

04.05.2015

# THE HINDU

## **Model farmers to give inputs**

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has said that the government will come up with its agriculture policy after talking to genuinely model farmers shortly.

Participating in the class on agriculture at the political training camp for TRS leaders at Nagarjunasagar on Sunday, Mr. Rao asked the agriculture university to take steps to carve out crop colonies in the State. He stressed the need for selecting two farmers in every village for introduction of modern techniques of agriculture and drip irrigation. They will become motivators for other villagers. When subject experts spoke technical jargon like green house gases and farm mechanisation which did not catch the imagination of the delegates, Mr. Rao intervened to urge them to use simple words which could be understood by all. He said the strength of TRS was in usage of language which was understood by common public. Mr. Rao went on to explain in his own way how green house gases increased humidity and how farm mechanisation reduced investment and resulted in higher yields. He regretted that agricultural extension was on the decline and called for revival of the sector.

## **36<sup>th</sup> convocation of TNAU**

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) has planned to conduct the 36<sup>th</sup> annual convocation in July 2015.

Applications for the convocation are invited from eligible candidates whose results were declared on or before March 31, 2015. Application form and other details may be downloaded from the university website [www.tnau.ac.in](http://www.tnau.ac.in) from May 4, 2015. Application fee for the convocation may also be remitted online.

Filled in applications with copy of provisional certificate and copy of the bank receipt remitted online should reach the university on or before June 10, 2015.

## TN opposes two Central govt. decisions regarding fishing



Tamil Nadu government on Sunday opposed two decisions of the Central government regarding fishing, saying these could in effect lead to “swamping” by foreign fishing vessels in India’s Exclusive Economic Zone and also increase the regulatory burden on domestic fishing fleets.

Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam said the new Deep Sea Fishing Guidelines issued by the Department of Animal Husbandry Dairying and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, on November 12, 2014, had changed the definition of ‘Deep Sea fishing Vessels’, reducing the Over All Length (OAL) to 15 metres instead of the OAL of 20 metres as per the original guidelines.

Further, the definition of ‘Operator’ has been expanded to include ‘joint ventures’ with up to 49 per cent foreign equity, he told Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a letter.

He said the procedure for engaging foreign crews has also been made easier with the removal of the requirement for prior clearance from the Central government.

Further, as per a Public Notice issued on November 28, 2014, by the same department, issuing Letters of Permission (LOP) has been expanded for Deep Sea Fishing Vessels to conduct fishing in the EEZ which will operate for all vessels with an OAL of 15 metres and above.

Thus, even the existing Indian coastal fishing vessels which are between an OAL of 15 and 20 metres will now be required to obtain LOP which was not required earlier, the Chief Minister said.

Obtaining LOPs from the government and voyage clearances from Indian Coast Guard for each fishing voyage was 'extremely impractical', Mr. Panneerselvam said.

He said that the new guidelines 'are per se illegal' because they were contrary to the existing laws since according to the Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act 1976, a citizen of India need not get any licence or letter of authority from Centre for fishing in the EEZ.

"The rights granted to an Indian citizen by an Act of Parliament cannot be abrogated by an Executive Order of the Government," Panneerselvam said.

According to the consolidated FDI policy published by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, no foreign investment was permitted in the Fisheries sector and therefore, the notification dated November 12, 2014, which brings within the ambit of the operator, a joint venture company with at least 51 per cent Indian equity "is not in conformity with the consolidated FDI Policy Circular, 2014," Mr. Panneerselvam said.

Fishermen community across India including those in Tamil Nadu were strongly protesting against these, he said, adding Tamil Nadu's stance was that the rights of Indian citizens and fishermen to fish in India's EEZ should not be unnecessarily restricted.

Panneerselvam requested Mr. Modi, among others, to rescind the two guidelines issued last year and "summarily reject" the Dr. B. Meenakumari Committee recommendations on deep-sea fishing.

Further, he said no permission should be accorded to foreign fishing vessels or engagement of foreign crew under the LOP or through any other mechanism to fish in India's EEZ while no joint venture or any other form of agreement with a foreign individual or company should be permitted for undertaking deep sea fishing.

## **Mission mode approach to promote balanced use of fertilizers and nutrients**

Imbalanced use of fertilizers and non-replacement of depleted nutrients in the soil over the years have been identified as the major factors that reduce the crop yield in Tirupur.

To overcome this and ensure sustainable agriculture, the Department of Agriculture with the help of allied departments and agencies have commenced an enterprising mission of identifying the segment-wise deficiencies in the soil at the farmers' holdings and accordingly give them advisory support to improve fertility and productivity. "Yield could have been improved by at least 30 per cent if the farmers have given attention to application of proper dose of organic matter and fertilizers and replaced micro as well as secondary nutrients over the years. Under this mission, we will be taking samples of soils randomly from 36,000 spots covering both irrigated and rain fed areas of cultivation in three phases and analyse the same for levels of nutrients, minerals and alkalinity before suggesting methods to carry out reclamation," Deputy Director of Agriculture A. Mahendran told *The Hindu* .

