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THE HINDU

‘Make in India’ campaign reaches tier-II cities



Taking the message of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ‘Make in India’ to tier-II and tier-III cities across, Jagat Shah, founder and mentor of Global Network and Cluster Pulse, on Thursday exuded confidence that all cities would transform by opening up manufacturing sector.

“Instead of following a technology introduced by some other country, India can turn into a tech-leader. There are a plenty of opportunities and it is for the individuals to cash in on the situation. It is wrong that only big or large-scale units can make it to the top. Small and tiny units also flourish and it is a question of striking the right chord at the right time,” he said.

Unravelling a number of success stories at a meeting held at MADITSSIA, in association with Native Lead Foundation here, Mr. Shah, who had travelled close to 10,000 km across the country since May 4, is carrying the message of the PM to 'Make in India' a success.

“Many may wonder what is ‘Gujarat model.’ It is nothing but manufacturing activity. In the last seven years, the State has turned into a land of opportunity. When it can happen in one State, it can work in other States as well,” he said.

Mr. Shah said that in agriculture, service and manufacturing sectors, there had not been a big change. For instance, in 1951, agriculture accounted for 41.8 per cent of the country’s GDP and it fell to 11.6 in 2012. As for the service sector, it had risen from 29.5 to 59.5 per cent.

Similarly, manufacturing had seen a rise from 9 per cent in 1951 to 15.1 per cent in 2012. Hence, the share of manufacturing sector had to be activated. When the country had 1.4 crore people looking for jobs, only 45 lakh were able to get employment. MSMEs should be encouraged to set up units and recruit people. From the moment the industry invested more in R&D activity, there would be robust growth all around, he added.

MADITSSIA vice-president Murugan, Native Lead founder-director R. Sivarajah and co-founder Ashwin Desai addressed the gathering. MADITSSIA secretary K.S. Serma Pandiyan proposed a vote of thanks.

Rs. 165 crore crop insurance released for Ramanathapuram

Collector K. Nanthakumar has announced that the State government and the National Agriculture Insurance Company had released their shares of Rs. 165 crore and the disbursement of the much-awaited crop insurance for the 2013-14 season would start on June 1.

The Collector made the announcement at the farmers’ grievance redressal meeting here on Friday after the farmers expressed their dismay over the inordinate delay in the payment of the insurance amount.

Amid cheers by the farmers, the Collector said that the State government and the Insurance Company had released their share of 55.71 per cent,

amounting to Rs. 165.03 crore, and after the Centre released its share of Rs. 118.30 crore later this week, the disbursement would start on June 1.

He said that Rs. 161.22 crore had been credited in Ramanathapuram Central Cooperative Bank, and Rs. 3.81 crore in commercial banks.

By cheques

The Collector said that all the about one lakh farmers would be paid the amount through cheques to avoid any irregularity in disbursement. Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Societies (PACCS) would distribute cheques to the farmers and they could encash them at one of the 29 branches of Central Cooperative Bank, he said, adding separate counters would be opened for the purpose.

The beneficiary farmers should submit two photographs. While one photo would be affixed in the ledger against their name, the other one would be affixed on the backside of the cheque leaf with their signatures, the Collector said.

Farmers who did not want to encash the cheques immediately, could deposit them in their bank accounts, he added.

The district was allotted the highest amount of crop insurance in the State as the district administration had sent a report that farmers in most of the firkas had suffered 100 per cent crop loss following failure of both southwest and northeast monsoons during 2013-14.

A total of 99,463 farmers – 85,153 non-loanee and 14,310 loanee farmers – would be benefited in the district, official sources said.

‘Mahapanchayat’ in Erode on May 25 to discuss farmers’ problems

A ‘Mahapanchayat’ of farmers’ associations in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka will be held here on May 25, to evolve a strategy for coming out of the adverse conditions for agriculturists across the country.

Suicide

Suicides by scores of farmers in recent years and the struggle by their poverty-stricken families due to denial of government support will be a main discussion topic.

The 'Mahapanchayat' will take stock of the situation arising out of farmers migrating in large numbers to cities to work as labourers for survival.

In the backdrop of absence of remunerative price for agricultural produces and inability of farmers to settle bank loans, the Land Acquisition Bill of the Union Government would deal a deadly blow to the already struggling agriculture sector, said P.K. Deivasigamani, president, All India Turmeric Farmers' Association, here on Friday.

There was a danger of several lakhs of farmers committing suicide if the government failed to write off pending loans. The 'Mahapanchayat' will devise ways and means to prevent such suicides through collective efforts of the associations, Mr. Deivasigamani said.

Jackfruit the star attraction at food fete



“Jackfruit is going to revolutionise our food habits. There is going to be a huge demand for jackfruit soon,” M.P. Rejul Kumar, president of Green View, an organisation of organic farmers, is quite confident. From the number of jackfruit products on display at ‘Adukkala’, a festival of traditional food items, organised by Green View, one would feel that his confidence is not misplaced.

Beginning from jackfruit jam, jelly, pickle and squash, the festival also features pickle from the outer skin of jackfruit, murukku, halwa and the traditional Chakkapuzhukku. Jackfruits of various kinds are also in great demand. The other major varieties include squashes from pith of banana, lemon and ginger; pineapple pickle; banana pith pickle; dried mango pickle; banana jam; Robusta banana chips; banana jelly; banana toffee; and unadulterated coffee powder.

The Thazhuthama curry, Cheera puttu, palpayasam, steamed tapioca, Karimeen Pollichathu and the quintessential rice broth with coconut chutney are also on great demand. To add spice to the seasonal food variants, there is Neera combined with the traditional ‘shaap curries’ made of fish and chicken, a major attraction of the festival.

This is the second edition of Adukkala being organised by Green View, which had also organised a month-long monsoon food festival in the city last year. Raw materials are all directly sourced from the various farms of Green View or from authorised suppliers. At least a dozen volunteers of Green View are part of the festival supported by the Regional Agricultural Research Station of Kerala Agricultural University at Ambalavayal in Wayanad.

The festival concludes on May 25.

MoU signed for production of Keramrutham



The Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) and the Kerala State Coconut Development Corporation (KSCDC) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the production and sale of Keramrutham, the KAU brand of Neera.

