

18-03-2015

# THE HINDU

## **Maharashtra sees big fall in foodgrain production**

Maharashtra is set to face an unprecedented fall of 31% in foodgrains production for 2014-15, owing to severely deficient rainfall and other natural calamities, said the State's Economic Survey report for the period published on Tuesday.

The State's poor output is not limited to foodgrains which include kharif, rabi and summer crops but also extended to oilseeds and cotton. In both these categories the State will suffer a massive output decrease of 53% and 25% respectively.

"It is mainly due to severely deficient rainfall received during the sowing period and vegetative growth state of kharif crops in all parts of the State," said the report.

Compared to the State's performance in the last three surveys, 2014-15 has turned out to be the worst. Major parts of the State suffered drought in 2013 and 2014, which is said to be the main reason behind the decrease in production. Hailstorm and unseasonal rains have also had an impact.

Ironically, the only crop across the State that is expected to increase its production is the water-intensive sugarcane, cultivated mostly in Western Maharashtra which has comparatively better irrigation facilities. As per the report, the output is expected to be about 10% more than the previous year.

While the State suffered in the agriculture sector, it has topped the country in terms of gross value added, fixed capital and emoluments to employees.

## The mills of yore grind slow



There used to be a time when oil was sold only in the loose; you couldn't pick oil packets off supermarket shelves. You had to carry a container to the oil store and you would get freshly-pressed gingeli, groundnut or coconut oil for use at home. For many today though, the *enna chekku* (oil mill) is something from the past.

“Bulls were led round and round the *chekku*(mill) turning the crusher to extract oil. It would take 12 hours to crush 150 kilos in the traditional way. But now, with electricity, we crush 1,200 kg in the same time,” explains M.S. Chandrasekaran, proprietor of the 50-year-old Sri Lakshmi Narayana Oil Mill in Adyar.

This oil mill is one of the few still functioning in the city. “In the 1960s, there were around 200 *chekku* as they were called. But now, there are very few left thanks to people preferring branded sunflower and rice bran oils. Not many prefer to work in oil mills as it is difficult work,” Mr. Chandrasekaran says, adding that a few people are coming back to the oil mills for health reasons.

“In the last one-and-a-half years, we have been witnessing this trend with some customers switching back from refined oils,” he says. A few mills continue to function in areas such as Thiruporur, Kelambakkam and Alandur. “We still buy gingeli oil to be used for puja and external uses as my mother insists on that,” says K. Sivaraman, a resident of Thiruporur.

Residents such as Velayudham of Thoraipakkam still collect coconuts, sun-dry them and take them to the *chekku* to get fresh coconut oil to apply on the hair. You get half-a-kilo of oil from one kilo.

R. Hariharan of Shanmugananda Oil Mill in Thiruporur, who runs a business that was begun by his grandfather, says that many customers continue to buy his product as the cost of loose oil is less than packaged oil. “ Also, daily wage labourers come to us since you can buy oil in small quantities. We started this mill as there was a lot of agricultural activity around and we used to get oil seeds from the surrounding areas,” he says, adding that old-timers will continue to patronise mills like his.

### **Permanent solution for human-animal conflict sought**

Vivasayigal Sangam, a non-political farmers’ association, has urged the State and Central governments to convene a meeting of stakeholders to find a permanent solution to the human-animal conflict in Coimbatore.

At a meeting convened here a few days ago in the presence of president ‘Vazhukkupparai’ Balu and general secretary P. Kandasamy, the farmers said that the Forest Department that was not concerned about the loss caused to humans and crops because of animals venturing out of forest was keen on acting against farmers even if they were not at fault.

Their condemnation comes in the wake of the Department acting against a farmer on whose land dead peafowl were found.

### **Urea-smuggling**

It also asked for stringent action against those involved in the smuggling of urea from Tamil Nadu to Kerala.

Citing preliminary investigation where it had come to light that the addresses of the consignee and consignor were false, the farmers sought a thorough probe and action against the guilty. In the same resolution they also called for the implementation of the order that asked for formation of procurement committees at district level headed by district Collectors.

### **Tenders**

They also came down heavily on the Horticulture Department for delaying the floating of tenders to buy implements.

And, they asked for officers to be not posted in their native districts.

They asked for bypass roads around Coimbatore and sought a probe in to the death of Agriculture Engineering Department officer Muthukumaraswamy.

