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THE HINDU

‘Use modern implements to improve yield’



Agriculture Minister Pocharam Srinivas Reddy called upon farmers to use modern agriculture equipment and technology so as to improve yield and productivity.

Telangana Minister for Agriculture Pocharam Srinivas Reddy on Monday called upon farmers to use modern agriculture equipment and technology. This will help improve yield and productivity, he said, inaugurating the third edition of Agritex 2015 in the city.

Highlighting how the State government was actively encouraging progressive farming methods, the Minister said it was working out modalities of the input subsidy proposed for two-wheel/four-wheel tractors with rotavators for farmers. With over 10,000 applications, the government intends to work on the proposal for 2015-16, he said.

Modern implements such as multi-wheel tractors, harvester, tillers, power tillers and rotavators, in the backdrop of rising labour shortage, are helping farmers bring larger areas under cultivation. It also leaves progressive farmers with more time to work on other aspects of modern-day farming methods, the Minister said.

The Minister also listed various government programmes to promote industries in the value chain, including a mega food park at Buggapadu village in Khammam district, spread over 100 acres. An investment of over Rs.200 crore is expected in the form of large and SME units at this Park, with a potential to generate 6,000 jobs.

The State government has allocated 100 acres at Bandamylaram village in Medak district for a seed park. The facility is expected to generate over

800 jobs. The three-day fair, being organised by Kenes Exhibitions, in association with HITEK Exhibitions, focuses on the value-chain of the agri-business industry, a release on the inauguration said.

More take to mushroom farming



There is a growing demand for mushroom spawns from the region with an increasing number of people taking to mushroom cultivation, both for household needs and for earning an additional income. The Agriculture Department and various organisations, including NGOs, provide training in the commercial and domestic cultivation of mushroom.

Veteran trainer

According to John Marangoli, a veteran trainer from Palakkad, farming can be taken up by anyone with a little training. “I myself have trained around 80,000 people in different parts of the State during the last 25 years,” he said

Though only a few hundred of his trainees had taken to the commercial cultivation so far, thousands of them were doing it domestically. “I have conducted training sessions in over 150 Krishibhavans in the State,” he said. Besides explaining the health advantages, the training sessions would give hands-on instruction on the cultivation in different stages.

The produce could be harvested in 18 to 25 days after the cultivation. In around 35 days’ lifespan it gives three crops.

“One can get around 2.5 kg of mushroom from a packet of 320 gm seeds,” said Mr. Marangoli. The farmers would also be given advice to obtain different aids from the government for mushroom cultivation, he said.

Vengeri centre

According to P.K. Muhammed, secretary of the Urban Agriculture Market at Vengeri, the farmers' training centre at Vengeri provided periodic training in mushroom farming. "People who take training and farmers, who come through different Krishibhavans are the main customers of our spawns." The centre sold 50 kg of spawns a month, he said.

Peruvannamuzhi KVK

Considering the rich nutritional value, great taste and economic implications, every household should cultivate mushroom at least in a small way, says K.M. Prakash, Subject Matter Specialist (Agronomy), Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Peruvannamuzhi. "It only requires limited space and a little spare time," said Mr. Prakash, who is also a regular trainer with the Agriculture Department.

There is an increasing demand for quality mushroom spawns in the region.

"We were forced to intensify the spawn production recently due to many-fold increase in demand," he said.

Meet to discuss rehab of endosulfan victims



A high-level meeting to review the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) projects by NABARD to address the issues faced by endosulfan victims would be held in Thiruvananthapuram on April 16, Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan has said.

The district-level Endosulfan Rehabilitation Cell meeting here on Monday, chaired by the Minister, called upon the government to earmark Rs.7.50 crore to write off loans below Rs.50,000 taken by 912 endosulfan victims to meet their medical expenses.

The meeting said a list of 374 victims who had availed themselves of loans up to Rs. 2 lakh has been prepared and the cell required Rs. 3 crore to settle the dues.

Speaking at the function, District Collector P.S. Muhammed Sagir said a list of 146 persons, who had taken loans in the range of Rs. 2-3 lakh, would be submitted at the next cell meeting to be considered for loan waiver.

The meeting has been asked to submit by April 10 the reports of the sub-committees headed by the local MLAs and panchayat-level monitoring committees formed to effectively co-ordinate the ongoing rehabilitation measures, the Minister said.

Stating that he had taken up the endosulfan issue in the Lok Sabha during the budget session, P. Karunakaran, MP, said the Union Health Ministry had taken a favourable view on the Rs.. 485 crore worth schemes submitted by the State.

More funds

Taking into account the NHRC recommendations, efforts are under way to utilise even more funds to mitigate the plight of endosulfan victims, Mr. Karunakaran said.

The meeting also decided to provide expert treatment for victims suffering from vision problems at the Pariyaram Ayurveda Medical College and Government Ayurveda Hospital in Kasaragod.