The memorandum was signed by KAU Registrar Dr. P.V. Balachandran and KSCDC Managing Director Asok Kumar Thekkan. It envisages large-scale production of Neera, based on technology developed by the KAU, and promotion of its sales through outlets of the Corporation and the University.

The product will be available in 200 ml bottles. While the University will provide technical assistance to the KSCDC to establish production units and impart training to technicians, KAU will facilitate processing of neera collected by the KSCDC units.

The MoU was signed in the presence of KAU Vice-Chancellor Dr. P. Rajendran, KSCDC chairman Subah Pulppaly, KAU Executive Committee member Aji Francis, Comptroller Dr. Joy Mathew and Associate Director of Research Dr. Pathummal Beevi.

CWRDM organises workshop on drip fertigation

The Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (CWRDM) organised a workshop on drip fertigation on its Kunnamangalam campus on Friday.

Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan opened the workshop, organised jointly with the Agriculture Department. CWRDM scientists C.M. Sushanth and U.

Surendran led the workshop which explained in detail the importance of drip fertigation and its effectiveness in saving both water and fertilizers, besides ensuring higher yield and better quality of crops.

Over 100 farmers cultivating various crops attended the programme. Officials said the project had identified 22 demonstration plots for drip fertigation in 10 districts in the State.

Prabhu for boosting ties with Dhaka



A partnership between New Delhi and Dhaka to save the rare ecosystem of the Sundarbans and that agreement should be signed in a boat — that was Union Minister Suresh Prabhu’s suggestion as Environment Minister in 1998 to his counterpart in Dhaka which could not be carried out.

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Dhaka, Mr. Prabhu, who now holds the portfolio of Railways, said his earlier suggestion could still be followed up with more such agreements between the two nations on various other fronts including climate change, transportation and agriculture.

Sundarbans ecosystem

“I proposed to my counterpart [then] that the Sundarbans is one common ecosystem, when the tigers go from India to Bangladesh and from there to here, they don’t need any passport or visa, no custom can stop them ... why not we, therefore, conserve the rarest ecosystem in the world. I proposed I will come from this side on a boat; you come from that side ... I think we should try to do that soon. We will have to do so many things together, this is one of them,” he said addressing the sixth India-Bangladesh friendship dialogue on “Bangladesh-India relations: bilateralism and beyond.”

Having ratified the four-decade-old India-Bangladesh Land Border Agreement, New Delhi is keen to extend its partnership with Bangladesh to areas such as climate change, energy and transportation, he said. Pitching for a joint water management between the two countries, Mr. Prabhu said: “It will be a great advantage to do joint water management, and save us from natural disasters; floods cause more damage than draught. If we put up a joint water management front with India, Bangladesh and even Nepal, without taking away anyone’s water, we can meet the challenge of climate change.”

Energy cooperation

He suggested collaboration even in the field of agriculture, and setting up of a grid for energy cooperation. “India and Bangladesh are trying to work together in the sector of railways, I have extended an invitation to my Bangladeshi counterpart,” he said.

Go Naadan



Green View’, an organisation of organic farmers holds ‘Adukkala’, a food festival featuring seasonal delicacies of Kerala, that are fast disappearing from the dining table. The festival is being organised with the help of the Regional Agriculture Research Centre in Ambalavayal, Wayanad.

Venue:Government Model Higher Secondary School, Mananchira

Date:Till May 25

Time:11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Bio-methanation plant grounded



A three-year-old pilot project of the Mangaluru City Corporation (MCC) of producing energy from waste, near Urwa Market, has now grounded.

The ‘Nisargruna’ biomethanation plant, set up using the technology developed by Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Mumbai, stopped functioning from this month, according to sources in the corporation.

The plant had been set up as the first of many such plants in each ward or for a group of wards to dispose of garbage at ward level.

This project aimed at reducing the bio-waste dumped at the compost plant yard of the corporation at Pachchanady. Transportation cost from wards to Pachchanady could also be brought down, and solid waste management could be decentralised. The plant started functioning from November 2011.

The sources said that the plant was not supplying energy to the shops at Urwa Market. After supplying power to the shops for some months it was stopped due to irregular supply, and the shopkeepers opted for grid power.

The sources said that it had been planned to use the energy produced at the plant to light some street lights in the Urwa Market area. The plan has not been realised.

The sources said that the plant had been getting vegetable waste mainly from Akshaya Patra Foundation as it was supplying mid-day meal to some schools in the city. As schools were closed for summer, there was no mid-day meal supply, which in turn affected the supply of waste to the plant. When schools remain open, the plant gets between 600 kg to 800 kg of waste daily.

The energy (methane gas) produced at the plant was being used operate a generator, which in turn produced power.

The plant could process up to two tonnes of bio-waste a day. This bio-waste could produce between 100-160 cubic metres of methane gas. That could produce up to 200 units of power.

The plant had been set up by Wipro Eco Energy under the guidance and technology provided by Sharad Kale, Professor, Homi Bhabha National Institute, and Head, Pesticide Residues and Soil Science section Nuclear Agriculture and Biotechnology Division, BARC.

Prakash B. Saliyan, chairman, standing committee for public health, education and social justice said that he would see how the plant could be revived.

Tomato prices soar in Mysuru

ARRIVALS AND WHOLESAL PRICE AT APMC MARKET, MYSURU				
MAY 15	Arrivals: 5,600 quintals Wholesale price: Rs. 15 to Rs. 25 a kg	Retail price in the market Rs. 40 a kg	Pushcart vendor price	
MAY 22	Arrivals: 3,500 quintals Wholesale price: Rs. 23 to Rs. 35 a kg		Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 a kg	

The price of tomato has gone northwards during the last one week, hitting the middle class and poor households hard.

The price of tomato, which was around Rs. 25 to Rs. 30 in the retail market around a week ago, soared to between Rs. 40 and Rs. 50 on Friday.

While Ravikumar, a vegetable dealer at the Devaraja Market here, said the price of a kg of tomato was Rs. 40, Sujatha, a homemaker, said a push-cart vendor, who goes around the neighbourhood at Udayagiri selling vegetables, was selling it for Rs. 50 a kg.

Sources in the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Yard here told *The Hindu* that there had been a sharp decline in the arrival of tomato in the market over the last 10 days.