### **Rs. 365-cr. proposal for drinking water supply**

A Rs. 365-crore proposal to ensure round-the-clock supply of drinking water to Chitradurga has been submitted to the State government, G.H. Thippareddy, MLA, has said.

If the government gives approval, the drinking water problem would be permanently solved, he said after inaugurating a drinking water purification unit installed at the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) here on Tuesday.

It has been installed by Merchants Souhardha Cooperative Bank.

The MLA said that installing drinking water purification units across the district had become inevitable as the water sources had high fluoride content.

### **Water purification units**

The MLA said that the purification unit installed on the APMC premises cost Rs. 6 lakh while the city municipal council spent about Rs. 18 lakh a unit.

It had been noticed that private drinking water purification units were providing 10 litres of water for just Rs. 2 a litre but the CMC was collecting Rs. 8 for 20 litres.

### **Action**

The issue would be brought to the notice of the CMC commissioner and action would be initiated, he said.

The MLA also alleged that owing to lack of proper maintenance of pipelines, the drinking water pumped from Vani Vilas Sagar and Shanti Sagar to Chitradurga city was being wasted.

## **NABARD to fund Telangana cooperative bank**

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) will finance the State cooperative bank of Telangana to the tune of Rs. 800 to Rs. 900 crore after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank (APCOB).

The financing will be done out of a new fund of Rs. 15,000 crore created by NABARD for cooperative banks in the country, its chairman Harsh Kumar Bhanwala told Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao when they met at latter's camp office on Tuesday. A release later said that NABARD also offered to finance Telangana State in agriculture, Mission Kakatiya, drinking water projects and other rural development programmes. Mr. Bhanwala requested Mr. Rao's intervention in speeding up projects as some of them were implemented at a slow pace.

## **Take up green house cultivation, farmers told**

Agriculture Minister Pocharam Srinivas Reddy and Deputy Speaker M. Padma Devender Reddy said the lives of farmers can be transformed with green house cultivation.

Addressing a huge gathering of farmers at this tiny village on Tuesday after launching green house cultivation programme for the first time in the State, Ms. Padma said these programmes were part of building a 'Bangaru Telangana'.

Mr. Srinivas Reddy said many tanks were neglected by Andhra rulers . Informing that 46,000 tanks were constructed during Kakatiya rule, he said the government was committed to restoring the tanks, which would recharge 20 lakh borewells across Telangana and improve the condition of farmers. Stating that 9,514 tanks are being taken up at a cost of Rs. 2,100 crore in the first year, he said these programmes would directly benefit farmers. "Poly house will protect the crop from natural problems like heavy rains, severe heat and cold and improve financial conditions. In the last one decade, only Rs. 24 crore was sanctioned for 125 acres in Telangana under this scheme with 50 percent subsidy, while this year the subsidy being offered is 75 percent to cover 1,000 acres every year at a cost of Rs. 250 crore," said Mr. Srinivas Reddy. He said small farmers can take up cultivation even in 500 metres. The government has been offering 75 per cent subsidy on the unit cost of Rs. 39.36 lakh, that comes to Rs. 29.52 per acre which includes construction of poly house, drip irrigation equipment, preparation of beds,

plantation of saplings and management of poly house. The government has fixed a target of 250 acres for Medak district in the year 2014-15 for green house construction. In the first phase, the programme was taken up in 50 acres at an estimated cost of Rs. 73.8 core. So far applications were received from farmers to take up green house cultivation in 44.28 acres.

As many as 147 mandals falling in 100 km radius in Medak, Ranga Reddy, Mahabubnagar, Warangal, Nizamabad and Nalgonda districts will be covered, Mr. Srinivas Reddy said, adding that the government has sanctioned Rs. 200 crore and one need not pay any bribe to get works done.

### **DPCs receive over 21,000 tonnes of paddy this season**

With the harvest season drawing to a close, Direct Procurement Centres in the district are set to wind up operations within the next few weeks.

S. Ayyappan, Regional Manager, Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC), said that 19,284 tonnes of paddy had been procured in the 48 centres set up by the TNCSC across the district as of date.

“Additionally, 2,080 tonnes of paddy have been procured at 5 DPCs set up by the Cooperation Department,” he added.

Officials in the agriculture department said they would be undertaking surveys across the district and shut down the DPCs where procurement had completely stopped.

