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THE HINDU

...The differentiated impacts of climate change



Intense water scarcity and increasing summer temperatures hurt agriculture and tourism income of Southern Europe. Many northern European countries benefit with lower heating costs, higher agricultural productivity and longer tourist seasons. There are winners and losers within Europe, but because Europe is developed, the losers can manage the changes.

Given the manageable negative payoff from climate change, why is Europe acting? Part of it maybe a desire to gain prominence in the world stage, a stage increasingly being dominated by the US and China. They can get leadership credibility only if they lead by example. Second, a higher sense of social equity in European countries may be driving action through a social justice angle. Third, European companies stand to gain from action on climate change. Some of the world's leading wind energy manufacturers and LED lighting companies are European. 92% of responding Euro 300 companies report that climate regulation presents an opportunity to their business.

Now, India. India is and will be badly affected by the changing climate. We are a hot, dry and poor country - thus vulnerable to the heating and drying aspects of climate change (think floods, droughts, lost livelihoods and increased infection) and with limited financial space to adapt. We have abundant reserves of relatively inexpensive coal. We have a young country with a large poor and middle class hungry for iphones and commercial dreams. They will want the government to spend on education and jobs, not on carbon sequestration. We cannot take on binding unilateral targets of emission without ambitious binding emission reduction commitments and

financial assistance from developed countries. Why? India cannot afford to cut its emissions aggressively - but even if it did, this would be futile if the rest of the world continued to emit for then, the world would still get warmer.

Taken together, India's payoffs if status quo persists are very negative unless everyone cooperates; China's is negative; US's is very mixed; Europe, though the status quo payoff is not very negative, by credibly signalling that they will always cooperate, has made it more likely for others to cooperate . Returning to the prisoner's dilemma, if prisoner A knew with certainty that prisoner B would always keep silent (say he had a secret camera in prisoner B's room), it is extremely likely he would keep quiet, thus enabling both of them to be set free. Consider this: Europe made its 40% emissions reduction public announcement in October 2014. The China and US joint announcement to curb greenhouse gas emissions came a month later, in November, after eluding the world for so long.

The depressing truth is that the differentiated "payoffs" from climate change makes substantive action unlikely in a consensus based forum like the UN. We could try for better success by framing the issue on moral grounds like slavery and shame countries into complying by invoking reputational consequences. But that's a long shot.

Nature's heroes



The main focus of Indian conservation efforts should be on the establishment of landscape corridors, feels Dr. Asir Jawahar Thomas Johnsingh, who was awarded the Sálim Ali National Award For Nature Conservation 2014 on Wednesday.

Dr. Johnsingh, a pioneer in the area of field research on free ranging large mammals, was one of the three recipients of the award instituted by Bombay Natural History Society in honour of the ‘birdman of India’.

“The problem with the government’s efforts is that a lot of planning, discussion and talks keep happening, but on the ground there is very conservation taking place. In fact, it is totally lacking,” stressed Dr. Johnsingh who spoke to The Hindu before the commencement of the award ceremony.

His recent work involved an extensive survey of Western Ghats from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu to Bhimashankar in Maharashtra, with the support of the Ministry of Environment & Forests, and the Save the Tiger Fund. “We have identified several landscapes and corridors to support large mammal conservation,” he said. Some corridors identified include the landscape between Periyar and Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, and the one between Mudumalai and Mukurthi, an important corridor which nobody was talking about, felt Dr. Johnsingh who has worked as a vertebrate ecologist studying species such as Asiatic Elephant, Asiatic Lion, Goral, Himalayan Ibex, Nilgiri Tahr, Sloth Bear, Grizzled Giant Squirrel, Nilgiri Langur and Asiatic Wild Dog.

His co-awardee was renowned ornithologist, Prof. Ian Newton who received the Sálim Ali International Award For Nature Conservation 2014. He is particularly known for his path-breaking study of the Eurasian Sparrowhawk bird population in Scotland, spanning 27 long years!