Decline in arrivals

Against the 5,600 quintals of tomato, which were received at the yard last week on May 15, the arrival of the commodity had declined to 3,500 quintals on Friday, triggering a price rise.

“It is natural for price to increase when there is a decline in the supply of the commodity,” he said, adding that arrival of tomato to Mysuru from the farms in Mandya, Srirangapatna, Pandavapura, Nanjangud and parts of Chamarajanagar district had gone down over the last week.

Seasonal phenomenon

While sources in the APMC attributed the decline in arrivals to an annual seasonal phenomenon, Mr. Ravikumar said the decline coincided with rain, leading to a dip in the output.

Officials at the APMC said the price of tomato usually increased during May and June every year.

However, farmers’ leader Kurubur Shanthakumar said several farmers had uprooted the tomato plantation when the prices had dipped to as low as Rs. 10 a kg about two months ago.

He said middlemen, who prowl the APMC, purchased the produce from the farmers at a very low price before selling it in the market at a higher price.

‘Farmers don’t benefit’

“Even though the price of tomatoes has gone up in the retail market, farmers are not benefiting from the price rise,” he lamented.

“Giving best price to farmers is FCI’s priority”



For the nation’s economy to stabilise, farmers’ lot must improve.

The Food Corporation of India (FCI) is making all out efforts to ensure that farmers get the best price for their produce even as consumers have access to quality foodgrains, Union Minister for Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution Ram Vilas Paswan said here on Friday.

Speaking after laying the foundation stone for new buildings to house the FCI Food Museum and district office, Mr. Paswan said the museum would be one of its kind in the country showcasing the growth and activities of the FCI and would sensitise farmers from throughout the country about benefits of the FCI.

Reiterating that the FCI was concentrating on improving storage and distribution aspects more than procurement, Mr. Paswan said it was pertinent that the FCI was able to procure over 600 lakh tonnes of foodgrains this year despite hailstorm and other natural impediments in several parts of the country.

That was more than the previous year’s procurement, he added.

When farmers from north India represented, the Union Minister said he directed the FCI to procure all their produce without any reduction in the purchase price.

On the attitude of the Centre led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr. Paswan said the present dispensation did not distinguish caste, creed, or religion but was only concentrating on development plank.

Speaking on the need to uplift the marginalised sections of society, Mr. Paswan said that Dalits among Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, and Buddhists were seeking these benefit of reservation and other facilities enjoyed by those in Hinduism and passionately called upon all political parties to support the move to sanction reservation in service promotions to the oppressed and the marginalised as a means of their social uplift.

Government should use excess milk produced: farmers

Timely intervention by Collector K. Maharabushanam dissuaded the farmers from resorting to an agitation of pouring milk on the ground to express their dissent over the refusal of Aavin to procure additional milk, at the farmers' grievances day meeting here on Friday.

After gauging the mood of the farmers at the meeting, the Collector allowed discussion on the matter at the meeting. The farmers' representatives took full advantage of the opportunity to vent out their feelings.

S. Govindaraj of Ammanpalayam, a farmer, said unprecedented situation was prevailing in the State after Aavin refused to procure the entire quantity of milk provided by the members of the primary milk societies.

The State Government should take steps to sell milk to Kerala, which was procuring large quantities of milk from Karnataka. Even private dairies have stopped procuring milk from farmers, Mr. Govindaraj said adding that the farmers were left with no option but to destroy the excess milk.

A.R. Shanmugam of Panamarathupatti, said that the State, which always had faced deficit milk supply, was for the first time witnessing a surplus in milk production. He said that the district administration, and the government should come to the rescue of the farmers by supplying milk to noon meal centres, and school students.

He suggested that Aavin could impart training to women SHG members in the production of value added products from milk.

N. Perumal, president of the Salem Maavatta Vivasayigal Sangam, accused the Aavin of ignoring the interest of its long time members. The farmers have to spend at least Rs. 50 to produce a litre of milk, but they receive a meagre amount from cooperative societies.

C. Vaiyapuri, president, United Farmers Association — Tamil Nadu, said that the marketing strategy of Aavin should be improved.

S. Jayaraman, president, Abinavam Uzhavar Mandra Koottamaippu, Ethapur, said that there was a good demand for milk, but a majority could not opt for it because of poverty. K.A. Govindasamy, president, Tamil Nadu Tapioca Farmers Association, accused the farmers of supplying adulterated milk.

This allegation brought all the farmers on their toes, and they shouted him down.

Referring to the supply of milk from Karnataka to Kerala, Mr. Maharabushanam said that Karnataka milk was procured as they supply it at much reduced rate.

Salem Aavin was procuring 5.22 lakh litres milk a day, compared to the 4.33 lakh litres procured during the same period last year. The Aavin has paid the farmers up to date, he added.

Summer tang

Air conditioners on high blast, increased ice-cream sales and soft drinks being bought like there's no tomorrow — summer is definitely here. However, if you're not a fan of the fizzy stuff, here are some lip-smacking ways to cool off. Just step back into the kitchen to whip up these easy traditional dishes and drinks.



Thayir Saadam

A traditional meal at home is incomplete with this humble yet essential component. It's a superhero by itself, a powerful weapon against indigestion and is great as a stomach acid diffuser. *Thayir saadam* is basically rice mixed with a large dollop of fresh yogurt and water, making it easier to swallow. Fancier variations, particularly for weddings and festivals, include dressing it up with a tempering of spices, toor dal, coriander and chilli, but it is best eaten plain for beating the heat. If you've got some potato chips and mango pickle to go along with it, tuck in already.

Kambu Koozh

Once an immensely popular dish in Tamil Nadu, the porridge-like *kambu koozh* is made from pearl millets. If you want to look a picture of health and cool down at the same time, just grind some of these in a pot, make a light runny porridge and spice it with some ginger and cumin.

Aam Panna

A favourite in Maharashtra (known as *kairi panha* there) and in many parts of North India, *aam pannais* made of the pulp of raw mangoes in chilled water, with mint to taste and salt and elaichi to give it its signature *khatta* taste. Forget energy pills, sports drinks or coffee — *aam panna* will definitely give you the boost you need to last through the day's burning heat.

