction2015@gmail.com](mailto:climaction2015@gmail.com)*

### **SHGs generate Rs. 440 cr. from sand mining**

The State government has generated revenue of more than Rs. 440 crore from the 220 and odd sand reaches allocated to women self-help groups (SHGs) in the State, C. S. Rama Lakshmi, Advisor to the Government, Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) has said.

"In addition to their income, the SHGs are paid Rs. 5 per every cubic metre of sand as incentive. Today, nearly 6.5 million members of 65 lakh SHGs across the State have savings to the tune of Rs. 5,000 crore. This is in addition to the financial assistance of nearly Rs. 6,000 crore given to them annually by the banks," Ms. Rama Lakshmi told *The Hindu* .

Admitting the 'sluggishness' on part of SHGs in loan repayment in the recent past, she attributes it to a misconception "as the women members mistook it for waiver."

Speaking about Stree Nidhi Bank that provides microfinance to SHGs, she said it lends assistance of Rs. 1,000 crore to women, in addition to the Community Investment Fund of Rs. 400 crore. Ms. Lakshmi says Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is keen on taking these schemes to the interior areas. "It's a women's movement aimed at improving their living standards. AP has tremendous opportunity and women here are very enterprising. Paddy-procurement worth Rs. 1200 crore has fetched them earnings to the tune of Rs. 38 crore," she said.

The face of AP is set to change, she claims. "Toy industry being set up by the GMR in Kakinada SEZ has provided direct employment to 4,000 women. The proposed food and textile parks will also have ample scope

for employment, especially the textile park where 90 per cent of the jobs will go to women,” she says.

Speaking about the ‘smart village’ concept, she says the idea is to ensure “at least one SHG member in each household and every village should have viable income-generating activities, be it agriculture, dairy farming, horticulture, fisheries or poultry.” “I see more and more girls opting for technical and management courses. Even if 15 per cent of them become entrepreneurs, imagine the kind of change that will happen here,” she says.

### **Tobacco Board chief optimistic about e-auctions**

Tobacco Board Chairman K. Gopal on Thursday sounded optimistic as marketing of the key commercial crop in Prakasam district is all set to commence from next week.

He exhorted the farmers to stick to the crop size to realise a better price for their produce.

“The buyers’ market can be turned into sellers market by scrupulously adhering to the crop size, adopting best agronomic practices and improving the quality to make the best out of the unpredictable market situation,” he said.

Mr. Gopal was interacting with the farmers here, ahead of e-auctions set to commence in two phases from March 11 in Southern Light Soil platforms and in Southern Black Soil platforms on March 16.

“As auctions progress, there will definitely be market buoyancy,” he said. The farmers should concentrate on realising better average price, he said while explaining on the Board’s efforts to create the brand image for Indian tobacco in the international market.

The farmers should concentrate on bringing to the market tobacco free of non-tobacco related material (NTRM) to get the best price for their produce, he advised.

Virginia Tobacco Growers Welfare Association president Ch. Seshaiyah said the Centre would allow FDI in tobacco sector.

The Centre should also facilitate introduction of contract farming to ensure a definite price for ryots at the time of cultivation itself in order to put an end the present uncertainty at the time of marketing.

### **Barren paddy field gets a new lease of life**

For over a decade, it was a barren paddy field near B.C. Road. Now, some youths have rejuvenated it by producing 6,000 kg of rice under cooperative farming.

The youths, who had planted paddy in six acres of barren paddy field in November 23, 2014, harvested it on Monday after 100 days.

A notable feature is that it was grown organically, said Rajesh Naik Ulepady, a progressive farmer who motivated and led the youth, to visiting presspersons on Monday. The six-acre land near Brahmarakootlu toll booth on the Mangaluru-Bengaluru national highway belonged to the Kuppila Guttu family and there were many share holders of whom some are in Mumbai. "It was lying barren for the past 15 years," said Ramanath Shetty, one of the shareholders (owner).

When youth requested for the land, the owners agreed without expecting anything in return.

Manual harvestation of the crop would have required a fortnight. A mechanised harvester did it in a day. While harvesting, the machine separated paddy from the stalks, said Mr. Rajesh.

The leader of the 45-member youth group, Hindu Seva Sangha, Charan Kumar said that now they would grow maize to increase soil fertility and cultivate paddy again this June.

Mr. Rajesh said that after hearing about this success story, youth in other parts such as near Moodbidri and Gurupura and other parts of Bantwal have shown interest to form groups and grow paddy in barren paddy fields. "Our target is to rejuvenate about 300 acres of barren paddy field in Dakshina Kannada during 2015-16," said Mr. Rajesh.

He said that attempts would be made to market it by forming a marketing firm and convince the government to purchase from the youth farmers for its "anna bhagya" scheme.