“As someone who is in this field of research, the satisfaction comes from knowing that my findings have a use somewhere. It is partly through my efforts that some birds that were extremely rare have recovered in Britain and have now become common. That is the most satisfying thing,” said Prof. Newton.

Speaking of the threats to bird species today, he explained, “The main factors affecting food supply of the birds, especially in Britain where I live is agriculture. It is getting more and more intensive and increased use of pesticides. They don’t kill just the pests, but other insects and animals too. Over the last 30 to 40 years, there has been a massive decline of all things that the birds eat. Insects that were quite common are now very rare.”

Receiving the Sálim Ali Award For Community Conservation was the relatively unknown Sandy Beach Youth Group from Lakshadweep. They are a group of around 20 youngsters who ran a small coffee shop on the beach on one of the islands, which they slowly got converted into a dynamic hub of nature education and awareness. The youngsters along with the community are actively involved in sea turtle rescue and conservation, besides regularly organising beach clean-ups.

From farmer to manual scavenger



Thanikachalam Sekar (53) cultivates groundnut in one acre of land in Vettavalam Village of Thiruvannamalai District. However, on Thursday, he was at work cleaning sewage in a stormwater drain on Poonamallee High Road near Ripon Buildings in Chennai, 200 km away from his native village.

Five months after the National Human Rights Commission pulled up the State government for engaging dalits as manual scavengers, civic bodies are deploying a number of farmers belonging to other backward classes for such work. The Supreme Court has also ordered States to ban manual scavenging.

“I have started cleaning drains in the city and earn Rs. 450 per day. Rain-fed agriculture is very difficult to continue in,” said Mr. Sekar. The drains are polluted with sewage, yet Mr. Sekar was not wearing any protective gear. He was not concerned about the stigma either.

The contractor who carried out the work on behalf of the Corporation said a number of farmers like Mr. Sekar were engaged in the work. “Farmers from

dry areas including Thiruvannamalai are ready to do such work. They also use the wages to procure farm inputs,” he said.

“If we use machines for such operations, the telecom cables will get damaged. So, we have no alternative,” he added. Chennai Corporation officials reportedly used the services of the contractor after the CMRL diverted waste water, clogging the drains.

“Many hotels near Ripon Buildings illegally let sewage into stormwater drains. The Public Health Department wanted to clean the drain to tackle public health issues,” said an official of Chennai Corporation. Recently, civic body officials in all zones of the city were asked to implement the provisions of the Prohibition of Employment of Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.

In November 2014, the National Human Rights Commission observed that people engaged in manual scavenging are often dalits. The NHRC also pointed to violation of the Fundamental Rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

“The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis can intervene even if the person is not a dalit. This is a violation of the Act. The person concerned will get a jail term of two years and a fine of Rs.5 lakh,” said Dr. Lata Om Prakash Mahato, Member of National Commission for Safai Karamcharis

Drought hits cotton crop



Scarcity of water for irrigation has hit the cotton growers in Uppilliyapuram and Thuraiyur blocks in the district this season, with the plants withering away in the scorching sun.

A number of farmers in these two blocks complain that poor realisation of rain had brought down the formation of bolls and consequent yield this season.

T. Jayabal of Chikathambur near Thuraiyur says he had invested about Rs. 13,000 to raise cotton crop on one acre. The village, blessed with black soil, was suited for raising the crop, but the crop failed because of failure of monsoon.

According to Agriculture Department officials, about 2,000 acres had been brought under the crop, 1,000 acres each in Thuraiyur and Uppliyapuram blocks.

The crop was mainly grown in Pachaperumalpatti, Aangiyam, Koppampatti, Shobanapuram, Uppliyapuram, Okkarai, and E. Badharapatti (all in Uppliyapuram block) and T. Ranganathapuram, Maravathur, Chellipalayam, Chikathambur, Irunattham, Perumpalayam, and Urugoor in Thuraiyur block. The average yield per acre ranged between 600 and 700 kg every season but this year it was nearly 100 kg.

Farmers anticipated some showers in January this year for saving the crop but were disappointed, say the sources.