Rasayana

While there are hundreds of ways to use ripe mangoes and their sweetness, nothing seems to compare to the thick lusciousness of *rasayana* , a pudding-like preparation from South India that could also serve as a milkshake for those languid summer afternoons. The dish is coconut-based, with the mango being the main ingredient.

Thandai *Thandai* is a signature North Indian cold drink, its mouth-watering creaminess stemming from the use of cold milk mixed with a delicious paste of almonds, fennel seeds, saffron and other dry fruit. Some even garnish it with rose petals, and add cardamom for a spicy kick. These days, *thandaipackets* are also available in the market for an instant treat .

Khus ka Sharbat

Khus is the North Indian name for vetiver grass, which is used for cooling rooms during scorching summer months. By straining its juices and thickening them to form an emerald-tinted syrup, *khus* can be used to flavour any drink you choose, from milkshakes and juices, to a zinger of a cocktail for pool party evenings



Diet Diary: The Chinese food syndrome — sensitivity to MSG



Headache, tightness in the chest, stiffness or generalised weakness of limbs, light headedness, facial flushing, profuse sweating, heartburn, gastric discomfort and burning sensation (face, upper back, neck or arms), heart palpitations, anxiety, excessive urination, thirst, stomach ache, vomiting, attacks mimicking epileptic seizures in children, asthma, depression;

if you have experienced any of these symptoms after eating Chinese food, then the chances are you are sensitive to Mono Sodium Glutamate (MSG). These symptoms are generally transitory but it has been shown that women are more likely to experience “Chinese Restaurant Syndrome” than men. Monosodium Glutamate (MSG), commonly known as ajinomoto, is the most widely used food additive that is valued for its flavour enhancing properties.

It is a sodium salt of glutamate, an amino acid (building block of proteins) that occurs naturally in cheese, fish, meat, peas, tomatoes, mushrooms and milk. The body uses glutamic acid as a fine-tuner of brain function as well as a protein building block.

MSG, a flavor enhancer in Chinese, Japanese and other Asian cuisines, is now extensively used in meat, poultry, seafood and vegetables in restaurant cooking.

Research has shown that MSG intolerance may not be as common as previously thought with symptoms being subjective and transitory with no documented long-term effects. As a precautionary measure, however, one must read labels or check with chefs or restaurant staff.

Concerns regarding safety have always surrounded MSG, in spite of its great popularity among chefs and the food industry. Numerous international scientific evaluations undertaken over many years, involving hundreds of

studies have placed MSG on the GRAS (generally regarded as safe) list of food additives approved by the US FDA. Because of individual sensitivity issues, food labels are required to indicate the presence of MSG. The phrase “contains glutamate” appears on labels of foods containing MSG. While MSG may be considered safe for children, it may be prudent to limit MSG intake during pregnancy.

MSG is not an allergen, according to the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. The US Food and Drug Administration has found no evidence to suggest any long-term, serious health consequences from consuming it.

Express Recipes: How to make the freshest salad ever



Health in a bowl with the freshest salad

Preparation Time: 10 mins| no cooking| Serves 2

Ingredients

2 cups lettuce leaves

2 medium (the reddest, plumiest) tomatoes (or 4-5 cherry tomatoes)

1 ripe avocado

1 cucumber
1 orange
1/4th cup croutons
1 tsp chia seeds
1 tsp sunflower seeds
juice of 1 lime
salt and pepper to taste

Method

- * Wash the lettuce leaves in cold water. Cut them into stripes and put them in a bowl filled with ice. This would keep them fresh and crisp.
- * Cut the avocado in half, remove the stone and scoop out chunks
- * Cut tomatoes, cucumber and orange into chunks. Remove seeds and skin from the orange chunks.
- * Mix together all the ingredients (except croutons and chia seeds) in a bowl.
- * Sprinkle croutons and chia seeds and serve immediately.

In healthy MSG-intolerant people, the sensitivity symptoms tend to occur within an hour of eating, with severity being dose dependent. Caffeine and vitamin B6 are known to counter the effects of MSG.

Do's and don'ts

- * Carefully read labels of processed foods to determine the presence of glutamate.
- * Supplement with at least 50 mg of B1, B2 and B6 daily if they consume significant amounts of processed foods, as vitamin B6 also helps alleviate the symptoms of MSG sensitivity.
- * Order food without MSG, when eating out.

- * Check with a qualified professional, if the problem persists.
- * Individuals who develop tightness of the chest must seek medical advice so that serious problems are not overlooked.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Sukhbir seeks notification of 'green zone' around Sukhna

In order to remove hardships being faced by farmers in making commercial use of their agricultural lands in Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA) areas, Punjab deputy chief minister Sukhbir Singh Badal has urged Union environment and forests minister Prakash Javadekar to waive off conditions imposed by the Centre over such areas which were under cultivation.

Sources said Javedkar has assured Sukhbir to decide on the matter within a month and asked the concerned officers to come out with a proposal in this regard.

Sukhbir has also sought to notify ecological sensitive areas around Sukhna wildlife sanctuary in Chandigarh as the state has already forwarded a proposal for notification of eco sensitive zones (ESZ) around 13 wildlife sanctuaries to the environment ministry.

He informed the Union minister that this proposal was in accordance with recommendation of central empowered committee of Supreme Court, which has recommended 100m ESZ around protected areas. He also urged that inhabitants of Kansal village should not be further burdened by restrictions imposed under ESZ in one KM width.

Sukhbir also suggested to the Union minister to adopt State Forest Research Institute Ludhiana as a sub-centre of Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun, to promote agro forestry in the region as well as northern states.

He said the state institute was being set up in collaboration with the FRI as a centre of excellence in agro forestry research and extension services.

Javedkar promised to look into the proposal and decide the matter after meeting with concerned administrators of the institute.

Scientists in Chhattisgarh develop high-zinc rice that may play crucial role in fighting malnutrition



Scientists here have developed a high zinc-enriched variety of rice that is expected to play a crucial role in fighting malnutrition in tribal-dominated Chhattisgarh where nearly seven lakh children are still malnourished.

The new paddy seed, called "Chhattisgarh Zinc Rice-1", the first zinc biofortified rice variety in India, was launched by the state variety release committee, the authority for official release of new varieties of seeds, in March and its production is likely to begin from the next kharif season.