“While the amount of paddy procured has substantially increased when compared to the previous year, farmers cultivating high-quality variety of paddy preferred to sell it in the markets since it is in demand and they could command a high price for it,” Mr. Ayyappan explained.

Speaking about the procurement in the district, Joint Director for Agriculture Jaisingh Gnanadurai said that while there was a marked increase of a few hundred tonnes of paddy over last year’s procurement, they expected the procurement to touch 40,000 metric tonnes since the yield this year was high across the district. A good yield of paddy had been expected from over 44,000 hectares in the district. An official said that there were no major cases of malpractice reported regarding the functioning of the DPCs.

“Other than a few minor issues, there were no major raids. The monitoring committees too ensured the smooth functioning of the centres,” he noted.

### **Unauthorised sale of fertilizers banned**

Special inspection teams of Department of Agriculture have banned the sale of Rs. 3.27 lakh-worth fertilizers and Rs. 1.44 lakh-worth pesticides to farmers as they were being sold without permission.

According to Joint Director of Agriculture C. Chandrasekaran, special inspection teams led by Agricultural Officers conducted surprise checks in 31 fertilizer outlets at Radhapuram, Nanguneri and Paappaakudi recently and found the traders had stocked 21.80 tonnes of chemical nutrients and pesticides for sale without obtaining proper permission from the Department of Agriculture.

Subsequently, the officials banned the sale of Rs. 3.27 lakh-worth fertilizers and Rs. 1.44 lakh-worth pesticides. Moreover, the team checked the quality of soluble chemical fertilizers and banned the sale of another one tonne soluble fertilizer as no permission had been obtained for selling it to farmers.

### **Samples for analysis**

“We’ve taken eight samples of soluble fertilizers during the raids and sent them for analysis,” Mr. Chandrasekaran said.

### **Accent on biodiversity research**



With biodiversity facing destruction in the country, K. Venkataraman, director, Zoological Survey of India called upon universities to take up research on biodiversity conservation for future India.

Delivering the convocation address at the 10th annual convocation of Thiruvalluvar University in the presence of Governor K. Rosaiah on Tuesday, he appealed to university faculty to lay emphasis on basic research on biodiversity conservation and awareness on conservation.

There should be emphasis on applied research topics too that are relevant to national needs and attention should be paid to solving problems that are specific to the local region, he said, adding, “Think locally, act globally.”

The problem, according to him, was that people expected incentives. “Like, there is no incentive for conservation of tigers in the country,” he noted.

Talking about scientific developments, he said, “Scientific development did not begin in Europe as many think. Rather, it started in India, in its caves where men drew pictures of animals and started their research.”

Mr. Venkataraman said that research began in the pre-Vedas period and went on till 1850s until the British came into the country and stopped all research, except those that they needed.

With biodiversity being crucial for the survival of all, he said, “Biodiversity is very important but we are destroying it. We need to conserve it for the future generation,” he added.

He pointed out that destruction to environment and biodiversity was the reason for presence of nutritional deficiency, diabetes and hypertension among people. “We are entering into an artificial world from being closer to nature. Hence, our lifestyle is changing,” he added.

The country accounts for diverse ecosystems. “We need to protect our country’s wealth. For this, we need research,” he insisted.

“Universities are the focal point of creative young minds, which if synergised with knowledgeable faculty can act as a seeding and breeding ground for new innovative ideas and technologies,” he added. This will lead to advancement of science and development of innovative home grown technologies, he pointed out.

Mr. Venkataraman stressed that the prospective for science-based economy is enormous and is the very reason why international communities are



coming forward to work with us,. He urged students and faculty to work towards nation building using modern knowledge.

A total of 45,016 candidates were awarded the degrees – 1,139 diploma, 35,963 undergraduates, 6,349 post graduates and 1,518 M.Phil candidates.



### **Diet soda builds up belly fat in older adults**



soda intake is directly linked to greater abdominal obesity in adults 65 years of age and older, says a study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society.

Chronic diet soda consumption may increase belly fat and contribute to greater risk of metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular diseases, it said.

“Our study seeks to fill the age gap by exploring the adverse health effects of diet soda intake in individuals 65 years of age and older,” said lead author Sharon Fowler from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

The burden of metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular disease, along with health care costs, is great in the ever-increasing senior population.