Water crisis pushes farmers to switch over to millet cultivation

The fear of water crisis and a possible drought has led to steep decline in farming activities in the district.

The Irrigation Department has been releasing water to canals for the past few weeks on 'on-and-off basis' to facilitate cultivation of crops. However, the agricultural activities have not commenced owing to the fear of drought and water shortage.

The Agriculture Department had fixed the target of sowing of crops in 26,350 ha of land, M.N. Rajasulochana, Joint Director, Department of Agriculture, told *The Hindu*.

Nevertheless, according to the statistics available with the department, sowing had been completed in 17,409 hectares of land till March 16, which was 66.01 per cent of the targeted area.

The chances of farmers taking up cultivation in the remaining area during this summer were dim as the farmers in a majority of villages had stopped sowing and transplantation of paddy crop, among others, owing to the fear of suffering losses, another official said.

The statistics reveal that paddy transplantation had been completed in about 12,237 hectares of land against the targeted 20,000 ha. The district is considered the 'rice bowl of Karnataka' as farmers cultivate paddy in at least 40,000 hectares, every year.

Meanwhile, it has come to the notice of the department that farmers had switched over to millets and other pulses in the current summer, as these crops would not require much water.

The fear of drought is haunting the farmers. Besides, the farmers were suspecting that the quantity of water that would be supplied this year could be inadequate. Therefore, the farmers had shifted to other crops, Shambhunahalli Suresh, leader of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS), said.

The farmers have cultivated millets in 1,959 ha till March 16.

"Millets need only about 20 per cent of the water needed for paddy cultivation. That might have prompted farmers to switch over to millets," C.R. Ravishankar, Associate Director of Research (Ragi), Zonal Agricultural Research Station (V.C. Farm), Mandya, told *The Hindu* .

Cole crops help ryots reap rich dividends



It turned out to be a risk worth taking. When the Department of Agriculture introduced Cole crops, or a family of cool climate vegetables, on six demonstration farms in Puducherry during this Rabi season, neither the farmers nor the officials expected to see healthy cauliflowers weighing around 1.5 kg.

“Some of the cauliflowers we grew are better than the ones we saw during our exposure visit to Hosur, Krishnagiri and Udhagamandalam,” said Malaroli, one of the participating farmers.

Noticing the rising demand for vegetables such as cauliflower and cabbage in Puducherry markets, the Department of Agriculture set up six demonstration farms of one acre each in Thirukkanur, Vambupet, Chettipet, Sellipet and Koonichampet, through the Centrally-sponsored Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) scheme. Cauliflower, beetroot and cabbage were grown.

The farmers were guided in the know-how by the Farm Information and Advisory Centre (FIAC) in Thirukkanur. Seedlings which were suitable for the plains were procured from Bengaluru and raised in the Perunthalaivar Kamaraj Krishi Vigyan Kendra Nursery and distributed to the farmers free of cost. They were also given farm inputs on subsidised cost.

The department wanted to improve crop diversification, increase farmers’ income and understand the possibility of cultivating such crops in this

region, said G. Ravipragasam, project director, ATMA. Among the strategies adopted by the Agriculture Department is that of minimal or zero spraying of chemical pesticides, besides the use of cost effective biological pest control measures like spraying of neem oil.

Timely planting and care are essential for these crops, as cabbage is prone to attacks from the diamondback moth, said M. Thamizh Selvam, agricultural officer, Thirukkanur. “It was not an easy task to convince the farmers at first because of the risks involved. Also, these Cole crops are not generally cultivated in the Puducherry region,” he said.

The farmers’ returns have improved vastly, said Ms. Malaroli. “My profits have increased from Rs. 25,000 per acre of cow peas (karamani) which I was cultivating earlier to around Rs. 1 lakh on my field which has cabbage, cauliflower and beetroot.”