Assistant endosulfan nodal Officer Muhammed Asheel said steps would be taken to carry out heart surgery for 25 victims at the Kochi-based Amritha Medical College.

The meeting held at the District Planning Committee (DPC) hall here was attended by local MLAs N.A.. Nellikkunnu, K.. Kunhiraman (Uduma), K. Kunhiraman (Trikaripur), district panchayat president P.P. Shyamala Devi, Cell members, representatives of various local bodies and senior district officials concerned.

AP Grameena Vikas Bank opens 24 branches

The Andhra Pradesh Grameena Vikas Bank (APGVB), a sponsored RRB of State Bank of India, on Monday opened 24 new branches in the three

districts of Visakhapatnam (11 branches), Vizianagaram (3 branches) and Srikakulam (10 branches).

Chief General Manager, State Bank of India, Hyderabad CR Sasikumar participated as the chief guest at the inaugural of Peda Gantyada branch and from there opened 23 other branches online.

APGVB chairman V. Narasi Reddy, general manager Y.N. Sukumar and regional managers MS Prasad, BSN Raju and DV Ramana were present. Mr Sasikumar also visited a Bank Mitra stall set up by the bank in Peda Gantyada and witnessed the financial transactions carried out through business correspondent model of branch less banking.

Chairman Narasi Reddy addressed the bank's SHG customers and disbursed loans of Rs 4.18 crore. The bank has financed 1,74,977 Self Help Groups with a loan outstanding of Rs. 3,298.56 crore , which is the highest financed by any RRB in the country. APGVB's share of SHG financing in the three districts of Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam and Vizianagaram is more than 80 per cent. The bank has also extended loans of Rs. 3,444.97 crore to agriculture sector.

Rs. 2,915-cr. credit plan outlay for Pudukottai

The annual credit plan for 2015-2016 envisaging a credit flow of Rs. 2,915.31 crore was released here on Monday.

The credit flow includes Rs. 2,568.87 crore for agriculture and allied activities, Rs. 121.73 crore for small and medium industries and the balance Rs. 224.71 crore for other priority sector.

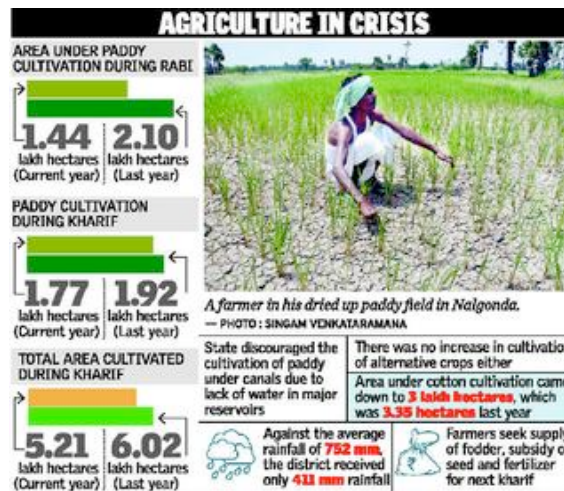
Releasing the plan prepared by the Karaikudi regional office of Indian Overseas Bank, the lead bank for the district, S. Ganesh, Collector, appealed to the credit would was 24.16 per cent over and above the last year's target.

He urged bank officials to sanction loans to all eligible persons so as to improve their economic status.

The Collector also advised the borrowers to be prompt in repaying the loans .

V.S. Venkataraman, Senior Regional Manager, IOB, Karaikudi, said that credit flow for agriculture and allied sector stood at 88.12 per cent of the total outlay, followed by 4.18 per cent for the small and medium industries and 7.70 per cent for other priority sector.

Farm yield plummets in Nalgonda



The agriculture production of Nalgonda district is set to go down by a great extent this year owing to poor rainfall throughout the area.

According to statistics of the Agriculture Department, the farmers in district cultivated paddy in 1.44 lakh hectares during rabi this year compared to previous year which was 2.10 lakh hectares.

The paddy cultivation also declined during kharif since just 1.77 lakh hectares was cultivated against the last kharif which was 1.92 lakh hectares.

The total area under cultivation in 2013-14 was 6.02 lakh hectares, but the area during 2014-15 kharif declined to 5.21 lakh hectares and the area during the rabi also came down from last year's 2.24 lakh hectares to 1.63 lakh hectares.

Particularly, the paddy cultivation came down considerably in both rabi and kharif this year.

The State government discouraged the cultivation of paddy under canals due to lack of water in major reservoirs during rabi, however, there was no increase in cultivation of alternative crops either. Meanwhile, the area

under cotton cultivation also came down to 3 lakh hectares, which was 3.35 lakh hectares last year.

The productivity of cotton went down by a great extent since the district registered poor rainfall throughout the year. Many farmers did not even have half of the yield compared to what they used to get.