The mobile soil testing laboratory personnel in the district would themselves collect the soil samples from the fields and tests the levels of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, manganese, magnesium, boron, copper, iron and sulphur, among other minerals. Each of the 1,38,983 farmers to be covered in the district would then be given the details of the analysis at their doorstep and advisory support on how to overcome if there were any deficiencies, Mr. Mahendran said.

According to officials, some of the mistakes the farmers did in the recent years have been over usage of potassium despite the soil in the region been naturally enriched with potassium.

Similarly, many of them have been using NPK (nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium) mixtures but not the secondary nutrients that eventually affect the yield.

"All these have been happening because of absence of scientific acumen while applying the fertilizers and nutrients. From now on, farmers will be given advisory support to apply nutrients in a balanced way," officials said.

## Jasmine growers seek processing facility



Absence of a processing facility has subjected jasmine growers in Sathyamangalam area to the market vagaries.

According to Muthusamy, representative of Jasmine Producers' Association in Sathyamangalam, the Government has not fulfilled the long-felt requirement of jasmine growers for suitable land to shift its marketing facility from a rented premise where they have been paying a monthly rent of Rs. 45,000.

The cultivators say they are at the mercy of middlemen who channel the flowers to the over 20 scent factories elsewhere in the State and for domestic and export markets.

Due to the absence of a proper cold storage facility, the producers suffer a lot when price fluctuations happen due to market uncertainties.

This being the season, the glut situation often causes price variations.

Earlier this week, the prices fell to as low as Rs. 30 a kg. On Thursday, the prices stabilised to Rs. 200 per kg, which is considered ideal by producers.

The cultivation cost has escalated steeply. Each labourer is paid Rs. 35 for plucking a kg of the flower in addition to timely refreshments and lunch, says Mr. Muthusamy, appealing to the government to establish a perfume unit so as to spare the cultivators from the grip of middlemen.

There are about 1,700 jasmine growers undertaking cultivation in nearly 8,000 acres in Sathy taluk. Considering that the yield per day ranges from 10 to 30 tonnes, there would be enough supply of flowers in natural freshness to the perfume unit.

To begin with, the Government should establish exclusive cold storage facility for jasmine that is transported from Sathyamangalam market to places as far as Hyderabad, Mumbai and Sharjah, Mr. Muthusamy said.

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has been advocating standardisation of post-harvest technologies for jasmine through chemical treatments to increase shelf life, improving packaging suiting preservation of the flowers to distant markets, and storage temperature to increase post-harvest life of jasmine flowers.

Cultivators say creation of suitable facilities for application of these technologies would shield them from market vagaries.

### **Plan of action to root out parthenium**



The Agriculture Department in the district has plans to create widespread awareness on eradication of parthenium weed.

A simple and proven method of mixing 20 per cent common salt to 10 litres of water and spraying the solution on the weed to destroy them completely would be demonstrated to farmers and other sections of the public shortly, sources said.

Menacing spread of parthenium weed in farms and the damage it has caused to productivity and biodiversity has to be addressed on a war footing, according to representatives of farming community.

The State Government had announced during 2011 that herbicides and bug, a Mexican beetle, to control parthenium would be distributed to farmers to drive the weed, but the initiative did not take off. The weed now in full flowering stage also causes dermatitis, asthma and other ailments. The Agriculture Department would mobilise people in villages taking the help of

NGOs and other social organisations for widespread elimination of the weed, sources said.

### **CMFRI calls for pragmatic approach**

The implementation of fishing ban as proposed by the Syda Rao committee will lead to exploitation of commercially important fish varieties during its peak breeding season, pointed out the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kochi.

Acting on the recommendations, the Central Agriculture Ministry had banned fishing for all vessels on the west coast beyond the territorial waters between June 1 and July 31 and on the east coast between April 15 and June 14.

As a result, fishing activities across the country would also come to a standstill between June 1 and 15.

The Rao committee was constituted in 2013 by the Ministry to review the duration of the ban period and to suggest measures to strengthen the conservation and management aspects of fish varieties.

Going by the Rao report, key pelagic species like sardines and mackerel would be exploited during its peak breeding months of April and May, where there would not be any ban. Demersal species like sharks, rays, shrimps, squids and catfishes too would be caught during October and November, its peak breeding season, pointed out the institute.

The shortfalls in the report were pointed out by the CMFRI, in a letter to the Secretary of the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries.

The institute, which requested the Ministry not to consider the report in its present form, had also offered to rework and resubmit it.

A pragmatic approach rather than wholly conservation-oriented one should be adopted in case of fisheries regulations as it would affect the livelihoods of millions of fishermen, argued scientists.

The ban order had created widespread uproar across the coastal States, including Kerala, where its effect would be felt more.

'The annual monsoon trawl will begin in Kerala on June 15.

While the mechanised sector would be banned from fishing during the period, the traditional fishermen can put to sea during the ban days. Kerala government has stated that it will not implement the Rao recommendations in the wake of widespread protests.