### **Puthan Anai receives 36.2 mm rainfall**

Puthan Anai in Kanyakumari district received the maximum rainfall of 36.2 mm in the region on Wednesday. Sudden rain with heavy winds occurred in Arumanai, Kulasekaram on Wednesday evening.

Electric poles and banana crop were damaged in the strong winds in Arumanai and Kulasekaram. Rubber trees were uprooted in Karod and Balukuzhi, Manjalumoodu and Vellangode. Damage to two electricity poles affected power supply in these areas.

Marthandam and its surrounding areas experienced rain for about an hour on Wednesday evening with lightning. Rainfall was recorded in Tiruvattar, Atrur, Kanjiracode, Balamore, Puthan Anai, Surulode, Kannimar and Adayamadai.

As the catchment areas of Pechiparai and Perunchani dams received good rainfall, flow into these dams increased.

Water level of Perunchani Dam was 61.10 feet and the inflow was 105 cusecs and discharge 103 cusecs.

Flow into Pechiparai dam was 310 cusecs and 334 cusecs was discharged from it. The water level in the dam was 27.25 feet.

Rainfall in important stations in mm: Pechiparai 18.4, Perunchani 35.8, Chittrar I 4.2, Chittrar II 13, Surulode 12.4, Kannimar 5.2, Balamore 11.2, Adayamadai 3, Kozhiporvilai 20, Puthan Anai 36.2, Anaikidangu 6.2. Water level of dams (in feet): Chittrar I 5.41, Chittrar II 5.51, Poigai 10.50 and Mambazhathuraiaru 50.85.

### **“Waive crop loans”**

The Tamizhaga Eri Mattrum Attru Pasana Vivasayigal Sangam has urged the government to waive all crop loans in view of poor monsoon during the past three years. In a resolution adopted at its general body meeting, chaired by P.Viswanathan, president, here on Tuesday, the association urged the Centre not to permit construction of dams across the Cauvery at Mekedatu and Rasimanal and across the Pamparu in Kerala. The Cauvery Management Board and Cauvery Water Regulatory Authority should be formed immediately. The State government should expedite the execution of the Cauvery-Gundar-Vaigai linking project as it would help provide irrigation for over 93,000 hectares of land. The government should also order immediate disbursement of arrears to cane growers, another resolution said.

### **Neera taps into organic trend**

Neera, unfermented sweet sap from coconut flowers, is turning out to be the latest organic food trend in the State.

The country's first neera plant, Kaipuzha Coconut Producer Company Limited (KCPCL), was launched by Chief Minister Oommen Chandy at Thevalakara in February.

Though the company has firm orders, lack of neera technicians to tap the sap has come in the way of the firm meeting the demand. At present, about 300 litres of raw material reaches the plant a day. Only 60 people had been trained in tapping the sap in the district, company officials said, adding that at least 1,000 technicians would be needed considering the demand. They said the KCPCL served two outlets in Kollam city and two in Alappuzha.

The company was unable to meet an order from the United Kingdom to supply 30,000 litres of neera a month.

Though a distributor for the domestic market had been finalised, supply had not started yet. About 600 people were being trained as neera technicians in the district and the supply situation would improve once they joined the job.

The Shreyas farm of the Kollam Latin Catholic Diocese has successfully cashed in on the initiative. Director of the farm Fr. George Ribeira said the 180 coconut palms there fetched a revenue of Rs.18,000 every two

months. Now, from 60 palms given for neera tapping, the farm was earning more than Rs.1.15 lakh a month.

Chief neera technician Anil Kumar said on an average a coconut palm could yield three litres of neera sap a day but there were trees with an yield of eight litres. A farmer would get Rs.90 a day from a palm that produced three litres. "A neera technician gets Rs.30 a litre as wages for 450 litres a month. When the quantity goes beyond 450 litres, the wage will be Rs.42 a litre," he said.



## THE TIMES OF INDIA

### Grow spices for world market, farmers told

COIMBATORE: Using good agricultural practices and cultivating crop varieties based on demand will improve export of spices, experts at a national seminar on spices said on Thursday. The third edition of the seminar was held at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU).

Homey Cherian, director, directorate of arecanut and spices development, ministry of agriculture, Kozhikode, said, "Almost 90% of the spices produced are utilized within the country, and only the rest is exported. With Indian spices being in demand, farmers and scientists should work on increasing the yield."

"Horticulture crops contribute 30% of GDP and spices 5% to 6% of agricultural GDP every year. The yield has risen from three million to five million tonnes," said Cherian. He added that small agricultural centres should be set up to address the needs of farmers cultivating spices.

TNAU vice-chancellor K Ramasamy, who inaugurated the third edition of the national seminar on spices, said farmers should stick to good agricultural practices.

"There are numerous methods available to misguide farmers. But, the university and spice board along with its scientists are here to offer good agricultural practices for spice cultivation," he said.