Against the average rainfall of 752 mm, the district received only 411 mm rainfall with a deficit of 42 per cent.

Sensing this very early, the district administration sent a report to State government last October requesting them to declare all the 59 mandals as drought-hit, but to no avail.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, a farmer from Chityal, which received 73 per cent deficit rainfall during the year, P. Narayana asked the State compensation for crop loss, supply of fodder to feed the cattle throughout the summer and subsidy on seed and fertilizer to start next kharif operations.

‘Farm mechanisation benefitted rich ryots only’

Cutting across the party lines, all the ZPTC members have alleged that only influential and rich farmers were benefitted under the farm mechanisation programme of the Agricultural Department during the Zilla Parishad general body meeting in Karimnagar on Monday.

Raising the issue during the discussion on agriculture, Choppadandi Telangana Rastra Samithi (TRS) ZPTC member Sambaiah alleged that the farm mechanisation programme had benefitted only the rich farmers neglecting the plight of small and marginal farmers. He said that the real beneficiaries should be given the benefits of the government.

Bejjanki TRS ZPTC member T. Sharath Rao said that the bankers were not coming forward to provide benefits to small and marginal farmers, who have less land for the purchase of tractors and mechanised tools. .

Accepting that some of the rich farmers were benefitted under the mechanisation scheme, Collector Neetu Kumari Prasad said that they had sanctioned the beneficiaries as per the guidelines issued by the government.

Meeting was chaired by chairperson Tula Uma, legislator Gangula Kamalakar, MLC P. Sudhakar Reddy and others were also present.

Thrust on agriculture in budget



The budget estimates of the Alappuzha district panchayat for the 2015-16 fiscal, which was presented by vice-president Thampi Mettuthara, provided thrust for the agriculture sector.

The budget expected a total revenue of Rs. 244.49 crore and a total expenditure of Rs. 243.97 crore, thereby denoting a surplus of Rs. 52.03 lakh. The budget has allocated 40 per cent for the production sector and 30 per cent for the service sector.

The district panchayat plans to coordinate with the local bodies in the district to promote fallow land farming, intermediary crop cultivation, flower farming, terrace farming undertaken by community development society (CDS) clusters, and improving basic facilities at paddy clusters. An allocation of Rs. 3 crore has been made for paddy cultivation.

Another allocation of Rs. 1.5 crore has been made for promoting the cultivation of other crops. Amounts of Rs. 1 crore and Rs. 2 crore have been earmarked for coconut and vegetable cultivation respectively. In addition, Rs. 1 crore has been set aside for a scheme, titled Udyanalakshmi, which will be implemented during the financial year to support gardening.

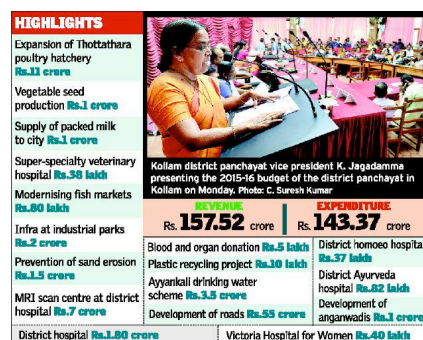
A decentralised waste management project will also be launched in association with the other panchayats. Maintenance grants will be sanctioned for the Mavelikkara District Hospital and the District Ayurveda Hospital.

Other proposals

Among its other proposals, the panchayat will organise free mammography tests for the diagnosis of breast cancer. Mobile units will be operated for the initiative. A scheme will be launched for the medical care of women aged from 16 to 50 years. Health schemes will be implemented for cashew workers in the district.

In the education sector, the district panchayat plans to organise vacation classes, yoga training, martial art camps and swimming classes. Reverse osmosis plants and buses will also be provided for schools run by the district panchayat.

Priority for agriculture in Kollam panchayat budget



Providing high priority for the farm sector, the District Panchayat Budget for 2015-2016 showing revenue of Rs. 157.52 crore, expenditure of Rs. 143.37 crore and surplus of Rs. 14.15 crore was presented on Monday by the vice-president of the District Panchayat, J. Jagadamma.

In her budget speech, Ms. Jagadamma said that agriculture plays the main role in the economic development of the district.

Therefore the agriculture and allied sector have been given top priority in the budget. More than Rs. 40 crore has been allocated for the sector.

To supply packed quality milk to Kollam city, Rs. 1 crore has been allocated. The milk will be sourced from cows farmed under a satellite project of the government's Kuryottumala Animal Farm near Punalur.

For the construction of a super specialty veterinary hospital, Rs. 38 lakh has been allocated.

To expand fodder cultivation under the hydroponics system at the Kuryottumala farm, allocation of Rs. 12 lakh has been made.

A sum of Rs. 38 lakh has been allocated for electricity generation from cow dung produced at the Kuryottumala farm and Rs. 15 lakh for operation of the mobile veterinary clinic this year.