### **Cotton auction**

About 7,000 bags of cotton was auctioned for Rs. 1.30 crore at the Konganapuram branch of the Tiruchengode Agricultural Producers Cooperative Society held on Saturday.

While PT variety fetched a price between Rs. 3,900 to Rs. 4,650 per bag;

the DCH first quality variety fetched a price between Rs. 4,500 to Rs. 5,044; and the second quality variety a price between

Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 4,350, according to cooperative society sources.

### **Nature-based farming need of the hour, says expert**



Most of the problems causing the agrarian crisis in the country can be solved by reverting to nature-based farming, says expert Subhash Palekar.

A two-day workshop on nature-based farming and zero-budget farming would be conducted for farmers of the North Andhra districts at AU Ambedkar Assembly Hall here from Monday, Mr. Palekar told media here on Sunday.

The Green Revolution had increased the cost of agricultural production as farmers were dependent on outside sources for inputs, including seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, he said. With the rise in the cost of inputs, farming was increasingly becoming un-remunerative.

This was pushing farmers into debt traps and suicide, he added.



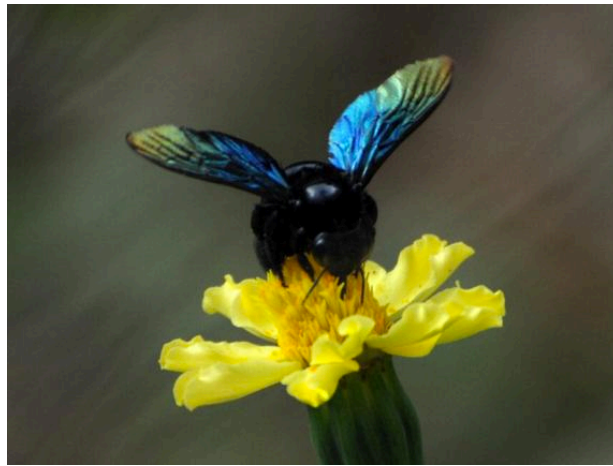
Today, the policy makers are realising that chemical farming was contributing to emission of green house gases as industrial sector.

Dependence on local seeds and other inputs is essential to make agriculture remunerative, he said.

Thousands of farmers across the country were practising the nature-based farming, and getting the benefit of increasing yields and reducing costs proving the efficacy of the system, he said.

***A two-day workshop on nature-based farming and zero-budget farming will be conducted at AU Ambedkar Assembly Hal in Visakhapatnam today.***

### **India home to 48 species of bumblebees**



India is home to 48 of the 250 known species of bumblebees, the only pollinators of vegetation in high-altitude regions.

This has been revealed in a recent publication *Indian Bumblebees* written by entomologist M.S. Saini and co-authors Rifat H. Raina and Harpeet Singh Ghatot. The book was launched in Kolkata at the beginning of the centenary celebration of the Zoological Survey of India.

Mostly characterised by black, yellow and reddish body hair, and often striped, bumblebees are generally found on altitudes of 2,000-15,000 feet along the entire Himalayas, from Jammu & Kashmir to Nagaland.

### **Crucial role**

“The publication which enlists all 48 species found in India is the result of 16 years of hard work. Bumblebees are important to the ecosystem, as

without them seed setting and fruiting will not take place in many plants. They pollinate vegetables, fruit trees, cash crops and even ornamental and medicinal plants high in the Himalayas,” Mr. Saini told *The Hindu* over telephone from Punjab.

### **Social insects**

Like the honeybees, bumblebees are social insects and live in colonies — the size of which depends on the species.

“The founder of the colony is the queen that hibernates throughout winter. In spring, she finds a site for new nest. Having mated the previous autumn, she then lays her eggs which will result in the first batch of workers,” Mr. Saini said, explaining the life cycle of the bumblebees.

### **Preserving Himalayan ecology**

It is completely baseless to say that the Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Prakash Javadekar, and his friends in industry are out to finish off what little is left of the [Himalayas](#), its rivers and glaciers (“[Killing a country’s ecology](#)” Comment page, April 29, 2015) . It is the BJP-led NDA government, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which has given importance to protecting the ecology of the Himalayan region. As examples, the government has already launched the ‘Ganga Mission’ which will give impetus to protecting the Himalayas. The government has also allocated Rs.150 crore for Himalayan studies. It has also launched a Himalayan initiative, wherein 11 hill States will be partners in preserving the ecological balance of the Himalayas. After the recent natural calamity in Jammu and Kashmir and lessons learnt after the disaster in Uttarakhand, the government is working closely with the States concerned in ensuring that the Himalayan ecology is protected.

The article also creates a wrong impression, as if Mr. Javadekar has given his approval to six hydro-electric projects in Uttarakhand. I wish to clarify that in the last 11 months, not a single environmental approval has been given to any hydro-electric project in the Himalayas.