Similarly, researchers from Indira Gandhi Agriculture University (IGAU), Raipur, led by Professor Girish Chandel, have rolled out two varieties of high zinc rice, of which one has been released.

"We focused on increasing our crop production since the inception of the 'green revolution' in the country aiming to eliminate hunger. In the process, we managed to yield high production, but the quality of crop did not improve," Chandel told PTI.

In 2000, the Centre, along with, health organizations in a survey found that 60-70 per cent of population was suffering from malnutrition because of deficiency of micronutrients, particularly iron, zinc and vitamin A.

Following this, the government decided to come out with a research programme to improve the variety of three staple crops — rice, wheat and maize — in different states, he said.

Under the programme, Chhattisgarh, considered as the rice bowl of the country, decided to work on the quality aspect and took up "Rice Bio Fortification Research Project".

In the first phase of the project in 2003-05, some 200 rice germplasm lines with high grain nutritive values but low-yielding quality were identified, he said.

Subsequently, in the next phase of 2006-11, seeds were multiplied and subjected to genetic improvement exercise, which led to seven high-yielding zinc-enriched rice varieties.

In 2013, the Centre decided to conduct a separate exercise coordinated by Directorate of Rice Research (DRR), Hyderabad, to analyse the outcome of the researches being conducted in different parts of the country.

Finally, four varieties were adjudged best in terms of quality, of which the top two came from Chhattisgarh.

"Currently, we have 100kg seeds of this new variety and we are further planning to multiply it in 10 acres. By November-December this year, we will distribute it to around 5,000 farmers across the state. Its sowing would be started in the next kharif season," he said.

UP emerges as biggest contributor to India's agriculture sector: ASSOCHAM study



Uttar Pradesh has emerged as biggest contributor to India's agriculture and allied sector as of 2013-14 with a share of about 13%, according to a recent ASSOCHAM study.

"Agriculture and allied sector contributes just over 22% to UP's gross state domestic product (GSDP) as of 2013-14," highlighted the study titled 'States Emergence: A comparative analysis of growth & development,' conducted by The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM).

"UP has acquired 15th position amid top 20 states in India with a mere 3.2 per cent compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) in agriculture and allied sector during the decadal period of 2004-05 and 2013-14," noted the study prepared by the ASSOCHAM Economic Research Bureau (AERB).

"UP government needs to take corrective measures to revive agriculture production as it is chiefly an agrarian state and holds tremendous potential to attract significant investments in agri-infrastructure like wholesale and retail trading, storage, distribution and irrigation sectors," said Mr D.S. Rawat, national secretary general of ASSOCHAM while releasing the findings of the chamber's study.

ASSOCHAM has given following recommendations to UP government to perk up state's agriculture scenario.

1: Disconnect between farmers and consumers or market is a major cause of farmers not able to benefit fully from modern scientific developments in farm industry. "This disconnect should be corrected through programs like E-Choupal (an experiment of ITC).

2: Old mandi system should be replaced with modern competitive supply chains that would synergize agriculture and farm economy.

3: Information related to monsoon, agriculture price of crop should be provided to farmers as per their convenience so that it could fetch maximum benefits for them. Information through mobile and Internet should be extended in order to provide better service.

4: Farming should be encouraged and promoted through providing best price of crop to the farmers. Trade fairs should be organized especially in rural areas with the participation of farmers through public-private partnership (PPP) model.

5: New commercial crops should be sought for and promoted to break the monotonous and risky dependence on single crop in the hinterland.

6: Contract farming concept should be implemented on a bigger scale and large farms should be promoted either through consolidation or outright purchases.

7: Better seeds, top-quality farm equipment, fertilizers and others should be provided to farmers. Besides, better water conservation and proper irrigation management should be implemented in rural areas by creating awareness of its respective benefits amid farmers.

8: Government should provide agriculture insurance schemes to farmers who are involved in large scale farming and a PPP model could be developed for providing comprehensive insurance for agri-crops in the Rabi and Kharif season especially for sugar, pulses, wheat, rice and other prominent crops.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Pumped up by its potential



The Flipkarts and Amazons have tapped into urban Indian middle class consciousness and their seeming success has spurred various reports that estimate that the e-commerce sector in India could be worth as much as \$300 billion by 2030.

It isn't surprising then that rural online marketing holds significant potential and *Pumpkart.com*, a Chandigarh-based venture founded by KS Bhatia, a 45-year-old chemical engineer, is one such start-up gaining traction among rural consumers by creating a one-stop shop for agricultural, commercial and residential pumps.

"I had been in the water business since 1998 after having worked in the corporate world for 5-6 years. The idea to shift online was actually my son's and he bought me a domain to get started two birthdays ago.

So the credit must go to him," quipped Bhatia, CEO, *Pumpkart.com*, who spent the year studying similar online seller models in the US and UK. After going live around nine months ago, Pumpkart now sells 50 pumps a day across the country with the largest sales being clocked in states such as Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

Rural focus

Various kinds of pumps make up the company's portfolio including booster, sprinkler, borewell and irrigation pumps. Currently, pumps used for agricultural purposes account for 40 per cent of sales. "We cater to consumers across rural India and it's grown steadily not just in terms of sales but also bringing suppliers and distributors on board. This is mainly because pumps are the second-highest capital item in rural markets after tractors," Bhatia explained.

The size of the market for pumps in rural areas is estimated at Rs. 7,500 crore, with the unorganised sector accounting for Rs. 4,500 crore. There are more than 5,000 pump manufacturers and 300 brands in the country, Bhatia estimated. But consumers were aware of only 5 or 10 big names.

Pumpkart hosts 250 vendors and 200 manufacturers. With an average 'ticket size' of Rs. 7,000, the venture transacts business worth Rs. 3.5 lakh per day. That's not bad for an establishment that sold 17 pumps in its first month.