The project has reduced the dependency on middle men. The farmers supply vegetables directly to the farmers’ market (uzhavar sandhai) and also to retail outlets. Each cauliflower fetches them between Rs. 25 and Rs. 40. “We want to try other crops such as broccoli, gherkins, chayote (chow-chow),” said Mr. Ravipragasam. Training for the farmers has included forecasting and sensitisation to pests and diseases. Ms. Malaroli said that they were also taught a few recipes. “I learnt how to make cauliflower pakoda and soup,” she smiled.

My profits have increased from Rs. 25,000 per acre of cow peas which I was cultivating earlier to around Rs. 1 lakh now” – Malaroli, farmer

Agri-technology expo at UAS today

The University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur (UAS-R), in association with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), has planned an agriculture technology exhibition at its main campus here on Friday. It will be a part of a series of one-day exhibitions organised on the same day in 24 centres across the country. In Karnataka, the expo is organised in Raichur only.

Addressing a press conference at the Reporters’ Guild here on Thursday, P.M. Salimath, Vice-Chancellor of the university, said that agricultural machinery and equipment with advanced technologies would be on display at the expo. “The use of advanced machinery that demands minimum

manpower and does maximum work has become inevitable in the farming sector due to the fast diminishing labour-force in rural India. The technology expo would introduce newer technologies in the sector and guide farmers the way for reducing labour-pressure,” he said. Manufacturers of farming equipment and machinery would also put their products on display, he added.

Kisan Sangha launches membership drive

Ranganath Yelandur, president of the State unit of Bharatiya Kisan Sangha, said on Thursday that the Sangha intends to enrol two crore members across the country in its membership drive.

He was speaking at the inaugural function of the membership drive programme organised by the district unit of the Bharatiya Kisan Sangha, here.

Mr. Ranganath said it was a tragedy that famers were committing suicide in the country. Agriculture should be made profitable, he said.

The country could progress only through agriculture and not through industrialisation or construction of buildings or roads. Farmers should be given the powers to decide the price of their produce instead of middlemen, he said.

Satyanarayana Udupa, General Secretary of district unit of the Sangha, said that the Sangha aimed at enrolling 25,000 members in the district by April 15.



Explained: Wet blanket



Unseasonal rain in large parts of north, west and central India since early this month brought a grim prognosis for farmers. HARISH DAMODARAN analyses.

Which crops are worst affected?

Pulses, mustard, vegetables, seed spices from coriander to jeera. Waterlogging has hit potato in Aligarh, leading to rotting. But this has been offset by bumper production in West Bengal and the east. Potato is retailing at Rs 8/kg in Kolkata; state plans to give freight subsidy to bail out farmers selling in distress.

Why was this rain so lethal?

Because of when it came. March is when the rabi crop — be it wheat, mustard or pulses such as chana and masur — is either at the reproductive (i.e., flowering and seed-setting) or grain-filling, and even ripening stages. At this time, unlike the earlier germination, tillering and vegetative growth stages, rainfall is generally undesirable. Light showers may help to keep temperatures low so there is proper grain formation and no premature ripening — but we had heavy rain accompanied by strong winds and hail in many places. Some areas like south-eastern Rajasthan (Sawai Madhopur,

Bundi, Kota and Jhalawar) got up to 130 mm of rain in a single day this week.

What was the damage to mustard?

South-eastern Rajasthan and adjoining areas of MP (Shivpuri, Gwalior, Morena, Bhind) and UP (Jhansi, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Banda) is the mustard belt. “There’s been extensive damage,” S Chandra, director of Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals, a farm extension consultancy firm, said. Mustard is harvested from the third week of February to mid-March. “Farmers would have kept the crop out to dry before threshing. Moisture ingress from the pods would have caused the seeds inside to germinate, which could affect the amount of oil that can be extracted,” Chandra said.

What about chana and masur?

Much of the crop was in the grain-filling stage, and would have suffered significant damage. Even for the crop that was in the flowering or pod-formation stage, such heavy rain would have been bad. Quality issues like discolouration and non-uniform size of grains are likely.

And the traditionally politically sensitive onion crop?