In December 2014, the Ministry had sought 12 months' time from the Supreme Court to carry out a comprehensive impact assesment of river valleys in the Himalyas. Reference for six projects has come on the directions of the Supreme Court to assess the status of clearances of these projects on the date they were granted. Clearances for six hydroprojects in Uttarakhand, and which have been referred to by Mr. Gonsalves, were

accorded approvals by the previous UPA government. Clearance from the National Board for Wildlife has not been granted to any of these projects. Forest clearance to one of the six projects has been revoked. All the clearances required are not available for any of these projects. Most importantly, the issue is before the Supreme Court as “sub judice”.

**P.J. Michael,**

Deputy Secretary (Media)

Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change,

New Delhi

### **Exclusive education park to showcase range of renewable energy sources**



An Energy Education Park was inaugurated by Chief Minister N. Rangasamy at Kurinji Nagar, Lawspet on Sunday.

The objective of the park is to offer play as a method of education on the importance of energy, different types of energy, renewable energy sources and new generation technologies through working and demo models.

The Energy Education Park is a project of the Renewable Energy Agency, Puducherry.

An official press note from Renewable Energy Agency said the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has come out with an initiative to set up Energy Education Parks in each State and Union Territory in the country.

The park consists of an exhibition hall for indoor exhibits, a lush green landscaping for out door exhibits and a canteen block for refreshment.

The exhibition hall has been designed as a green building which utilises the natural sources for lighting and cooling. The indoor exhibits includes a film theatre, quiz and games on renewable energy, working models on different types of energy, hydraulics, demo models for energy generation through renewable sources and display boards.

The outdoor exhibits consist of solar car tracks with toy cars for children to drive, remote controlled solar boat, energy generation drum, energy generation slide and working models of solar power plant, windmill, solar cooker and a bio-digester. The landscaping has been designed with water bodies, trees, herbs and shrubs keeping in mind a sustainable residential landscape architecture practices which decrease energy usage and improve water efficiency.

### **Training centre**

It is proposed to set up a training centre in the exhibition hall to impart one week to one month hands-on training to the ITI, Polytechnic students on the importance of sustainable energy. The training will be an initiative to create a pool of technicians keeping in view the demand in the sectors which are growing at a rapid speed.

The park is open for public from 10.00 a.m to 5.30 p.m. Access to the park is free for Government schools and colleges and a nominal fee is proposed to be charged for other visitors.

The park has been set up at a cost of Rs. 2 crore with the UT and Government of India, Ministry of New Renewable Energy, New Delhi, sharing 50 per cent each.

Science, Technology and Environment Minister T. Thiagarajan, MLAs- Ashok Anand and M. Vaithianathan were present during the occasion.

## Out of My Mind: Losing the Plot



India won a lot of well-deserved compliments for its rescue efforts in Yemen. Many other countries whose citizens were trapped in Yemen were relying on India to help them. In the tragic events in Nepal, again Indian rescue efforts have been exemplary. The Prime Minister has shown true leadership and mobilised the resources, human and material, which the urgency demanded. This is very much an Executive responsibility which the Prime Minister as someone who has experience as Chief Minister is alert to and delivers what is required.

The problem the Government has run into is however on the legislative and political side. It is not one where resources can be commanded and deployed in a focused way. Here the target is slippery. The Opposition has no incentive to co-operate with the Prime Minister. Indeed, it can only gain advantage by blocking progress in the Parliament. That is the Opposition dharma. Appeals to national interest do not cut any ice in such circumstances.

The distress of the farmers is a result of long-run structural neglect of the sector, especially of subsistence farmers. As student of economics in the Fifties, I had to take an examination in Indian economic problems. As far as farmers' distress is concerned, nothing seems to have changed over the past 60 years — subsistence farms with small uneconomic plots, lack of rural credit, harsh revenue officers, large landlords receiving extra help from the same officials and their political masters. They may cry crocodile tears about

the kisans but the parties sitting in Opposition created this problem by their policies.

That, however, is no consolation and does not help to progress the government's business. What is striking, however, is the lack of visibility about what the government is doing to relieve the distress. Of course, it is a state subject, but even so this is a national emergency. The Minister for Agriculture is not someone we see on our TV screens or even could recall the name of. No doubt he is trying his best but no one knows what he has done by way of relief over the last three months. Where is the media blitz on Twitter or even newspaper ads ?

What we see and hear is the Opposition who don't have to do anything but just protest.

The big worry during the Nehruvian days was that India did not have enough food to feed the urban population — marketable surplus as it was called. The Green Revolution solved that problem by harnessing the larger farms in the more fertile areas. India is awash with so much food that it is rotting. This time around the issue is too many small non-viable farms which have to be phased out and farmers and their families have to be given a permanent viable economic alternative. It is no good being sentimental about the kisan. Much better to be hard-headed and give him and his family hope for the future.