The model is similar to Snapdeal's whereby a buyer places the order and Pumpkart's courier delivers the product. The payment is collected from distributors or retailers and the venture, which has 22 employees at present, takes 5-10 per cent of the margin. "Business is being generated since there's a demand; 70 per cent of payments is cash on delivery. The main problem is logistics. I lose between 10 and 15 orders each day because of it and we have approached more couriers now to smoothen movement. The availability of skilled technicians and plumbers in rural areas is another problem," informed Bhatia. To overcome the issue of poor skilled labour, the creation of a new marketplace tied to Pumpkart is in the offing and will bring technicians, plumbers and engineers together. The entrepreneur has written to the Centre a month ago to help the platform tie up with India Post for a seamless delivery process.

Eye on the sky: rice sowing up, more are under cane

The sowing of rice, the main foodgrain grown during the Kharif season, is gathering pace with 2.68 lakh hectares (lh) covered as of Friday, as per the latest estimates provided by the Agriculture Ministry. The figure during the corresponding period last year stood at 2.28 lh.

“About 2.68 lh area coverage under rice has been reported from Assam (1.10 lh), Nagaland (0.85 lh), Arunachal Pradesh (0.52 lh), Tamil Nadu (0.19 lh) and Odisha (0.02 lh),” said an official statement.



Overall, the area under Kharif crops increased to 56.22 lh from 49.04 lh at the same time last year.

Monsoon concerns

Pre-monsoon showers have been encouraging, say experts, but warn that official estimates of lower rainfall during the four-month Southwest monsoon can have an impact in low-lying rain-fed cultivation areas in Eastern India, which accounts for 60 per cent of the rice growing area with almost 50 per cent reliant on rain.

The India Meteorological Department has predicted rainfall this Kharif season at 93 per cent of long-period average of 89 cm., driven mainly by the El Nino weather phenomenon. Last season, deficient rainfall estimated at 88 per cent resulted foodgrain output declining by 13.92 million tonne (mt) to 251.12 mt.

“Pre-monsoon showers should benefit farmers planting the early ‘aus’ varieties of 90-110 days duration. However, heat waves have been strong, and if the lower rainfall prediction is true, there could be some apprehension

about large-scale sowing particularly in Eastern India,” said Trilochan Mohapatra, Director, Central Rice Research Institute, Cuttack.

He did not expect rice acreage to increase beyond the 37.48 million hectares registered last season if there is a rainfall deficit and any predictions about sowing could only be made once there were estimates of distribution made public.

“If there is a delayed monsoon, farmers in States such as Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar and parts of West Bengal and eastern Uttar Pradesh, could opt to not plant rice,” said Mohapatra.

He said even if water levels in reservoirs were up due to the pre-monsoon rain, it would be difficult to supply the water in the areas mentioned given the lack of infrastructure.

In better-irrigated States such as Haryana and Punjab, sowing would start by early June with nurseries being raised already. Long-duration varieties are generally sown between end-May and early-July across Eastern and Southern India, ahead of the heavy showers between July-early September.

Cane acreage up

Acreage for sugarcane has also risen to 40.7 lh from 40.58 lh at the same time last year with increased area reported from Uttar Pradesh (0.38 lh), Madhya Pradesh 0.43 lh) and Gujarat (0.19 lh) and decline reported from Maharashtra (0.61 lh), Karnataka (0.88 lh) among others.

Area under jute and mesta has also shown an uptick with 6.72 lh under the crop as compared with 6.18 lh at the same time in 2014.

Mango yields slump in Andhra Pradesh

Mango yields have suffered badly in Andhra Pradesh this season in all the major growing districts and though the retail prices are high, farmers still complain that they are not being paid commensurately by merchants in the market yards.

In the major mango-growing districts of Krishna and West Godavari, yields have suffered due to unfavourable climatic conditions and in Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts, mango orchards were ravaged by Hudhud

cyclone in October 2014, almost reducing the crop to one-fourth its usual size.

Erratic climate

Agricultural scientist Rajyalakshmi at the Mango Research Centre in Krishna district, says, “the rains in January have helped the crop, but subsequently, the climatic conditions were not conducive at the fruiting stage. Pest attack has also reduced the yields, though the crop quality has not been damaged.”

According to her estimate, the yield loss may be 30-40 per cent in Krishna and West Godavari. “Unseasonal rains now are causing some damage after the crop has matured,” she says.

Banganapalli prices

The prices of Banganapalli, the fancied variety, are ruling in the range of Rs. 15,000-30,000 per tonne at Nunna, the biggest market yard in the State at Vijayawada. Yedukondalu, a farmer in Krishna district, complains that unless the farmer gets Rs. 15,000 a tonne, he will not be able to recoup the cost of cultivation. “Only a price of Rs. 20,000 or above for Banganapalli will be remunerative, but the merchants do not pay the amount even for the best grades,” he says.

Banganapalli mangoes are transported to upcountry markets from Nuzvidu in Krishna district and also the Vizianagaram railway station in AP. But due to the Hudhud damage, only a few mango-laden rakes have left Vizianagaram this season.

Altogether, it has not been a very encouraging mango season in AP. It is drawing to a close in June.

As crushing ends, UP sugar mills look for govt support

With sugar mills set to close for the season in Uttar Pradesh and prices still depressed, sugar mill owners are looking for State Government support to clear the dues owed to farmers.



At the time of announcing procurement prices in November, the State said payments would be made in two tranches. A mandatory payment of ₹240/quintal was to be within 14 days of procurement, while the balance – ₹40/quintal – was to be paid within three months of the end of crushing. Mills adhering to the schedule were entitled to reimbursements and compensation in purchase tax, society commission and entry tax which worked out to ₹11.40 of the ₹40 remainder.

The industry is now hoping for the balance ₹28.60 to be provided as it had been linked to benchmark prices for sugar, molasses, bagasse and press mud at ₹3,100, ₹390, ₹167 and ₹26.

Lack of clarity

If rates slipped below these prices, sources said the State had to chip in; but there appears to be a lack of clarity as to how it will be done.

“That ₹40/quintal is divided in a back-handed way. A Committee under the State’s Chief Secretary is supposed to decide on providing the ₹20/quintal and it’s unclear where the ₹8.60 component comes from. The total of ₹28.60 and whether it comes through is what’s being debated,” said a mill owner.

An official told *BusinessLine*, “That ₹20 component is supposed to be knocked off under various heads and ₹8.60 of the balance ₹20 will be decided on the basis of the benchmark rates. Sugar is the main driver since it accounts for 95 per cent of the calculation.”