For expanding the poultry hatchery of the district panchayat into the State's biggest parent stock farm, establishment of an avian disease diagnosis centre and a training institute there, Rs. 11 crore has been allocated. All agriculture farms of the district panchayat will be further developed.

She said that the revenue from the Anchal Government Agriculture Farm at Kottukkal touched an all-time record of Rs. 2.5 crore this year. The farm sells tissue culture banana saplings, vegetable seeds and coconut saplings. The farm is now poised to enter the horticulture sector too and for this Rs. 50 lakh has been allocated.

Paddy cultivation in the district will be expanded to 15,000 acres in the coming fiscal and in order to promote this activity, a rice mill at the cost of Rs. 1.5 crore will be established at Sooranad North panchayat. For the benefit of kidney patients from economically weak families, 10 dialysis units had been set up at the district hospital.

Twenty more such units will added to the district hospital and the required allocation for that will be made.

Rs. 3,353 crore credit plan for Mandya district released

The annual credit plan for Mandya district for 2015-16 envisaging a credit flow of Rs. 3,353.29 crore was released here on Monday.

Mandya Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Rohini Sindhuri and the officials of various banks released the annual credit plan (ACP), a release said.

The credit plan, which has been drawn up by the Vijaya Bank, which is the Lead Bank, has earmarked Rs. 3,115.25 crore for priority sector and Rs. 242.02 crore for non-priority sector.

The allocation for crop loans is Rs. 1,511.59 crore and Rs. 175.54 crore for small and micro industries.

The plan has set aside Rs. 549.12 crore for the implementation of Rajiv Gandhi Chaitanya Scheme, National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRML) and others.

Bindumadhava Vadavi, Assistant General Manager of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Dayakara Shetty, Regional Manager of Vijaya Bank and G. Basavarajappa, Lead Bank Manager, and others were present.

Need to strengthen marketing mechanism for herbal medicines highlighted



Eminent scientist and former CFTRI Director V. Prakash on Monday said strengthening institutional and marketing mechanisms for stronger link of herbals to rural centres of trade and urban and semi-urban markets will probably address multilayer problems faced by the growers of present day.

Inaugurating a joint international training workshop on ‘Herbal medicine: drug discovery from herbs, approaches, innovations and applications’, organised by JSS University and NAM S&T Centre, here, he said, the most important factors of technologies, ethics and environment would dominate the tomorrow’s market with a focus on safe product.

India was a treasure house of a variety of herbal plants and it was important to select the best variety that suited our climate and agricultural market must be capitalised along with the knowledge of post-harvest protocols for herbals, which could be laid out, he said. Arun P. Kulashreshtha, Director-General, NAM S&T Centre, who was the guest of honour, said the developing countries with emerging economies had rich mineral resources, distinct biodiversity and abundant medicinal and aromatic plants.

Such medicinal and aromatic plants were not only used as herbal medicines and in food and cosmetics, but also they were used as an

important trade commodity JSS University Vice-chancellor B. Suresh thanked NAM S and T Centre for their support in organising the workshop.

Rs.19.99 lakh for farm sector

The Nedumangad block panchayat's budget for 2015-16, presented by president J.L. Sutharmma on Monday, earmarks Rs.19.99 lakh for the development of agriculture and Rs.64 lakh for dairy farming.

The budget envisages a revenue of Rs.23.83 crore and an expenditure of Rs.23.65 crore.

A comprehensive farm policy would be formulated to make use of the allocation, an official release issued here said. The budget earmarks Rs.12 lakh to provide assistance to 50 select beneficiaries to carry out maintenance of their houses.

Come together, farmers told

The scope and advantages of farmers coming together to form farmers-producers' organisations were highlighted at an awareness meeting organised by the Department of Agri Business and Small Farmers Agri Business Consortium here on Monday.

Speaking at the meeting, S.Selvam, Executive Director, Agro Market Intelligence and Business Promotion Centre, Tiruchi, said farmers could achieve significant reduction in cultivation costs and drastic increase in profits by organising themselves into farmers-producers' organisations.

Citing success stories of farmers-producers' organisations in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, he said if 1,000 farmers could come together to form such organisations they could churn the market.

"First of all, you need to produce what the consumers or market demand. By forming farmers-producers' organisations, you can produce what the market requires and achieve significant profits," he said.

Farmers-producers' organisations could take up various business activities such as opening agro retail centres, renting out farm equipment and seed production. "You can also of producing value added products," he said.

Such organisations would be able to procure inputs such as seeds and fertilizer at wholesale prices, get better access to government subsidy and be able to market their produce better.

Agencies such as the Indian Farmers Fertilizers Cooperative Limited were ready to supply fertilizers at wholesale rates at the village level to such organisations.