This is where quick infrastructural schemes are crucial. Manufacturing industries have to be set up fast. The caution about reforming labour laws has to be abandoned. Lives, especially of the next generation, are at stake. It is only by calling this a National Emergency that things will move. The Government is going through its agnipariksha. It is lucky this has happened early in the political cycle. The Prime Minister has time to regroup his forces, reshuffle his Cabinet, read the riot act to his backbenchers. He has to act and to be seen to be acting.

## Diet diary: You can't blame family history for type 1.5 diabetes



We all know that diabetes is of two kinds – type 1 diabetes also called juvenile diabetes or IDDM (Insulin dependent diabetes mellitus), which occurs in childhood, and type 2 diabetes also called adult/ maturity onset or NIDDM (non-insulin dependent Diabetes mellitus), which as the name suggests happens in adults and is associated with poor lifestyle and obesity. Now, a new type of diabetes, called LADA (Latent Auto-immune Diabetes in adults) or Type 1.5 diabetes has been recognised. It falls in between type-1 and type-2 diabetes. LADA, also called MODY (maturity onset diabetes of the young), is a form of childhood diabetes that occurs in adults over 30 years of age. In this type of diabetes, the body destroys its own insulin producing beta cells of the pancreas.

LADA was first discovered in 1993 to describe slow onset childhood diabetes (type-1) in adults. Nearly 80 per cent people with LADA are initially misdiagnosed as having type-2 diabetes. People with LADA are usually non-obese, lean and even underweight, while some may be overweight or mildly obese. Often people with LADA, may or may not have family history of type-2 diabetes, but may have a family history of other auto-immune conditions such as thyroid, arthritis, gluten-related disorders

and celiac disease. They test positive for certain auto-antibodies that are not present in type-2 diabetes.

Treatment for LADA may involve diet, exercise and medication initially but eventually insulin therapy is needed. Although LADA seems to initially respond to lifestyle and medication as in type-2 diabetes, it will not halt or slow the progression of beta cell destruction and people will eventually become insulin dependent.

Dietary recommendations to manage LADA include slowing progression of the disease, management of body weight and maintaining optimum blood sugar levels. A high fibre, low glycemic index diet with anti-inflammatory foods and nutrients has been found to be useful.

Over the past few years, evidence has supported a protective role of certain nutrients, including vitamin D, vitamin A, vitamin C, selenium, magnesium, zinc, omega-3 fatty acids, prebiotics, probiotics, glutamine (an amino acid), and flavanols (plant chemicals which protect against diseases) in auto-immune conditions. Several animal and human studies have shown that diets high in omega-3 fatty acids, the kind of fat found in fish and flaxseeds, have a role in managing auto-immune diseases. Gluten-free diet have also been found to have a protective effect.



## **THE TIMES OF INDIA**

**HAU releases new hybrid bajra variety**





A new bajra (pearl millet) hybrid variety HHB 272, developed at Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University (CCSHAU), Hisar, has been identified for release in Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

According to HAU vice-chancellor K S Khokhar, the new bajra hybrid is high yielding and resistant to major diseases. He said that at the annual group meet of the All India Coordinated Pearl Millet Improvement Project, held at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, the hybrid had been identified for A1 zone of the country comprising dry areas of Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat in view of its characteristic features.

He said HHB 272 had grain and dry fodder yield potentials of 44.8 and 101.0 quintals per hectare, respectively. Besides, it was highly resistant against downy mildew and other diseases. Khokhar said the hybrid out-yielded the national check bajra hybrid HHB 67 (improved) by 30.3%. Enumerating other characteristics of the new bajra hybrid, S S Siwach, HAU director of research, said its ear heads were compact that carried grey coloured globular grains. Besides, its tillering capacity was also very high and its plants matured in 68-72 days.

#### **Pulses at above 100/kg set pulse racing**

Tur dal is all set to make headlines again. Wholesale rates of this humble source of protein for the masses have crossed Rs 100 a kg. The retail counters are quoting up to Rs 130 for a kg of the top variety, with the lower ones not lagging much behind at Rs 95 to 98 a kg.

Tur dal had become a national issue some four years ago when rates had touched Rs 90 a kg. Other varieties of pulses are also on the boil, crossing the Rs 100 a kg mark, say foodgrain traders.

Agrarian losses due to dry spell and unseasonal rains are being blamed for the price rise. However, what has surprised the markets is that in a mere 15-day period the rates of tur and other pulses shot up by Rs 2,000 a quintal or Rs 20 per kg, say sources.

If dal prices are on a high, the roti is not behind too. Unseasonal rains have hampered the wheat harvest leading to prices of varieties like MP Bot see a sharp increase as compared to last year. The MP Bot variety, which was last year priced between Rs 25 to 28 a kg in bulk markets is now Rs 30 to 36 a kg. The medium variety is now Rs 25 to 28 per kg as compared to Rs 20 to 24 last year

Pratap Motwani, secretary of the Itwari Wholesale Grain and Seeds Merchants, said the dry spell has reduced production of pulses by 15 lakh tonnes.

Supplies from Marathwada have been negligible this year due to the drought. The Karnataka consignments were also delayed by a fortnight, after which the rates were too high to be feasible for local traders to buy, he said.