In UP, with the seven-month average ex-mill price of the sweetener at ₹2,650/quintal, the State had to honour the scheme, he added.

The Committee, mentioned earlier, was tasked with tracking price trends of the four commodities between October 1 and May 31. A meeting is likely to be held early next month on the question of this relief.

Bigger picture

The procurement price effectively becomes ₹240 if the State opts to go through with the move fully. According to industry estimates, at this rate, arrears owed to farmers drops to ₹6,864 crore from ₹10,421 crore if the State Advised Price (SAP) of ₹280/qtl is considered.

According to Indian Sugar Mills Association data, private mills in UP have paid ₹9,613 crore to farmers so far this season, with ₹6,160 crore or 39 per cent of dues left to be paid.

“Given depressed prices, mills’ paying capacity works out to 72.5 per cent of the seven-month average price. That’s about ₹175-177 of cane but the SAP is fixed at ₹280. Mills are finding it difficult to bridge this gap, this is why the ₹28.60 will make a huge difference,” the official added.

Mango shipments turn sour on high price, freight costs

Over the past four months, three countries have opened their doors to Indian mangoes, but the higher price and increase in freight costs are proving to be hurdles for exporters. Also, the lack of availability of ‘export-quality’ fruit, due to the recent unseasonal rains, is compounding their woes.

Trade sources expect this could lead to a fall in mango exports this year close to 30 per cent against 41,200 tonnes exports in 2013-14.

“The availability of mangoes is a major challenge as unseasonal rains has impacted the quality. The Alphonso season is nearing its end, but we haven’t done any export so far, despite the EU lifting the ban on Indian mangoes,” says Rajendra Jagtap, a mango exporter from Mumbai.

Faced with stiff competition from their Pakistani counterparts, the exporters in India have raised concerns about the lack of proper storage facilities and pack-houses at key mango growing regions.

“We have learnt that Pakistan is not only providing additional subsidy on freight for mango shipments, but it has also created a separate department for mango exports, which ensures awareness about the quality in mango production. When countries are opening up for Indian mangoes, we should not miss this opportunity because of lack of good quality fruit,” said Bhavesh Jotangia, partner at M&J Enterprise, Vashi, Mumbai. Since February this year, Japan, Mauritius and Switzerland have allowed imports of Indian mangoes with appropriate quality compliance. But the excitement among traders is absent because of higher prices and freight costs.

After procuring the mango from farmers at around ₹350-450 per box (of 12 pieces) – close to double that of last year’s ₹250 – the exporters incur additional costs on mandatory processing to qualify for exports.

Trade sources said the vapour heat treatment, which is mandatory for EU, costs anywhere between ₹40-50 per box, while packaging adds another ₹50 plus ₹380-400 towards freight. The combined cost works out to be anywhere around ₹890 per box (or \$14-15). Gamma Radiation treatment, which is mandatory for exports to US, costs around ₹60,000 for a batch of about 400 boxes.

“After incurring such high costs, we get only a difference of couple of dollars from exports. World market is about \$17-18 per box. So increase in cost at any level of supply chain makes it unviable to export,” said Batuksinh Jadeja, an exporter of Kesar mango from Mau village in Kutch.

The Mango Grower Association of India has estimated the overall mango exports from India at around 25,000-30,000 tonnes. The main destinations are UAE, Saudi Arabia, UK, Kuwait, Qatar, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Cotton exports slow down on big drop in demand from China



Even as the Cotton Council International (CCI) – that works in conjunction with the National Cotton Council to promote US cotton exports – is set to launch its 25-year old flagship brand Cotton USA in India, cotton exports from India are expected to slump 29 per cent to 7 million bales in the current crop year that ends in September.

One bale contains 170 kg of cotton. Market sources indicated that exports have slowed down due to higher world stockpiles, and a sharp decline in demand from China.

Exports to China

Though China has retained its spot as the largest importer of Indian cotton over the last three years, imports have shrunk considerably.

Commerce minister Nirmala Sitharaman had pointed out in the Rajya Sabha recently that China imported cotton worth \$696.5 million in the first 11 months of fiscal 2014-15. While India exported cotton worth \$1,912.95 million to China in 2013-14, exports to China in the previous year in 2012-13 were \$2,237.38 million.

Moreover, though Bangladesh was the second largest importer, purchasing cotton worth \$510.26 million in 2014-15 till February, exports from India were considerably lower from 2013-14's figure of \$698.88 million.

The Cotton Association of India (CAI) has pointed out that exports are lagging this year, and there is only a limited demand for Indian cotton.

China, which imported more than 20 million bales of raw cotton in 2012-13, is forecast to import only 7.5 million bales this season, the CAI has noted.

Global cotton trade is also projected lower at 34.3 million bales for 2014-15, down by 16 per cent from 2013-14.

Sources said the decline in exports has also resulted in a surplus in the domestic market.

The Indian textile industry is primarily cotton focused, with cotton accounting for nearly 54 per cent of total fibre consumption in 2014. However, the industry has been battling inherent challenges like cotton price fluctuation and the over dependence on monsoons, according to the CCI.

Market potential

The Indian textile and apparel market is above \$100 billion and growing at a healthy rate, with a potential to double its export share from the current 5 per cent to 10 per cent over the next decade. In a statement, David B Collins, Cotton Council International's (CCI) Senior Advisor, said that noticing the huge potential in the Indian market, the CCI had decided to bring “the best quality cotton to Indian consumers”.

CCI has said that in order to meet the rising demand, with official cotton consumption in India projected at a record 24.2 million bales, the potential in the Indian market was huge.

Spices Board rolls out new schemes for pepper growers

To make Indian pepper competitive in international markets and to bring in economies of scale in production, Spices Board has announced new schemes for growers.

Starting with the installation of pepper threshers for hygienic separation of pepper berries from the spikes, the other components are provision of bamboo mats for drying pepper in hygienic conditions, cleaning and grading units and user-friendly ladders for harvesting from the vines.

All the schemes are designed to motivate the growers to produce export quality pepper by ensuring clean and hygienic practices. It is expected to benefit the growers in terms of minimising the operations costs and mitigating the labour shortage problem as it covers all sectors of harvesting, cleaning and drying.