K Nirmal Babu, project coordinator, All India Coordinated Project for Spices, said spices are non-adulterated and disease free products. He said, "Farmers should cultivate varieties based on market demand. This will help them sell their products better," he said, adding that farmers should



closely work with industry to identify the market scenario and cultivate crops accordingly.

### **Consultative panel to discuss status of agriculture credit**

NASHIK: The private and public banks offering agriculture credit in Nashik district are worried given the prevailing climatic conditions that are not only hampering the agriculture produce but also the credit to housing, automobiles and allied sectors in the rural areas. The district level consultative committee headed by the collector will discuss the issues on March 16.

The private and public sector banks, which have offered huge amount of money in district through government or corporate schemes in housing and automobile sector, are apprehending rise in non-performing assets (NPA) largely due to the climatic condition that have taken toll on the district's economy that heavily depends on agriculture.

The district has onion, tomato, sugarcane, grapes, cotton and vegetables as major cash crops with maize, bajra, jowar, wheat, paddy, cereals and pulses as other major crops that not only bring livelihood to farmers but the labour force that depends upon the agriculture. The good irrigation system in the district only adds to its economy.

The banks recently raised the issue with the collector about their concern over the credit supplied in the district and the recovery of the same. For the third consecutive year, hailstorms and unseasonal rain has caused damage to almost 20,000 hectares of farms.

"Considering the extensive damage, the state government offered some aid but it was inadequate to assuage the hardships of the farmers. This is having a toll on the credit and savings accounts of the banks and also the loan accounts," said an officials of a public sector bank.

"The banks - particularly the private banks - have already raise alarm over the recovery issue and the public sector banks are also worried about how to handle the rising numbers of the NPAs. The situation is growing critical and unless the government steps in urgently, the things would go out of control," the official said.

The district level consultative committee meeting has therefore been called on the March 16 by the collector to discuss the issue. The DLCC is

expected to come up with some solution to the problems or help raise the issue with the state government.

Farmers asked to follow good agricultural practices to improve exports of spices

COIMBATORE: Using good agricultural practices and cultivating crop varieties based on demand will improve exports of spices, said speakers at a national seminar on spices here on Thursday.

The third edition of the seminar was held at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

Homey Cherian, director, directorate of areca nut and spices development, ministry of agriculture, said, "Almost 90% of the spices produced are utilized within the country, and only the remaining are exported. And, with Indian spices being in large demand, farmers and scientists like us should work on increasing the yield."

He said Malabar pepper, Madras turmeric and many other spices were in huge demand across the globe.

"The horticulture crops contribute for 30% GDP, spices occupy 5-6% of agricultural GDP every year. The yield has risen from three million to five million tonne," said Cherian. He added that small agricultural centres should be set up to address the needs of farmers cultivating spices.

In his inaugural address, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University vice-chancellor K Ramasamy called up on farmers to stick to good agricultural practices and restrict themselves from using unnecessary methods to achieve high yield.

He said, "There are numerous methods available to misguide farmers. But the university and the Spices Board of India and its scientists are here to offer the good agricultural practices for spice cultivation." He added, "I urge the farmers not to fall prey for such practices."

K Nirmal Babu, project coordinator, All India Coordinated Project for Spices, highlighted the special features of spices, which included non-adulterated product and disease free-product.

He said, "Farmers should cultivate varieties based on market demand. This will help them in selling their products better."

Babu said farmers should closely work with the industry to identify the market scenario and thus cultivate crops accordingly.

## THE HINDU BusinessLine

### **Almost all PG students at Manage get recruited**

Almost all students doing the post-graduate diploma at National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (Manage) have been recruited by multinational and domestic firms. One student has opted out of employment, choosing to become an entrepreneur instead in the dairy sector.

Big corporates, both multinational and domestic employed 58 students with attractive salary packages. The average cost-to-company was Rs. 7.53 lakh, up 15 per cent over last year. International placements doubled to four with Edelweiss (commodities) and Skylark Group recruiting two each.

The campus placements for the 18<sup>th</sup> batch at Manage was cent per cent. A total of 102 offers were made by recruiters across eight sectors. Major companies included ITC (ABD), Adani Wilmar, Bunge, Spencer's Retail, Tata Metahelix, National Bulk Handling Corporation, Dow AgroSciences, SAB Miller etc.

YES Bank retained the spot of highest domestic payer (Rs. 13 lakh CTC), said Manage. Among sectors, banking and finance was the biggest recruiter with 32.8 per cent, followed by agri input (27.6), commodity (13.8), food & beverage (12.1), consultancy (5.2). On the roles offered by recruiters, credit management (29.3), sales and marketing (25.9), procurement and supply chain (10) and business development and agribusiness consultancy (5.2) each topped.

The PG diploma in agribusiness management was started in 1996 after being established in 1987. Demand for the students has been high consistently with placements being cent per cent every year, it claimed.