Tur dal prices were in the range of Rs 65 to 70 a kg in January when fresh crops arrive, but an acute shortage led to the rates shooting up, eventually touching Rs 100 a kg, he said. Other pulses like urad now cost Rs 100 to 115 as against Rs 70 to 85 a kg last year. Moong dal is in the range of Rs 105 to 115 per kg as compared to Rs 85 to 95 last year respectively.

The only saving grace is that the rates of rice have come down due to a low demand for Basmati variety in overseas market. Countries in the Middle East have reduced buying Basmati from India as they are getting a better deal from Pakistan. This has reduced rates of Basmati rice to Rs 80 a kg from Rs 120. The non-Basmati rice which cannot be exported is also down by Rs 1,000 a quintal, said Motwani.

### **Burning a hole in the pocket**

\* Pulses production down by 15 lakh tonnes at 1.90 lakh tonnes

\* Consumption stands at 2.25 lakh tonnes but costly dollar has made imports from Burma dearer

\* Tur dal is now Rs 130 a kg for best variety, as against Rs 65 in January.

\* Urad and moong dals have crossed Rs 100 mark too

\* Rice is, however, cheaper as against last year due to enough supply from Andhra and Chhattisgarh

\* Wheat up by around Rs 500 a quintal

### **Rising pollution triggering asthma in healthy people**

Rameshwar Tyagi developed severe breathing problems one night. Rushed to the emergency ward of a leading hospital, he was diagnosed with asthma and put on oxygen. For Tyagi, 55, it was the first asthma attack as he had never suffered from the disease earlier and was otherwise perfectly healthy.

Experts term this to be late onset of asthma, which is otherwise a chronic disease, due to the increasing levels of air pollution in Indian cities.

"More and more patients who have never got asthma before are coming to us with this disease. This can be only attributed to the rising levels of pollution in the air," Ujjwal Parikh, consultant chest medicine, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, told IANS.

"Incidents of asthma overall are also increasing. Air pollution is one of the triggering factors. People who are exposed to vehicular pollution and dust are most prone," he added.

Rajesh Chawla, senior consultant with the Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, told IANS: "Pollution definitely aggravates asthma. It is one of the major triggers. Incidents of asthma have in fact increased over the years."

Echoing this, Vivek Chhattachopadhyay of the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) said that several research studies also indicate that pollution triggers asthma as well as low lung function, especially in children.

"Air pollution is a rising concern. It definitely aggravates asthma. Studies indicate that there is a variety of health impacts of air pollution," he said.

A study conducted in Delhi by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and Kolkata-based Chittaranjan National Cancer Research Centre found that every third child in Delhi had reduced lung function due to air pollution.

Chhattopadhyay said children in the national capital, where CPCB found "critical" particulate levels, are the most vulnerable.

"Poor air quality affects kids' capacity to breathe leading to increase in respiratory problems. It affects their growth," Chhattopadhyay told IANS.

Citing a scientific judgement, Chhattopadhyay said children's breathing depends on per kg of body weight.

"Kids breathe more for each kilogram that they gain during the growing age. While they breathe more, they inhale more pollutants. And they also play outdoors. Keeping all these factors together, children are the most vulnerable group along with older people," Chhattopadhyay said.

Vivek Singh, consultant at the pulmonology department at Gurgaon's Columbia Asia Hospital, told IANS: "Even the normal population these days gets affected due to air pollution."

Asthma is a chronic disorder of the lungs, where inflammation and narrowing of the airways happen. And when the air is polluted the allergens present like smoke, dust, toxic gases like carbon monoxide and nitro-oxide affect asthma patients with aggravated levels of asthma.

"Air quality these days is pretty bad due to the ongoing construction work in and around Delhi NCR, vehicular pollution and industrial pollution," Vivek Singh said.

"Burning of crops has also led to increased smoke in the air making it difficult for people suffering from asthma and worsening their condition and losing control of their asthma," he added.

According to the World Health Organization, Indian cities, including Delhi, are among the most polluted.

Taking note of the rising levels of air pollution, the National Green Tribunal has taken steps like banning diesel vehicles older than 10 years from entering the capital and making burning of waste a punishable offence.

Although the fundamental causes of asthma are not completely understood,

the strongest risk factors for developing asthma are inhaled asthma triggers, which include indoor allergens (house dust mites in bedding, carpets and stuffed furniture and pollution), outdoor allergens (such as pollens and moulds), tobacco smoke and chemical irritants in the workplace.

During an asthma attack, the lining of the bronchial tubes swell, causing the airways to narrow and reduce the flow of air into and out of the lungs.

Doctors say that though there are no particular ways of preventing the disease, it can be effectively managed by taking certain precautions.

According to Parikh, unnecessary travel should be avoided during peak traffic hours and care must be taken to drive with the car window up.

"While travelling in a car, the air conditioner should be put on the re-circulate mode so that the outside air does not come in," he said.

The majority of the first time patients, according to Parikh, are youngsters.