The National Bank for Agriculture and Development (NABARD) was willing to extend up to Rs.1 crore to farmers-producers' organisations without collateral provided they implement a proper business plan successfully.

S. Suresh Kumar, Assistant General Manager, NABARD, explained the various schemes that could be availed by such organisations.

Karikalan, president, Nachalur Farmers Producers Company, explained the activities taken up his organisation. A short film on the company's functions was screened on the occasion.

R. Chandrasekaran, Deputy Director, Agri Business, and Pandiarajan, Personal Assistant (Agriculture) to the Collector, spoke.

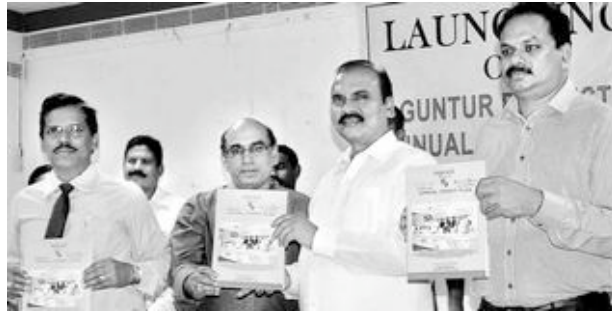
Meeting at Tiruvannamalai

Economic Offences Wing (EOW) and Commercial Crime Investigation Wing (CCIW) of police department and Revenue Department conducted a meeting near here on Monday to spread awareness on fraudulent financial companies. It was held at the Primary Agricultural Cooperative Rural Development Bank, Thuringapuram, in Mallavadi village.

Tiruvannamalai Tahsildar Murugan, Deputy Registrar of Cooperative Societies Nandhakumar, Primary Agricultural Cooperative Credit Society president Govindasamy, CCIW inspector B.Manoharan, Sub Inspectors Manonmani and Prema spoke about how these firms lured the depositors. Awareness visuals were screened and pamphlets were distributed.

Speakers said that there was mushrooming of financial companies that offer attractive returns. Many collect crores of rupees from people in the guise of online trading and vanish. Most of the victims happen to be daily wage earners, salaried class and pensioners. They deposit their hard earned money in these companies and when they are cheated their lives shatter, they said.

Minister releases Rs. 14,617 cr. annual plan



Minister for Agriculture Prathipati Pulla Rao on Monday released the annual credit plan for the district which was pegged at Rs. 14,617.14 crore, an increase of 17.02 per cent over that of last year.

The Minister said agricultural and allied sector credit accounted for a lion's share of the credit plan at Rs. 9,182.564 crore, followed by Rs. 1,704.39 crore for industry and Rs. 1,729.17 crore for other sectors.

Non-priority sector lending accounted for Rs. 2,001.14 crore.

Lauding the lead bank for coming out with a credit plan before March 31, the Minister said aqua industry had been doing well and added that agricultural sector, too, should turn out to be profitable for farmers. In-charge Collector Ch. Sridhar, Andhra Bank Deputy General Manager C. Girish Kumar and Nabard AGM A.V Bhavani Shankar were present.

Water released from Gunderipallam Dam

Water was released from Gunderipallam Dam on Monday to facilitate irrigation of 2,498 acres in Kongarpalayam, Vaniputhur, Kavundampalayam, Panchathurayampalayam, and Arasankottai, until June.

District Collector S. Prabakar and Tirupur Member of Parliament V. Sathyabama initiated the water release in the presence of Sub-Collector of Gobichettipalayam H. Krishnan Unni, senior Public Works Department officials, and local dignitaries.

According to a press release, the reservoir has a storage of 105.17 million cubic feet of which 82.94 million cubic feet will be released in four staggered stages spread over 42 days: till April 11 in the first stage, from April 19 to 20 in the second stage, from May 7 to 17 in the third stage,

and from May 22 to June 4 in the final stage. The reservoir's canal systems on its right and left sides irrigate 879 acres and 1,619 acres respectively.

Safe food, from the farm to the plate



Food safety is critical for public health as food-borne diseases affect people's well-being, strain health-care systems, and adversely impact national economies, tourism and trade

How often do we ask ourselves if the food we are eating is safe? Do we know if it is free of bacteria, viruses, parasites, chemicals, other contaminants, additives and adulterants which can cause over 200 diseases ranging from diarrhoea to cancer?

Every year, diarrhoea caused by contaminated food and water kills 2.2 million people, including 1.9 million children, globally. Unsafe food and water kills an estimated 7,00,000 children in the World Health Organization's South-East Asia Region every year. Access to safe food remains a challenge in the region.

Whether as individuals, families, farmers, contributors to and handlers of the food chain or policymakers, we need to make food safety our priority.

Food safety is critical for public health as food-borne diseases affect people's health and well-being. Unsafe food creates a vicious cycle of disease and malnutrition, particularly affecting infants, young children, the elderly and the sick. Food-borne diseases impede socio-economic development by straining health care systems and adversely impacting national economies, tourism and trade.