The picture is not clear yet. The late kharif crop that is harvested in January-March and accounts for about 30 per cent of the total output, has faced the most damage. More important is the fate of the main rabi crop (50 per cent of production) that will be harvested from mid-April to mid-July. “We are getting some reports of the standing rabi crop having been affected in places like Nasik. A clearer picture should emerge in coming days,” said Pradipta Sahoo, Business Head (Horticulture) at Mother Dairy Fruit & Vegetable Pvt Ltd.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Mango supply can't meet demand

The Hindu new year, Gudi Padwa, is just around the corner but the famed and much-loved alphonso mangoes are missing from the shelves.

Unseasonal rain has hit the agriculture output badly and mangoes are no exception. Traders say the shortage of alphonso mangoes has reached 60%, but the prices have almost doubled.

With exports to the European Union starting in April, the supply may dip by almost 70%, said a trader.

Ratnagiri-based grower Mandar Desai said that though mangoes are arriving, the fully ripened ones, which can be used immediately for Gudi Padwa, are in short supply. "Unseasonal rain and high demand for festival are responsible for the crisis. Last Padwa, a dozen of ready-to-eat alphonsoes cost anything between Rs 600 and Rs 900. This year, it is sold for Rs 1,000-Rs 1,800," said Desai.

The prices generally drop by April first week as fresh stocks arrive. But this year it may hover around Rs 600-Rs 900 per dozen. Last year, the cost was around Rs 400 to Rs 600. "Alphonso supply may be 30-35% less this year," added Desai.

Nishant Sawant, a grower from Konkan, said the supply could drop by half this year. "Not just the rain, but the re-flowering from December till January due to sudden weather changes has also affected the crop," he said.

Sawant said the sudden changes in weather and its consequent effect on mangoes are perhaps the first he has seen as a grower in the last 15 years. "Though such changes happen in a long cycle, the severity this time is extreme. So much so that my production has come down by 50% - from 3,000 parcels I supply each year to 1,500," said Sawant, pegging the current shortage of alphonso in the market at 60%. He said that instead of harvesting the crop daily (as he would every year), he now does it twice or thrice a

week.

For growers from Konkan, the region known for alphonso mangoes, the production may come down by about 70%. "Only 20% to 30% produce is left across Konkan, especially in Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg and Raigad. The variation in temperature that started around December 20 not only caused double flowering but an increase in male flowers, which affects the output," said Vivek Bhide, a grower and exporter. The yield is so low that Bhide has decided not to export mangoes this year.

Nathsaheb Parashram Khaire, a fruit commission agent in Gultekdi, said the city is receiving close to 1,000 boxes (each box contains four to seven dozen mangoes) a day as against 2,000 boxes it used to get last year during this period. "The Kesar variety, which comes from Gujarat, may also be short by 30-40% this year due to unseasonal rain there," he said.

Start bird watching for a cause today

Watching and counting birds was never so useful. You can contribute in the conservation of house sparrows by counting the number of birds in your neighborhood and telling the biodiversity and wildlife conservation lab of Lucknow University about it.

University researchers and environmentalists in collaboration with Uttar Pradesh State Biodiversity Board have urged city folks to not only keep an account of the number of sparrows but also provide them food and shelter by creating nests out of waste material.

"Getting out of the house between 7am and 7:30am, counting them and sending feedback will certainly help us in analyzing the situation," said Amita Kanaujia, associate professor in the department of zoology at Lucknow University."

A study shows that though there has been a considerable increase in the number of house sparrows in Chowk, Aminabad, Daliganj and New Hyderabad, due to urbanization, people in Gomtinagar and Indiranagar have failed to see even a single sparrow.

"Let us adopt a sparrow-friendly behaviour as rampant urbanization and changing lifestyle over the years has widely destructed the natural habitat of

the sparrows, which love to make their nests inside houses of human beings," said Pratibha Singh, secretary of the Board.

Lack of sufficient food and excessive use of insecticides and pesticides in gardens and agricultural fields is another cause for the dwindling number of sparrows and other common birds, says the study.

Elaborating upon these Singh said, "Sparrows do not get grains to feed on as the home makers now procure packaged clean grains from supermarkets and malls and the practice of women cleaning grains at home no longer exists."