Vivek Singh said: "There are some ways with which people can keep asthma under control."

"Once in a while, go to places with clean air quality like hill stations where clean air is available. I have personally seen some patients coming back from places with clean air and no episodes of asthma.

"Educative efforts of awareness need to be done on both individual and organizational levels. People need to avoid maximum exposure to such polluted conditions; or wear an N90 mask for protection or wear a wet handkerchief to filter dust particles," Vivek Singh added.

### **India's coffee exports up by over 7.22% in April**

**Coffee exports** from the country have increased by 7.22% to 31,060 tonnes in April this year compared to the same month in 2014, but value realization was lower due to sluggish global prices.

The country had shipped 28,966 tonnes of coffee in the same period last year, the **Coffee Board** said in its latest report.

According to Coffee Board's data, export value realization was Rs 1,64,078.56 per tonne in the period under review as against Rs 1,69,561.48 per tonne in the said period last year.

## Oats, cracked wheat, rava idli



*A quick, tasty, easy to make and perfect healthy recipe: oats, cracked wheat rava idli. The roasted oats and cracked wheat gives a fine aroma to this tiffin. Try this wonderful diet recipe with tomato chutney or onion chutney and enjoy its health benefits.*

**Servings: 3-4**

**Ingredients** 3 cups Oats

1 1/2 cups Cracked Wheat

Grated carrot from 1 carrot

2 cups Fresh curd

1/2 tsp Eno fruit salt

Mustard seeds and urad dal 1 tea spoon each

1 Chopped green chilli

### **Directions :**

1. Heat a pan and dry roast the wheat rava till it gives out nice aroma in medium flame and transfer it to a bowl. Then in the same pan dry roast the oats for 1 minute in low flame without burning it and transfer it to the bowl that contains wheat rava.

2. Powder them coarsely together in the mixie jar.
3. Now heat a tea spoon of oil in a pan and saute it with mustard seeds and urad dal. After they splutter add the green chillies and grated carrot and give a stir. Transfer them to the bowl that has the oats and wheat rava powder.
4. Now add the curd, salt and required water and make the batter to the consistency of regular idli batter. Add the eno salt or baking soda in the last stage now and mix well.
5. Immediately grease the idli plates and pour the batter in them and make idlis.

## THE HINDU BusinessLine

### **Nature-based, zero budget farming alone can help solve agrarian crisis: expert**

Nature-based, zero budget farming alone without the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides can solve the many and complex problems leading to the agrarian crisis in the country. It is abundantly evident now that the present approach of the planners and policy-makers will do no good, according to Subhash Palekar, the proponent of such farming.

#### **Cultivation cost up**

He told reporters here on Sunday that a two-day workshop was being organised here from Monday to educate farmers in the north-coastal AP districts about such methods of farming.

Explaining the concept, Palekar said one of the major problems after the so-called green revolution was that the cost of cultivation had risen sharply as the farmer had to depend on outside sources for all inputs from seeds to fertilisers and other requisites.

With the ever-increasing input prices, farming had become unremunerative in spite of the initial spurt in yields. Subsequently, the yields had also touched a plateau and the agricultural sector was mired in a deep crisis, leading to suicides of farmers.

### **Greenhouse gas emission**

Further, Palekar said, a late realisation had dawned on the policy-makers that chemical farming was contributing substantially, as much as the industrial sector, to the emission of greenhouse gases and all consequent ill-effects such as global warming.

He said “Jeevamrutam” should be prepared with cow’s urine and dung, and black jaggery and a few other locally available materials and water.

It can be used instead of chemical fertilisers and pesticides and “its efficacy has been proved in all the agro-climatic zones of the country.

### **Increase in yield**

Thousands of farmers across the country, including Andhra Pradesh, were employing the method of cultivation, reducing the costs and increasing the yields. Farmers would have to make use of mulching and a few other such methods and they can easily be taught.

He said it was called zero budget farming as the farmer can recoup the cost of cultivation through the inter crops alone and the main crop would be a bonus to him or her.

# **Business Standard**

### **Bankers seek cess-like structure for agri insurance**

Bankers have sought a cess-like structure for agriculture insurance. In their list of proposals discussed with the stakeholders in the industry, these officials have said that there should be a low-premium compulsory National Agriculture Insurance Policy with contribution from central & state government.



Less than 20 per cent of farmers in India are insured, exposing a vast majority of the farming community to the vagaries of weather which lead them to taking desperate steps, as is being seen after a vast damage to the Rabi crop this year, according to an Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM)-Skymet Weather joint study.

At the all-India level, only 19 per cent of farmer reported ever having insured their crops. A very large proportion of 81 per cent were found to be unaware of the practice of crop insurance. Of the un-insured, 46 per cent were found to be aware but not interested while 24 per cent said that the facility was not available to them. Only 11 per cent felt that they could not afford to pay the insurance premium, mentioned the joint study.