In an effort to combat obesity, many adults try to reduce sugar intake by turning to non-nutritive or artificial sweeteners such as aspartame, saccharin

or sucralose. The San Antonio Longitudinal Study of Aging (SALSA) enrolled 749 Mexican- and European-Americans, who were aged 65 and older at the start of the study (1992-96). Diet soda intake, waist circumference, height and weight were measured at study onset. The findings indicate that the increase in waist circumference among diet soda drinkers was almost triple that among non-users at follow-up. “The SALSA study shows that increasing diet soda intake was associated with escalating abdominal obesity, which may increase cardiometabolic risk in older adults,” Fowler added. Older individuals who drink diet soda daily, particularly those at high cardiometabolic risk, should try to curb their consumption of artificially sweetened drinks, the authors said.

### **High-energy breakfast good for diabetics**

A high-energy breakfast and modest dinner can control dangerous blood sugar spikes all day, says a study.

More than 382 million people in the world suffer from diabetes, predominantly type-2 diabetes.

For these people, blood sugar surges – glucose spikes after meals – can be life threatening, leading to cardiovascular complications.

A new Tel Aviv University study published in *Diabetologia* proposes a new way to suppress deadly glucose surges throughout the day – eating a high-caloric breakfast and a more modest dinner.

The combined consumption of a high-energy breakfast and a low-energy dinner decreases overall daily hyperglycaemia in type-2 diabetics, said the study.

“We found that by eating more calories at breakfast, when the glucose response to food is lowest, and consuming fewer calories at dinner, glucose peaks after meals and glucose levels throughout the day were significantly reduced,” said professor Daniela Jakubowicz of Tel Aviv University.

The new study was conducted on eight men and 10 women aged 30-70 with type-2 diabetes.

Patients were randomized and assigned either a “B diet” or “D diet” for one week.

The B diet featured a 2,946 kilojoule (kj) breakfast, 2,523 kj lunch, and 858 kj dinner, and the D diet featured a 858 kj breakfast, 2,523 kj lunch, and 2,946 kj dinner.

The results of the study showed that post-meal glucose elevations were 20 percent lower and levels of insulin, C-peptide, and GLP-1 were 20 percent higher in participants on the B diet compared with those on the D diet.

Despite the fact that both diets contained the same calories, blood glucose levels rose 23 percent less after the lunch preceded by a large breakfast.



## THE TIMES OF INDIA

### **Sugarcane on a high, other crops take a hit**

MUMBAI: The state's economic survey reveals that the only crop that has done well is the water-guzzling sugarcane. The output of all other major crops—pulses, cereals and cotton—showed a dip. Overall, the sector shows a negative growth, painting a grim picture for the days to come. Cereals and pulses may be in short supply and may even get costlier with the costlier imports.

According to advance estimates, agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors are expected to grow by only 1.1%. "The production of food grains is expected to decline by 2.9%. The production of pulses and oilseeds is also expected to decline by 3.4% and 9.6% respectively. Production of fruits and vegetables is expected to increase by only 1.1%," says the survey. With unseasonal showers and hailstorms badly hitting farms since October and the recent bouts in January, February and March virtually putting them at loss, agriculture production is surely going to go down. To meet the demands in the absence of domestic produce, import from other states and countries would increase overall costs. According to experts attached to agriculture

produce marketing committees (APMCs), the movement of agriculture produce in markets might take a hit as imports from other states and countries would have to be increased.

"During the kharif season of 2014, sowing was completed on 145.79 lakh hectare, which is 3% less than the previous year (150.56 hectare). Area under cereals and pulses decreased while that of oilseeds and sugarcane slightly increased as compared to the previous year. The production of cereals, pulses, oilseeds and cotton is expected to decrease substantially while that of sugar would marginally grow," the survey stated.

Pickle your taste buds

*The ancient art of preserving food has piqued the interest of foodies worldwide. As kimchis, chutneys and kombucha go mainstream, we find out why the buzz around fermented food -the hottest culinary trend of 2015 -is getting louder.*

You probably have fond childhood memories of relishing your granny's homemade achar and chutneys. Remember the lengths you'd go to, to steal a palmful of murabba? Food, as they say, is the best nostalgia. The world over, food enthusiasts and connoisseurs have realised that a winning dish is one through which people relive their memories. Thus, fermented ingredients have gone high up on a chef's list.

