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THE HINDU

Modern practices increase farmers' income

With distribution of subsidy for drip and sprinkler irrigation and propagation of advanced technologies, farmers having small land holdings in rain-fed areas have managed to raise crops this season and earn a decent income in Theni district.

Major beneficiaries are horticulturists raising sapota, mango, lemon, banana, guava, cashew, papaya, hybrid amla, drumstick and vegetables, and floriculturists raising jasmine, rose, tuberose and other flowers.

With no support, K. Venkatammal and her husband Kayambu of Koduvilarpatti in Theni block had been struggling to raise crops in one acre of land owing to shortage of water.

With subsidy given by officials for drip irrigation, she raised tomato crop and got an yield of 200 to 250 boxes of tomato this season, earning at least Rs. 200 per box.

Similarly, S. Maharajan of Vellaiammalpuram in Uthamapalayam block who depended on channel irrigation shifted to drip irrigation for effective use of available water to raise crops. Labour shortage too disrupted his farm activities.

Now, he raised not only grape but also vegetables, including broad beans. With adoption of modern farm practices, he was able to increase production and profit margin. "I have earned around Rs. 2 lakh this season from three acre land," he said.

Durai Raj of Ambasamudram had abandoned his farm activities and became a daily wage worker in a mill owing to shortage of labour and irrigation water.

With creation of water sources and introduction of drip irrigation, he revived his farm activities and raised vegetables in his farm.

He also adopted all modern agriculture practices to boost production.

Farmers take part in extension programme

In an endeavour to demonstrate updated farming practices and technologies, a farmer-participatory agricultural extension programme, hosted jointly by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) here and Mangalpady panchayat, was launched in the panchayat on Monday.

Over 100 farmers took part in the programme, which was inaugurated by Manjeswaram MLA P.B. Abdul Razack.

Delivering the keynote address at the programme, Central Plantation Crops Research Institute Director P. Chowdappa said the KVK would continue the extension programme in the panchayat for the next two years.

A class on combating Rhinoceros beetle, the insect that attacks the central spindle leaves of coconut palms, was held.

Experts stressed the need for containing the multiplication of the insects from the breeding site itself by applying metarhizium, a fungal pathogen, along with organic manure during rainy season.

Vattavada farmers hopeful of bumper potato crop this year



The farmers of Vattavada, the vegetable bowl of the State, is expecting a bumper potato crop this time.

The sowing will come to an end soon. This time, nearly 60 per cent of the total area under cultivation is under potato crop. The State Horticulture Mission made available 100 tonnes of quality seeds from the Central Horticulture Institute, Jalandhar to farmers here.

The entire area from where grandis trees were removed under a government scheme were brought under cultivation. As per estimates, 1,200 hectares of land is under vegetable cultivation at Vattavada. The main crops include potato, carrot, beans, cabbage, and garlic.

Murukesan, a farmer, says they preferred potato this season as the newly cleared areas are best suited for potato. If the climate is favourable it will be a bumper crop, he says.

There are mainly three farm seasons in Vattavada. The main harvest season begins by July 15. The 'golden' coloured potatoes of Vattavada is preferred by vegetable vendors across the State.

Shaji Manakkad, State Horticulture Mission in charge, says the seeds made available from Jalandhar can be used in future too. The farmers usually source seeds from Mettupalayam in Tamil Nadu. The apprehension now is that a bumper crop can cause a fall in prices as in the past. Marimuthu, a farmer, says farmers had to sell garlic below Rs.10 a kg two years ago. He is sure that there will be a bumper crop this time. There should be some cold storage facility to keep the produce safe. This time, the area under potato cultivation is two times higher than usual, he says.

“This is a thing to worry as steps should be taken to cold storage the produce and save the farmers from a sudden fall in prices,” says an official of the Agriculture Department.

Almost 60 per cent of the cultivable area is under potato cultivation and the harvest is likely to start in July.