According to Spices Board officials, it is proposed to provide over 1,100 units of pepper threshers during this plan period in Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and North Eastern states. The increase in export volumes can be achieved only through massive processing under regulated scientific facilities.

The current practice of manual cleaning and grading using sieves is labour-intensive, time consuming and has the risk of contamination, the officials added.

Business Standard

With monsoon in sight, kharif sowing begins

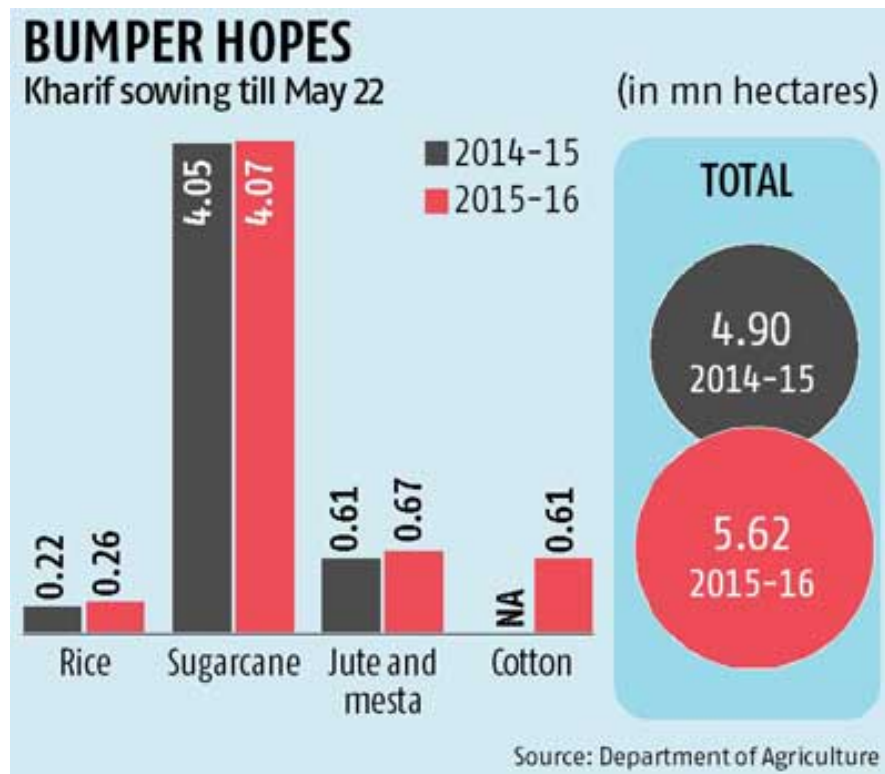


With the southwest [monsoon](#) on the horizon, farmers have started sowing of kharif crops. A more-than-normal winter rain has also helped in providing some moisture to the soil.

According to a preliminary estimate of the department of agriculture, kharif crops till May 22 had been sown on 5.622 million hectares, which is almost 14.6 per cent more than the area sown during the year-ago period. Sugarcane, which is planted twice in a year, has been sown on 4.07 million hectares, while during the year-ago period it was 4.05 million hectares.

Actual assessment of sowing and the progress could be made only after monsoon enters the Indian mainland.

India Meteorological Department had said the southwest monsoon was expected to arrive over the Kerala coast on May 30, two days ahead of its normal arrival date, while a private weather forecasting company said it could be earlier.



Good showers in the off-season have also filled up the water reservoirs in the country, apart from preventing the heat-wave setting in early.

Once the rains come, actual sowing will start and it will gather pace in July, which is when the highest amount of rain falls in the four-month southwest monsoon season. Paddy, oilseeds, pulses, cotton, jute and sugarcane are some of the main crops grown during kharif season, paddy being the biggest foodgrain. Data showed that between March 2015 to May 20, 2015, India received almost 163.6 millimeters of rainfall, which is almost 53 per cent more than normal.

According to the Central Water Commission (CWC) till April 30, water levels in over 80 odd reservoirs was around 48.62 billion cubic meters, which is 91 per cent of the corresponding levels last year and 120 per cent of the average levels in last 10 years.

The IMD, in its first forecast, had said rains in 2015 would be below normal at 93 per cent of Long Period Average (LPA), while private agency Skymet had said rains would be normal at 102 per cent of LPA.

LPA is the average rainfall that falls in India from 1951 to 2000 and is estimated at 89 centimeters.

Replace UP agricultural mandis with modern supply chains: ASSOCHAM

Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) has suggested that [Uttar Pradesh](#) overhaul old [agricultural mandis](#) and set up modern supply chains to synergise the farm economy and raise farmers' income.

In a study titled 'States Emergence: A comparative analysis of growth & development', [ASSOCHAM](#) said disconnect between [farmers](#) and consumers/market impeded the farmers from enjoying the benefits of modern scientific developments in the farm sector.

It noted that the disconnect could be rectified through agricultural-oriented programmes like e-Choupal. Besides, information related to monsoon and

support prices could be provided to farmers in real time through mobile/internet in order to empower them to fetch maximum benefits.

Other suggestions include holding rural trade fairs under the public-private partnership (PPP) model, promoting commercial crops to break the monotonous and risky dependence on single crop, implementation of contract farming on large farms etc.

Further, ASSOCHAM stressed the supply of better seeds, quality farm equipment and fertiliser, apart from water conservation and modern irrigation management.

The report suggested that the government provide agriculture insurance to farmers under the PPP model, during both rabi and kharif seasons, especially for sugar, pulses, wheat and rice crops.

Meanwhile, the study revealed that with a share of 13%, UP has emerged as the biggest contributor to India's agriculture and allied sector in 2013-14. The agriculture and allied sector contributed 22% to UP's gross state domestic product (GSDP) during 2013-14.

UP has acquired 15th position amid top 20 states in India with 3.2% compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) in agriculture and allied sector during the decadal period of 2004-05 and 2013-14.

The state needs corrective measures to revive agriculture production as UP is an agrarian economy and holds tremendous potential to attract investments in agri-infrastructure like wholesale and retail trading, storage, distribution and irrigation sectors, ASSOCHAM secretary general D S Rawat said.