Multisectoral collaboration

Since food passes through multiple hands from the farm to reach our plates, ensuring food safety requires multisectoral collaboration. The approach needs to be preventive — to improve food safety and quality through application of good farming practices by using agro chemicals or veterinary drugs only in the prescribed amount. Good storage, transportation, retail and restaurant practices are equally important to make food safe.

Street foods are emerging as an important source of food for a large proportion of the population in urban and peri-urban settings. Street food as a source of food-borne diseases therefore assumes public health significance.

Also, new threats to food safety are constantly emerging — the impact of climate change on food production, distribution and consumption; emerging biological and environmental contamination of the food chain, new technologies, new and emerging pathogens; antimicrobial resistance. Countries need to have a comprehensive food safety policy, legislation and national food safety programmes encompassing all the sectors and aspects for food safety.

Though most countries in the region have food safety policies, enforcement remains a challenge. Food quality and safety standards are usually strictly followed for exportable food commodities, but not always enforced for food destined for the domestic market. Food safety and quality should be ensured through stringent control and inspection mechanisms for export as well as the domestic market.

Adulteration of food is another problem as informal food production and distribution systems are deeply entrenched at the community level in the region. Contamination of mustard oil with argemone oil in 1998 and contamination of imported milk and infant formula with melamine in 2008 are among the few events that raised food safety concerns among consumers and policymakers in the region and globally.

Five keys to good safety

The most pertinent of all the measures is creating awareness among individuals to ensure that their food is safe. In this context, ‘five keys’ to food safety need to be promoted — maintain cleanliness, separate raw

and cooked food, cook thoroughly, keep food at correct temperature and use safe water and raw materials.

As food supply becomes increasingly globalised, there is an urgent requirement to strengthen food safety systems in and between all countries. Establishment of a network for food safety authorities in partnership with countries can help promote the exchange of food safety information and improve collaboration among food safety authorities at national and international levels.

There is also need to help countries prevent, detect and respond to food-borne disease outbreaks using the Codex Alimentarius, a collection of international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice covering all the main foods and processes.

In addition, food safety should be adequately incorporated in national disaster-management programmes and emergencies. Access to safe water and quality food is a major problem during flooding, earthquakes and other natural disasters. There is a likelihood of food in the affected areas getting contaminated and causing outbreaks of food-borne disease.

As part of its Regional Food Safety Strategy, countries in the region need to initiate, develop and sustain multisectoral approaches and measures for promotion of food safety among all population groups. Some countries have taken novel and notable initiatives such as the mobile food courts in Bangladesh, the establishment of a Food Standard and Safety Authority in India, and certification of street food vendors with a “Clean Food, Good Taste” logo in Thailand. This year’s World Health Day theme focuses on food safety. Food safety must be an essential component of national health, food, agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, water, sanitation and environment-related programmes. Food safety is a shared responsibility. Let us work together to make our food safe and to contribute to better health of people.

Rs. 5,894 cr. credit plan for Kadapa released

Joint Collector M. Rama Rao on Monday released an annual credit plan of Rs. 5,894.85 crore for Kadapa district for 2015-16.

The credit plan is 13.46 per cent higher than the previous year’s plan of Rs. 5,195.47 crore, he said at a meeting held at the Collectorate Sabha Bhavan. The plan includes a priority sector credit outlay of Rs. 4,992.58

crore. A total credit outlay of Rs. 3,740.58 crore has been projected for agriculture and allied sectors.

The outlay for short-term crop loan disbursements is Rs. 2,736.06 crore. The credit outlay for agriculture term loans is Rs. 303.20 crore and the outlay for farm mechanisation is Rs. 235.16 crore, Mr. Rama Rao said. An investment credit of Rs. 19.60 crore has been set apart for plantation and horticulture.



Haryana Agricultural University's annual budget approved

An annual budget of Rs 375.75 crore has been approved for Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University (CCSHAU) at Hisar for financial year 2015-16.

A meeting of Board of Management (BoM) of the university was held under the chairmanship of vice-chancellor K S Khokhar where the budget of the university for the next fiscal was approved, an official spokesman said here today.

The university's comptroller Naveen Jain said the budget for 2015-16 is 7 per cent more than the last fiscal.

Out of the total budget, 56 per cent would come from state plan (agriculture), 30 per cent from state non-plan (agriculture) and 9 per cent from Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and other agencies like University Grants Commission (UGC), Department of Science and Technology, he said.

Apart from this, 5 per cent of the budget amount would be generated from internal resources by the university, he added.

Regarding spendings, the spokesman said 29 per cent of the total budget would be incurred on research, 13 per cent on teaching, 11 per cent on extension activities, 32 per cent on administration, 13 per cent on service unit and 2 per cent on welfare of students.