10 crops in Odisha to be insured under NAIS

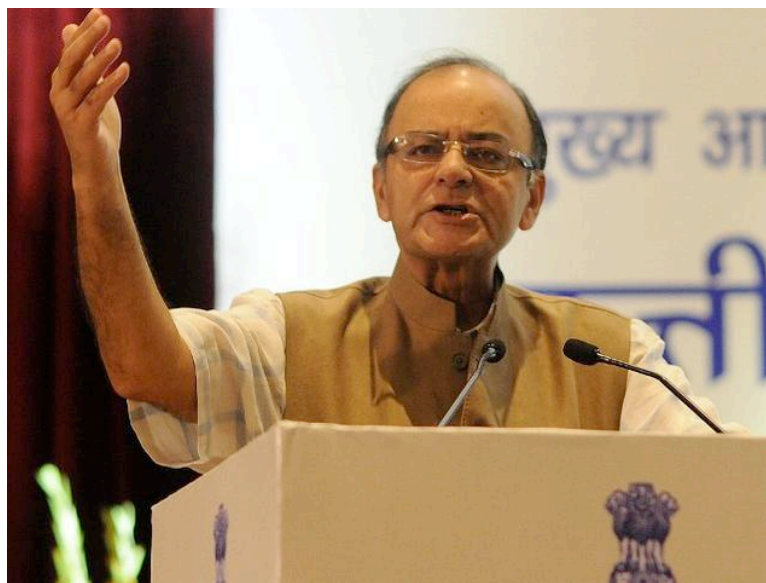
The Odisha government has identified 10 crops, which will be covered under the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) for 2015 crop season.

The crops notified to be covered under the NAIS include paddy, maize, groundnut, Niger, red gram, cotton, jute, turmeric, ginger and banana.

While farmers who have taken loan for producing notified crops in identified areas will compulsorily be insured, all farmers growing insurable crops can opt for the scheme. For loanee farmers, the sum insured will be cent per cent of the crop loan at normal premium rate. There is also option to cover up to 150 per cent of the average yield. The seasonality discipline for crops to be insured in respect of loanee farmers will be April to September this year. Gram panchayats, notified area council and municipalities have been taken as unit for insurance for paddy. For rest of the crop, blocks will be unit area.

Since paddy is grown all over the State, all the 30 districts have been identified as insurance coverage area. Major crops like groundnuts and maize will be insured in 15 and 10 districts respectively. As far as crops such as Niger, cotton, red grams, jute, turmeric, ginger and banana are concerned, farmers in selected blocks in some district could take advantage of the scheme. The notification says indemnity claim will be settled only on the basis of yield data furnished by the State government in cooperation department based on requisite number of crop cutting experiments conducted under general crop estimation surveys.

Pulses supplies will be shored up to bring down prices, says Jaitley



To cool off prices of pulses, that have run up by up to 64 per cent in the last one year with falling domestic production, the Modi government plans to shore up supplies with imports through state-owned trading firms such as MMTC.

“There is an issue with pulses these days, because there has been an impact on the crop, also of international prices... So, the Principal Secretary [to Prime Minister Narendra Modi] has held a meeting, so that supply is increased to bring down prices,” Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley told reporters on Monday after inaugurating a multi-media exhibition to mark one year of the Modi government.

The production of pulses, the government estimates, fell to 18.43 million tonnes in the 2014-15 crop-year from 19.78 million tonnes in the previous year. India imports about 4 million tonnes every year.

Addressing a conference of top officials of the Central Board of Direct Taxes, Mr. Jaitley said: “The parallel economy has to be squeezed and it has to be done in very fair manner, not in a harsh manner... In doing so, you have to maintain the highest standard of integrity.” Direct tax collections for 2014-15 were likely to improve by about 15 per cent, which could help the Centre improve its fiscal deficit to 3.9 per cent. Mr. Jaitley exhorted officers to be prompt in redressing the grievances of the tax payers and expand the tax base in a non-intrusive manner. On the new black money law for bringing back the unaccounted funds held by Indians abroad, the Finance Minister said honest taxpayers had anything to fear. “It’s targeted only against those who have stashed assets abroad... Black money has to be squeezed... only those who have defied the system in the past and intend to defy the compliance window to come clean have to worry.”

Mr. Jaitley also said that improving tax collections created more space for the government to step up spending on social and infrastructure projects and also provided relief to individual taxpayers. Government’s efforts on the direct tax front were to bring down the rate of taxation over the next four years to global levels and, at the same time, phase out the exemptions to the extent possible.

Mango season likely to end in a month’s time

The mango season is likely to wind up in a month’s time, said Horticulture Department officials and mango merchants in Mysuru.