Sandor Katz, fermentation revivalist and author of *The Art of Fermentation* and *Wild Fermentation*, whose endorsement of fermented ingredients has played a major role in its entry into gourmet restaurant menus, describes these foods as 'the flavourful space between fresh and rotten'. "Though the process has been around for centuries, it is only now that it is being tapped for its full potential. Chefs, home cooks and even supermarkets shelves are looking beyond fermented staples like wine, cheese, bread and yogurt." Its popularity is on the rise also because fermentation increases the shelf life of food, its flavour, causes minimum wastage, is cost-effective and can be easily done at home.

## **THE INDIAN PICTURE**

Touted as the hottest food trend of 2015, cultured foods such as the hugely popular Korean kimchi (made from vegetables), the many varieties of Indian chutney, the German delicacy sauerkraut (sour cabbage), Thai fish sauce nam pla, Japanese miso paste (fermented soybeans), Russian kombucha (a fermented drink made with tea) and its milky counterpart kefir, are some traditional dishes that have become mainstream ingredients in sandwiches, rolls, soups, salads and beverages across the globe.

Even in India, where dosa, chaas, dhokla, appam and chutney are popular dishes, chefs are experimenting with alternative fermented foods in their menus. Says nutrition consultant and food blogger Sangeeta Khanna, "Fine dining establishments across India have opened their kitchens to traditional fermented recipes like kanji (a drink prepared from the juice of black carrots), curries made from kachampuli (a fruit vinegar from Kerala), jau ki ghaat (a ragi drink from Rajasthan), iromba (a spicy Manipuri chutney made from fresh vegetables and fish) etc." The distinct flavour that fermentation imparts to a dish is also one of the major reasons why chefs are using this technique. "The process adds layers of complexity to the food. For example, you can see a world of difference between milk and cheese or grape juice and wine, the latter being fermented. Fermented foods taste strong, acidic, sometimes pungent and matured. The taste profile of consumers is very evolved today. People are acquiring a taste for it," says Mumbai-based Chef Akhil Multani.

## **A GOOD KICK IN THE GUT**

With people focussing more on holistic well-being, cultured food with its inherent probiotic health benefits, has caught the fancy of consumers. Says macrobiotic nutritionist Tarika Ahuja, "At any time, our gut has good and bad bacteria. Eating healthy fermented foods increases the good bacteria and helps digestion. It also improves immunity and purifies the blood, as the bacteria flushes out all the toxins." Snacking on these foods also means you don't need to pop probiotic pills, as the former contain triple the amount of bacteria. And above all, you can go back to your childhood memories by just 'pickling' your tongue!

## **FERMENTATION FESTIVALS AROUND THE WORLD**

Every year, to celebrate the benefits of fermented foods, world-class fermenting artisans and enthusiasts come together to set up festivals. Boston Ferments in New England, Santa Barbara Fermentation Festival in California, Fermentation Fest in Wisconsin, Ganggyeong Fermented Seafood Festival in Korea, are among the dozen festivals that were held in 2014. From holding workshops on how to master fermentation to having a market that sells homemade samples of cultured foods and drinks, these festivals give you a low-down on everything fermented

## **BOTTLE-FERMENTED COCKTAILS**

Bartenders and mixologists are using everything from champagne yeast to koji, a fungus used to make miso and sake, to ferment cocktail ingredients and make bottle-fermented drinks. A tricky process, this technique involves adding yeast to mixed cocktails, then bottling them and letting them sit for a spell. The resulting cocktails carry a unique carbonation with a bready flavour!

## **EAT CULTURED FOODS, BE SMART**

According to a study published in the journal Nutrition in Clinical Practice, apart from being good for the health, probiotic foods actually make you smarter! If you find yourself struggling with brain fog or depression, the problem may lie in your gut. If you lead a stressful life and have a diet high in sugary and processed food, the beneficial microbiome in your gut becomes imbalanced - which cause unclear thinking and excessive worrying. This can be corrected by consuming foods like buttermilk , unpasteurised sauerkraut, kimchi etc.

### **How many portions should I eat?**

"Eat homemade fermented food thrice a day, along with your meals. Include curd, pickled vegetables and fermented drinks as accompaniments. Items made of fermented rice and pulses can also be consumed," says health expert Neeraj Mehta

## **Indian experts sow the seeds of farming in Malawi**

In faraway Malawi, Africa, Indian agriculture expertise is slowly growing its presence and reaching out to help local farm communities.