To raise awareness about the decline in the number of sparrows, students of department of zoology of University of Lucknow on Thursday distributed free artificial nest boxes in different parts of the city and adjoining areas.

Sun powers winds of change in rural UP

At a primary school in Saraidand village of Sonbhadra district, dozens of students rush to queue up before a tap to quench their thirst from pure RO water. This is a new phenomenon. Not very long ago, water of any kind, let alone RO water, was a distant dream in this village, bereft of electricity. But solar power has changed all that.

Solar energy has come as a boon for un-electrified pockets of rural UP still untouched by the conventional electrification programmes. From running ROs at government schools to heating water for bath, not to mention charging of mobiles, villages in remote areas are getting on with normal life thanks to the sun power.

Across the state, the gloomy lives of the thousands of poor and the downtrodden are shining after more than one lakh solar-powered streetlights were installed in hundreds of villages. In the SP government's prestigious Lohia Avas Yojana, the government is providing a solar power pack for fans, LED lights and mobile to the each owner.

"So impressed is the government of India with this project that a team had inspected the Lohia Avas and confirmed to follow this model all over the country," said rural development minister, Arvind Singh Gope. UP in fact has become a leading state in the solar powered street lights, installation of ROs and power pack.

"Just three years back, UP did not have even a proper framework and laid down policy in the field of solar energy and in the past three years, now it is set to produce 52 MW of solar power, created a offline grid network, spreading a rooftop solar packs and most importantly, the government is providing solar power gen sets for agricultural activities, street lights , fans and installing RO water treatment plants!

" Backed by Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, who has evinced keen interest in solar energy, I formulated a solar energy policy and invited private investors in 2013 and nearly 100 MW for generation will start soon," Jivesh Nandan, principal secretary IT and solar energy, told TOI.

Similarly UP is also a pioneer in providing solar-powered RO water plants for primary schools in rural areas. In order to address the power crisis, the government is also setting up solar-powered submersible water pumps and fans in classrooms. More than 200 primary schools have already got solar-powered RO plants.

For farmers also, the government is providing solar energy pumps with 75% subsidy. "This will minimise the woes of farmers who have to depend on diesel genset which escalates the cost of farm produce," Nandan said.

7 reasons to drink coconut water

Coconut water is one of the most nutritious drinks

- 1) It improves circulation and is known to clean your digestive tract.
- 2) Coconut water not only makes your immune system stronger but also helps the body fight different types of viruses.
- 3) If you suffer from kidney stones, include coconut water in your diet. Drinking it regularly will break up the stones and make them easier to push out.
- 4) Have urinary problems? Have a glass of naariyal paani to get quick relief.
- 5) If you're suffering from a hangover, nothing will help you faster than having some coconut water.

6) Tender coconut water is very rich in electrolytes and potassium, among other things. Potassium helps regulating blood pressure and heart function.

7) Coconut water is known to be more nutritious than whole milk because it has no cholesterol and lesser fat.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

How to tackle trade barriers in agriculture, meat exports

Issues relating to trade hurdles such as sanitary, phytosanitary (SPS) and tariff barriers in export of meat products from the country need to be addressed. It can be done by adopting global standards and regulations.

Strict inspection and supervision of exporting units is required during licensing and post-licensing periods. This requires the Centre to play a vital role in regulating the adoption of better standards for production, processing, packing and transportation of products by exporters.

Adoption of standards will not be an easy affair for exporters to implement and authorities to enforce. But, in the long run, forecasting a high return out of such investment in the form of increased share in global trade will be obvious.

Largest exporter

India is one among the largest exporters of product group “Meat and Edible Meat Offal” (HS Code 02). During 2013, total exports in this category of meat were \$4.8 billion.

The country has also witnessed a continuous growth in exports of this product. Vietnam is one among the major market for our exporters. In 2013, exports of meat to Vietnam were valued at \$1.9 billion, about 40 per cent of meat shipments to the global market.