Nano-tech is science of future : Experts

ALLAHABAD: A world congress on green nano-technology and its role in sustainable agriculture concluded at Jacob School of Biotechnology

and Bioengineering, Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHIATS), on Friday. During the celebrations, the experts claimed that nano-technology was the science of the future and elaborated upon its many uses, including in modern farming.

The event was organised in collaboration with the University of Missouri, Columbia, US.

The technical session of the congress was chaired by Prof Newman Fernandes wherein Prof Florian F Bauer of the Institute for Wine Biotechnology, University of Stellenbosch, Cape Town, South Africa, delivered a lecture on nano-technology in the wine industry. Stating that it was the science of the future, he highlighted the numerous potential applications of nanotechnology in diverse wine industry, and suggested various ways in which fields such as synthetic biology and nanotechnology, or combinations thereof, may revolutionize the making of wine.

Head, food chemistry division, department of food science and technology, faculty of agriculture technology, Bogor Agricultural University, Indonesia, Prof Christofora Hanny Wijaya talked on implementation of nano-technology in herbal-based functional drink and carotenoid rich functional ingredient.

In the second technical session, founder director of IIT-Kanpur Dr Sandip Patil talked about use of nano-fibre technology in agriculture application and elaborated upon electro-spinning nano-fibre technology for agricultural applications.

Associate professor, faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Beni-Seuf University, Egypt, Dr Saber Mohamed Abd-Allah, expressed his views on applications of nano-particles on animal reproductive cells. He gave a historic prospective of nano-material application to animal reproductive biology and the most recent developments in this field. He also focused on effect of nano-particles on antioxidant activity and spermatogenesis process in testicular tissues and emphasized on the potential benefits, threats, and challenges of nano-particles in animal reproductive organs.

Professor of pharmaceutical technology at the department of pharmacy and pharmaceutical technology, School of Pharmacy, University of

Navarra, Pamplona, Spain, Prof Juan M Irache, delivered a lecture on food protein-based nano-particles for oral delivery of bioactives. He showed some of the capabilities of nano-particles, based on either casein or zein, as carriers for BACs (Biologically active compounds) and their potential use for food (functional), nutraceutical, and pharmaceutical purposes.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Telangana to have 100-acre Seed Park

The Telangana government is going to set up 100-acre Seeds Park at Bandamylaram in Medak district shortly. The park would have seed testing labs, storage facility and other relevant infrastructure to support seed firms in developing quality seeds.

Telangana Agriculture Minister Pocharam Srinivasa Reddy has said that Nuziveedu Seeds Limited will be the anchor client at the Seed Park.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating the third edition of Agritex-2015 here on Monday, he said the Government expects investments to the tune of Rs. 100 crore flowing into the park from seed firms and other stakeholders. It is expected to create 800 jobs.

He said the State had been allocated one of the 17 mega food parks by the Centre. This would come up at Buggapadu in Khammam district in an extent of 100 acres. The Centre would give Rs. 50 crore as a grant for the park.

“We are expecting investments of about Rs. 200 crore from various agribusiness firms at the food park, creating about 6,000 jobs,” he said, a press release said.

He said farmers must leverage modern agriculture equipment and technology to improve productivity. “We are in the process of finalising a proposal to rope in ICRISAT as a knowledge partner in the agri-business domain,” he said.

Palm oil futures may test support levels, rise



Malaysian palm oil futures on BMD ended higher on Monday, as market participants positioned ahead of the news of possible duty hikes from Indonesia.

After the close of the market, Indonesia set its crude palm oil export tax for April at zero, unchanged from March, the Trade Ministry said on its website. In other markets, oil prices fell further on Monday, with Brent dropping below \$55 a barrel, as officials from Iran and six world powers discussed a possible deal over Tehran's nuclear programme that could bring an end to sanctions and allow an increase in Iranian oil exports. Markets are anticipating good exports to support prices. Cargo surveyors Intertek Testing Services and Societe Generale de Surveillance are due to release data on Malaysia's March palm oil exports on Tuesday.

CPO active month June futures moved higher as per expectations. As mentioned in the previous update, till the support around 2125-35 MYR/tonne holds in the bigger picture, we will be hopeful of a rise in the coming sessions. Near-term supports are at 2145-50 MYR/tonne followed by very strong support at 2125 MYR/tonne levels.

Break of this level however could potentially drag prices lower towards immediate support at 2085-95 MYR/tonne levels. Failure to hold here too could confirm the beginning of a larger downtrend towards 1900 MYR/tonne or even lower. Resistance is now noted at 2220-25 MYR/tonne levels. Favoured view expects now prices to find resistances near 2200-25 MYR/tonne levels and subsequently, we expect the down move to begin again. Direct fall below 2125 MYR/tonne levels could hint that the down move has commenced without the expected resistance. Only a close above 2280 MYR/tonne levels could change the bearish picture to neutral.