While the Raspuri variety had flooded the mango mandi on Akbar Road since the last one week, Mango Merchants Association president Farooq Pasha said the arrival of Raspuri and Badami, the two popular and sought-after varieties, is likely to end in the next two to three weeks.

However, C.R. Krishna Kumar, Senior Assistant Director of Horticulture Department of Mysuru, said late varieties like Neelam, Totapuri and Mallika will be available in the markets for another month.

Many varieties

The price of Raspuri mangoes has dipped in the last one week and is available for Rs. 35 a kg.

The Badami variety, however, is priced higher at around Rs. 60 to Rs. 70 a kg, Mr. Pasha added.

The other varieties, including the large-sized Malgova, is expected to last longer. The pre-monsoon showers, which lashed Mysuru district and the surrounding region, had affected about 30 to 40 per cent of the crop, Mr. Krishna Kumar said.

‘Use stress alleviating medicines in poultry feed’

To sustain egg production and egg weight, poultry farmer have been asked to supplement amino acid and stress alleviating medicines in poultry feed.

A press release from Agromet Field Unit, Veterinary College and Research Institute and Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai, said that there was less chance for rainfall in the next four days with maximum and minimum temperature expected to be 38 degree Celsius and 27 degree Celsius.

With the nearing onset of regular Southwest monsoon in 7 to 10 days, day and night temperatures would rise after 10 days. The release said that day and night temperatures would induce heat stress and heat stroke in the poultry. Hence stress alleviating medicines should be used in poultry feed. Also, post-mortem observations in the birds brought for diagnostic purpose at Poultry Disease Diagnosis and Surveillance Laboratory at the institute revealed that death of birds was due to heat stroke and upper respiratory tract infection. Hence farmers are asked to follow summer management to control heat stroke and farm bio-security measures.

Vegetable prices hit the roof



The prices of various vegetables have shot up by up to 100 per cent within a week.

The price of tomato has increased from Rs.15 to Rs. 40 within a week in Nalgonda town, while the price of ridge gourd has gone up to Rs. 60 kg at the vegetable market located in Prakasam Bazaar, which was sold at Rs.30 only 10 days ago.

The price of lady finger also increased by 100 per cent since it was increased to Rs. 40 which was sold at Rs.20 per kg just 10 days ago. The price of capsicum and carrot and broad beans went up by Rs.20. Courgette and cabbage prices increased from Rs.30 per kg to Rs. 40 per kg in a week time.

The vegetables such as cucumber (Rs.10 per kg), potato (Rs.20 per kg) were being sold at relatively lesser price. The increase in prices has been attributed to continuous heat waves in both the Telangana and the Andhra Pradesh since the production of most of the vegetables came down.

Due to lack of refrigerated transport facilities, the vegetables were also being wasted during the transportation with prevailing heat conditions.

The traders in the market said that the sudden spurt in the prices of some vegetables was just an indication that the tough days are ahead.

Unless the monsoon arrives early, the traders said that the prices would go up further within no time.

Burden on families

Speaking to *The Hindu*, a housewife P. Shanthi, said that the increase in vegetable prices have increased the burden on them since the prices of all pulses have also doubled during the past one month. “We have been restricting ourselves to only a few vegetables that are being sold at cheaper price, but we could not avoid tomato any longer,” she said.

Meanwhile, increase in the prices after a two months lull in the market brought cheer among the farmers since they sold tomatoes, lady finger and a few other vegetable at less than Rs.10 per kg.

Seeding for a healthy future



Students at the seed diversity festival in Chennai. Photo: M. Vedhan.

It was his urge to give good pesticide-free food and thereby, a healthy life to his young daughter that drove R. Mithunkumar to get into community farming.

“I also have a terrace garden. I am right now doing the initial work for my farming and in a year or so, I expect to get it fully running,” he said picking up lots of seeds at a organic food Mela organised recently.

Native varieties

Many like Mr. Mithunkumar picked organic seeds from farmers who had brought in native varieties of brinjal, bitter gourd, cluster beans, snake gourd. The Mela had farmers displaying seeds of up to 800 varieties of paddy.

G. F. Visvasam from Simcodess, an NGO working with 250 farmers on 488 acres, explained how they were reviving Karunkanni cotton, native to Tamil Nadu and one of the oldest varieties in the State.

His stall had seeds of thambatta avarai whose cluster bean would each grow up to a length of half a foot, aamanaku and different kinds of saamai.