Despite high tariff rate, India’s market share in Vietnam has grown over the years. Malaysia is also among the largest destination for Indian shippers. It makes up some 9 per cent in total meat exports.

Among the markets that have emerged newly, exporters have made remarkable progress are progressing remarkably in Thailand.

During 2008 and 2009, total meat exports from this destination was \$0.14 million and \$0.08 million. It increased to \$342 million by 2013.

Recent notifications

From January 2013 to March 2015, there have been 163 instances where countries have notified SPS measure against its trading partners.

Most of these notifications were regarding food safety, human health, animal health and disease and certificate requirements. Similarly, a few notifications concerning standard requirements such as labelling and packing were raised under tariff barriers category.

Many of these notifications concerned all trading partners and not just India alone. In recent years, only Oman and Ukraine have notified India-specific SPS measures.

In 2012, Oman instituted emergency measure to prevent the entry of highly pathogenic avian influenza virus.

Similarly, Ukraine came up SPS notification against India in 2011 to prohibit the imports of animals susceptible to foot and mouth disease, their products and raw materials into its territory.

According to the notification, “the imports of other commodities from India, which are under the control of the State Veterinary Service, should be carried out according to veterinary requirements for imports into Ukraine of products subject to state veterinary and sanitary control and supervision”.

In both cases, no loss in exports was observed and the impact was nil in Oman markets. Exporters increased market share to 16 per cent in 2013 compared with 15 per cent from previous years.

Special corner

Though the Indian meat industry is growing and exporters are grabbing the opportunity in the international market, the Centre has to ensure

sustainability of the market by enforcing effective compliance to maintain the product quality.

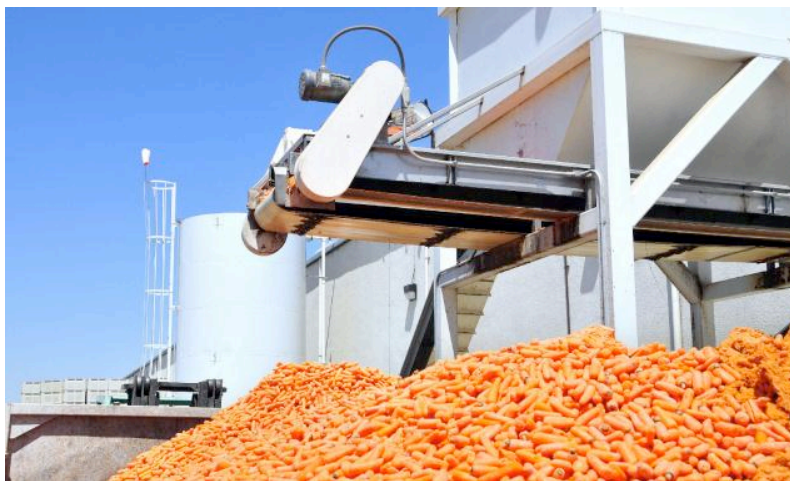
On March 9, Apeda launched meat.net, a special corner to cater to the specific needs of meat exporters. The current foreign trade policy stipulates that each export consignment should be subjected to compulsory microbiological and other tests by Government laboratory besides being accompanied by a health certificate. Meat.net allows exporters to apply to Apeda for health certificate for export consignment and registering a processing unit. The registered processing establishment has to submit an online application form and then approach the respective State Animal Husbandry Office, along with requisite fee, copies of the invoice, packing list, test reports, for collecting the health certificate.

State Veterinarian officials in the State Animal Husbandry Office can login on the website to issue the health certificate, making the procedure hassle free and less time consuming than earlier.

The system has just been launched and it will take time to get the response of the user to know how friendly it is and how much ease it has brought in certification process.

However, Apeda's approach to use technology in facilitating its stakeholders and taking similar initiatives for other products are necessary to take the country towards leadership in the global agri-export market.

Investors for 17 mega food parks to be picked on Mar 23



The Food Processing Ministry is all set to award 17 mega food parks on March 23.