We will have to once again review the wave counts, but will wait for a crossover above 2400 MYR/tonne to do that. Till then we will stick to our earlier assessment. As mentioned earlier a downtrend again could be confirmed on a close below 2175 MYR/tonne levels.

This once again puts the spot light on the 1700 MYR/tonne mark, which we anticipated earlier. We are now tracking a final leg of a impulse in a declining trend with potential targets near 1850 MYR/tonne or even lower to 1700 MYR/tonne levels. Ideally, the next leg of a larger up move could potentially begin from this area. RSI is in the neutral zone now indicating that it is neither overbought nor oversold. The averages in MACD have gone below the zero line of the indicator hinting at a bearish reversal again.

Therefore, look for palm oil futures to test the support levels and move higher again.

Supports are at MYR 2145, 2125 & 2085 Resistances are at MYR 2210, 2245 & 2280.

Pepper maintains status quo

The pepper markets, both spot and futures, on Monday ruled steady on matching demand and supply. Selling pressure wasn't prevalent as those in need of money before the end of the financial year appear to have sold their stocks last weekend, market sources tell *BusinessLine*.

At the same time, good buying activities were reported from Karnataka where MNCs were covering farm grade pepper for processing in their units in Vietnam where costs are apparently much lower. The domestic demand is expected to pick up after the Easter holidays as industry users will be buying till mid-May before the onset of Monsoon, they added.

The supply situation, at present, appears to be tight in India and overseas.

Riding on shale oil, guar is dragged down by crude



Falling prices of crude oil have resulted in turmoil in agricultural commodities market as well. The monthly average price of a barrel of crude oil has declined to \$54.79 in February from \$104.83 during the same period last year. The price slump has made crude oil much cheaper than the shale oil which, otherwise, a year ago was the favourite choice.

At present, the average cost of producing shale oil is higher than the price of crude oil by around \$16-35 a barrel, making it difficult for shale industry to sustain in the market. As on March 20, 1,069 oil rigs were working in the US, 40.7 per cent less than the number a year ago.

Though the falling price of crude oil may have brought some happiness to Indian consumers in terms of reduced petroleum prices and fiscal deficit on account of petroleum subsidy, the guar gum industry is facing another slowdown after recovering from the 2012-13 happenings.

See-saw of guar

The journey of guar from being a fodder crop to one of the most lucrative industrial crops has been remarkable. Such a phenomenal change in the nature of trade and the attention to the crop has been attributed more to the developments in the shale industry. Prior to the emergence of use of guar gum in fracking, the crop was mainly grown for fodder. Limited number of firms were in the market to process the seed to extract gum which at that time was used mainly by food industry. With technology advancement, shale industry flourished and guar became one of the important constituents of fracking fluid. This resulted in huge demand for guar from the US and thus many players entered this market.

Guar is, normally, a freely traded commodity. But due to high speculation in the market during 2012, regulators banned the future trade of guar on commodity exchanges. Though the ban was lifted in May 2013, the focus of the industry was to stabilise the market and to prevent extreme speculation. Till 2014, the exports of guar gum were considerable and the demand was growing. Till that time, the only threat faced by the industry was its replacement with some substitute in shale industry.

Tumbling crude

During the first two months of 2015, the exports of guar have been falling. The total exports to US were limited to 17,000 tonnes during February 2015 – 26 per cent less than the exports during the same period a year ago. The trouble has multiplied with falling prices as well.

The average price earned by exporters in the US market has come down to \$2.5/kg during February from \$3.3 in September 2014. The fall in price is natural as the demand is slowing down while the supply is constant. One can expect that market fundamentals will work and the prices of crude will rise again, leading to demand for shale exploration, which will result in increased demand for guar. But this may take a longer time, and till then guar industry has to keep its fingers crossed.

Though the incidence of falling crude prices which may impact guar industry was not much expected, it has exposed how vulnerable an industry may be in absence of alternative users.

Lesson to be learnt

Once more, the need for creating demand from untapped user industry of guar gum has to be given a serious thought. So far, guar gum is known to be used in food and shale industry. The other industries where guar gum is used are textile printing, paper, explosives, fire-fighting, coal mining, tobacco, water treatment, photography, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, etc. These have to be given consideration so as to substitute demand from these sectors. Guar gum processors have to understand and deliver specific need of different user industries.

To serve the needs of specific users, industrial units must actively engage in R&D activities. The industry-institution linkage may also be a desirable move for bringing prosperity. Some of the institutes which can play lead role are the National Institute of Agricultural Marketing, Jaipur (for marketing), Central Institute of Agricultural Engineering (R&D in machinery), Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, Hyderabad (in development of specific derivatives), etc. Such linkages may help guar industry in diversifying the product and market, stabilising prices as well as reducing risk arising out of turmoil in user industries.