India, a major importer of lentils from East Africa is also reaping benefits. A limited quantity of lentils is being imported currently from Malawi.

Back home in Dharwad region of Karnataka, efforts are on to grow lentils since similar agro-climatic conditions exist. University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, is a lead player in the efforts. India is hugely deficient in pulses production and people in proteins.

Catalysing the expanding engagement between the two nations is a collaborative tri-partite effort between Sathguru Management Consultants, Hyderabad; Cornell University, US, and the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, in Bunda the capital of Malawi, with funding from USAID.

The trio are work working to bring together innovation and agriculture technology to reach resource-less farmers.

The focus areas of the AIP- Malawi activity launched in April 2014 is to improve seed science and technology curriculum; introducing e-learning tools, creating a seed processing facility and supporting seed entrepreneurs and the seed enterprise development.

The University recently imported a seed processing unit from Fowler Westrup, Bengaluru, to give a push to the industry. Corn and bean are the staple in Malawi and the country is rich in germplasm. Indian seed companies have a tremendous scope to contribute, says K Vijayaraghavan, Founder Director of Sathguru Management.

In addition to supporting the University in accelerating their breeding programmes in collaboration with Cornell, Sathguru is encouraging small enterprises to come up along the value chain in agriculture.

The presence of Mahindra Farm implements and Mahyco seed is already helping. Cotton is emerging as a big interest in entire Africa as well as Malawi, says Vijayaraghavan.

The Agriculture Improvement Project under the “Feed the Future” initiative, endeavours to increase food security and improve the quality of life of Malawi farmers.

The Lilongwe University is the only agricultural institution in Malawi with most other organisation involved in agriculture sector there.

### **Buying by Bengal halts fall in potato price**

The decline in potato prices has been contained in West Bengal over the last one week on the back of the State Government’s decision to provide buying support.

#### **Farmers retain**

Procurement, though, is yet to start in full swing across various districts.

Potato price ruled between Rs. 150 and Rs. 210 per 50-kg bag (or between Rs. 3 and Rs. 4.20 a kg) at the farm-end, same as last week.

Trade sources claim that the farmers are withholding stock in an anticipation of the State buying support.

According to Purnendu Bose, State Agriculture Minister, procurement has begun in some areas on Monday. It is expected to gather pace over the next two days.

“We will continue with the buying support for the next seven days before deciding on the next course of action,” he told *BusinessLine*.

#### **Record crop**

A bumper crop – of approximately 110 lakh tonnes coupled with weak demand from neighbouring States – triggered a price crash in Bengal. This led to four farmer suicides here over the past seven days. The announcement of the procurement scheme, trade sources maintain, has, however, improved sentiments.



Under the procurement scheme, the State agri-marketing department through its shops (called 'Sufal Bangla') will buy potatoes from farmers at a price of Rs. 5/kg. It would then be sold in retail markets through various fair-price shops.

## Business Standard

Coffee prices decline on good crop prospects in Brazil



Indian [coffee](#) growers are worried at bean prices dropping in the past few weeks, after news broke that [Brazil](#) would harvest a better-than-expected crop in 2015-16. [Arabica](#) prices have declined as much as 30 per cent.

Currently, Arabica bean prices are ruling at 125 cents a pound (lb) compared to 180 cents a lb in October 2014. The [ICO](#) (International Coffee Organization) composite Indicator price stood at 127.97 cents a lb in the last trading session on March 12 — the lowest price in the current month.

LIFFE [Robusta](#) coffee futures extended losses to a 13-month low on March 12, on fund and technical selling. LIFFE May Robusta coffee futures closed down \$52, or 2.9 per cent, at \$1,768 a tonne, after touching \$1,756 — the lowest level since February 2014 — said the Coffee Board.

“The long dry weather in Brazil last year had led to a belief the country would harvest less crop in 2015-16. However, good rains in January and February in that country has now changed the outlook and it is expected to harvest a better crop than expected. This resulted in price fall everywhere,”

Ramesh Rajah, president, Coffee Exporters' Association, told Business Standard.

The news of improved weather in Brazil added to the selling pressure. Farm gate prices in Karnataka, which contributes 70 per cent of India's coffee output, have crashed 20-22 per cent since early January.