In their proposal, top bankers in an Indian Banks' Association interaction have said that since agriculture insurance market is not well developed, the government through suitable policy measures should ensure insurance premium be affordable & subsidized from sources like cess as done in Education loans.

As per the ASSOCHAM-Skymet study, there are about 32 million farmers who have been enrolled in various crop insurance schemes across India. However, issues in design, particularly related to delays in claims settlement, have led to farmers not being covered, despite significant government subsidy.

The government is planning a modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS), a market-based scheme with involvement from the private sector, since only Agriculture Insurance Company (AIC) operates in this space.

Compared with the existing scheme, the ASSOCHAM-Skymet study said that the new programme would have a design that may offer more timely, claim settlement, less distortion in the allocation of government subsidies and cross-subsidies between farmer groups, and reduced basis risk.

For coping with natural risks, crop insurance is one of the mechanisms available to mitigate loss. In this context, many crop insurance schemes have been developed. These schemes were further modified and the recent National Crop Insurance Programme (NCIP) has been evolved having modified national agricultural insurance scheme (MNAIS) and weather based crop insurance scheme (WBCIS) as component scheme. MNAIS is

yield based scheme and WBCIS is scheme in which claim is announced on the basis of weather data.

Bankers, have further said that claim of insurance should be on unit-loss basis instead of loss evaluated at block level . Also, they have said that share croppers/tenants farmers & women should also be covered. At present, in insurance claim threshold yield is average 3/5 years crop yield i.e. less than actual farm yield of that particular year.

Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS) aims to mitigate the hardship of the insured farmers against the likelihood of financial loss on account of anticipated crop loss resulting from incidence of adverse conditions of weather parameters like rainfall, temperature, frost among others.

At present restructuring in agricultural loans in case of natural calamity is done when crop loss /damage is more than 50 per cent. During the inauguration of Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana, PM Narendra Modi announced that the criteria of 50 per cent crop damage for providing compensation to affected farmers has been reduced to 33 per cent. These 33 per cent loss criteria should be taken as benchmark for restructuring.

Presently there is a system of two types of Insurance i.e. a weather based Insurance scheme and a Modified crop Insurance scheme. Bankers proposed that this should be replaced by a single insurance scheme to cover all risks of crop loss faced by the farmer.

Moreover, in the modified insurance scheme, the claim is not tenable if 50 per cent crop loss is not occurring over the whole of the Block. This means that the determinants for insurance claim are very broad and hence individual farmers at the local level will be put to loss. Bankers have proposed it should be ensured that the determinants of insurance claim are fixed at the micro level i.e. at each farm.

In many states, each district has been allotted to one insurance company for weather-based crop insurance. Bank officials have said that this ends up creating a monopolistic situation.

Apart from AIC, private players have developed weather-based crop insurance products. According to ASSOCHAM-Skymet, these weather-based insurance products are advantageous over yield- based insurance products in terms of time taken for claim settlement and transparency in settlement of claims, reveals the joint study.

## Hike in import duty on rubber: planters happy, industry irked



The Centre's decision last week to hike import duty on rubber from 20 to 25 per cent has evoked mixed response among various stakeholders. The United Planters' Association of Southern India (Upasi) has welcomed the move but consuming industries such as the tyre and rubber sector have opposed it.

N Dharmaraj, Vice President, UPASI said that the decision would serve to inject some life into the dying rubber plantation business, as the superior RSS-4 grade is a backyard produce and is crucial to the sustainability of the rural economy in Kerala.

Although a record quantity of 4.2 lakh tonnes of rubber was imported last fiscal, much higher than the production-consumption gap of 3.4 lakh tonnes, he said the increase in import duty would help shore up domestic rubber prices at least in the medium term.

### **Seeks clarification**

Upasi also sought to clarify certain issues on reports of the Rubber Board revising statistics on production. The planters' body, according to Dharmaraj, will strongly oppose any move to revise lower production data retrospectively, since the lower production is a clear fall-out of the low price scenario.

However, the consuming industries have termed the import duty hike as "business unfriendly and a dampener on future investments" in the rubber and tyre sectors.

According to them, this would lead to worsening of inverted duty structure since tyres and other finished rubber goods can be imported at 10 per cent or even a lower rate of duty.

### **Inverted duty structure**

Raghupati Singhania, Chairman, Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA), said that the tyre industry has been bearing the brunt of inverted duty structure for a long time. While import duty on rubber is 20 per cent, tyres as finished products could be imported at as low as 5 per cent duty under various trade agreements.

Increasing the import duty will worsen the inverted duty scenario, increasing the threat of large scale dumping of tyres in India, he said.

The MSME rubber sector comprising more than 5,000 units also raised its objections, saying the duty on import of rubber in India is already amongst the highest compared to other countries.

Mohinder Gupta, President, All-India Rubber Industries Association, said that the small scale sector is finding it difficult to retain competitiveness against invasion of cheap import of rubber goods.

“Increase in duties on rubber will add to the cost of production making it for MSME’s to compete both in domestic and international markets besides impacting exports,” he said.