This is being considered as first big step in the 'Make in India' scheme, announced last year to promote domestic industry and job creation.

Financing pattern

“We expect around ₹10,000 crore investment by private players and State government bodies,” a senior government official told *BusinessLine*.

The government will provide ₹850 crore grant for 17 projects.

The food park aims to provide a mechanism to link agricultural production with the market by bringing together farmers, processors and retailers to maximise value addition, minimise wastage, increase farmer income and creating job opportunities, particularly in rural sector, the official said.

The official said 17 new investors will be selected from a total of 72 eligible Expressions of Interest (EoI), without divulging any names.

The government has sanctioned 42 projects, of which 25 are already under implementation.

Project details

Projects in Haridwar (Uttarakhand), Chittoor (Andhra Pradesh), Tumkur (Karnataka) and in Fazilka (Punjab) are operational, while one project each in Jangipur (West Bengal) and Khargone (Madhya Pradesh) is expected to start soon.

The scheme aims to facilitate the establishment of a strong food processing industry backed by an efficient supply chain that includes Collection Centres, Primary Processing Centres, Central Processing Centre and Cold Chain infrastructure.

“Our plan is to have at least two-three such parks in each of the big States,” the official said.

Employment creation

It is expected that on an average, each project will have around 30-35 food processing units with a collective investment of ₹250 crore that would

eventually lead to an annual turnover of ₹450-500 crore and creation of about 30,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The Ministry believes that mega food parks will help curb wastage of perishable items, such as fruits and vegetables. Various studies show wastage in the range of 18-30 per cent, varying from season to season, pushing up retail prices.

The Ministry believes more mega food parks can help lower the retail inflation rate, particular food inflation.

The retail inflation rate for fruits and vegetables in February stood at 8.93 per cent and 13.01 per cent, respectively.

Business Standard

Veg oil imports to rise 8% to record levels



Vegetable oil import is likely to rise by eight per cent this oil year (November 2014-October 2015), to a record 12.7 million tonnes, due to a steep decline in rabi season output due to unseasonal rain and hail in major producing centres.

Import was 11.6 mt in the period between November 2013 and October 2014. In the November 2014-February 2015 period, import rose 23 per cent to nearly 4.2 mt, as against 3.42 mt in the same period last year.

Intermittent rain and hail in March, the crop maturing period, are expected to have damaged standing rapeseed and mustard seed in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Experts say 10-12 per cent of rabi oilseed output has been lost.

“It is too early to assess the mustard crop,” said Dorab Mistry, director, Godrej International. He forecasts vegetable oil import at 12.5 mt, slightly lower than the latest estimate by the Central Organization for Oil Industry & Trade (COOIT).

While announcing its oilseed output estimate for the rabi season, COOIT forecast India’s vegetable oil import at 12.7 mt, including 12.5 mt of edible oil for the current year ending October.

With a 28 per cent decline in groundnut output to 1.28 mt, overall rabi oilseed production is expected to decline by 17 per cent to 7.7 mt this year as compared to 9.19 mt in the same season last year. COOIT says deficiency of soil moisture during the sowing season reduced the area to 8.4 mn hectares this year from 9.14 mn ha the previous year. Coupled with crop damage in the harvesting season, this is expected to hit overall seed availability substantially.

As a consequence, total vegetable oil availability from kharif and rabi oilseed crops for 2014-15 is estimated at 7.61 mt, compared to nearly 8.4 mt last year, a fall of 9.1 per cent or 0.76 mt.

“We, therefore, urge the government to reduce import duty on oilseeds to 5-10 per cent from the existing 30 per cent, to increase domestic crushing,” said B V Mehta, executive director, The Solvent Extractors’ Association.

India’s vegetable oil demand rises 0.9-1 mt every year on a growing population, subdued price trend and increasing purchasing power of the middle class. Indonesia and Malaysia, the major global producers, have excess supply and both have reduced their export duty to nil.

In sum, India’s dependence on imported veg oil is set to increase to 62.5 per cent of the total supply this year, as against 58.5 per cent the previous year.