Terrace garden

The mela had terrace garden tools and a food section where native foods including uradh dhal kali, modakathan juice, and varagu sambar saadham were available in plenty.

Ananthoo of Safe Food Alliance explained how such melas helped spread the message of organic farming.

“We are seeing a lot of terrace garden enthusiasts and there is exchange of information and ideas here,” he said.

“Prevent discharge of waste water into river”

A group of villagers from Vaippar submitted a petition to Collector M. Ravikumar on Monday to prevent saltpan owners from discharging waste water into the nearby Vaippar river, the only water source in the region.

The petitioners said that the wastewater released by salt manufacturers from their saltpans on over 800 acres of land had polluted the river and consequently the groundwater.

A petition was submitted to the Collector on December 1, 2014, seeking his intervention.

Subsequently, a committee comprising villagers, salt manufacturers and officials was constituted to find an amicable solution to this problem.

When the saltpan owners sought 90 days for diverting the wastewater into the sea via a designated channel, it was granted.

Encroachments

Moreover, the salt manufacturers were asked to remove encroachments from the Vaippar. However, the salt manufacturers were not taking any efforts.

“If the discharge of wastewater from the saltpans is not stopped immediately, we’ll block vehicular traffic on East Coast Road,” they said.

About 100 tonnes sold during mela

About 100 tonnes of mangoes were sold during the four-day mango mela, which concluded at Curzon Park on Sunday.

Senior Assistant Director of Horticulture C.R. Krishna Kumar told *The Hindu* that the badami variety was a clear favourite as it accounted for about half the 100 tonnes sold during the mela. About 20 tonnes of Raspuri variety was sold during the mela. The remaining varieties like Malgova, Sindhura, Mallika, Totapuri, Baiganpalli and Dussehri accounted for the remaining 30 tonnes, he added.

Mr. Krishna Kumar said mangoes worth Rs. 40 lakh were sold during the mela this year against last year’s Rs. 17 lakh. “This was because of the publicity and the awareness among consumers for a better and safer option of naturally-ripened mangoes,” he said.

Though the mangoes sold had been ripened using ethylene spray, it was considered a natural ripening agent unlike the calcium carbide chemical, which is hazardous.

During the mela, about 12 tonnes of jackfruit was sold at an average of Rs 20 per kg, he added.

Rice, wheat distributed to fair price shops under Anna Bhagya scheme



Over 94,000 quintals of rice and 30,000 quintals of wheat have been distributed to fair price shops to be handed over to beneficiaries of the Anna Bhagya scheme for the month of May.

There are over 6,09,110 below the poverty families. Apart from this, 6,09,000 kg of oil palm and salt had also been distributed.

There are over 1,057 fair price shops in the district.

K. Rameswarappa, Deputy Director of the Food and Civil Supplies Department, said that measures had been taken to ensure that foodgrains will reach the beneficiaries and not be misused.

Similarly, the fair price shop owners have been instructed not to deprive any below the poverty line family of foodgrain citing whimsical reasons, Mr. Rameswarappa said, adding that people could register their complaints on the toll-free number 1967.

Over 7,860 new applications had been received in May for BPL and APL cards and of them 2,118 applications had been processed, the Deputy Director said.

‘Rice procured at negotiated prices from millers’

Telangana Civil Supplies Commissioner Rajat Kumar has maintained that the Civil Supplies Corporation/Department has been procuring rice required for government schemes at negotiated prices from millers, as has been the practice since 1983. In response to a news item “Free lunch for millers” published in these columns on May 23, the Commissioner said ‘sanna biyyam’ (fine rice) required for welfare hostels and mid-day meal scheme was also purchased from millers in the same manner. It was ensured that only varieties grown in Telangana were delivered and no unintended benefit was given to them, Dr. Rajat Kumar added.

Further, the Commissioner said fine rice required for 2015-16 had already been procured



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Kesar mango arrives in Junagadh's Talala market, prices at three year high



Finally, wait for the delicious kesar mango is over as the arrival of the fruit has begun in the main market of Talala in Junagadh. However, the taste of the indigenous kesar may become sour owing to the higher price.

The arrival of kesar mangoes from foothills of Girnar Mountain began on May 19 at the agriculture produce market committee (APMC) in Talala.

On the first day over 3,300 tonne mangoes landed from various kesar growing areas like Talala, Keshod, Vanthali, Una, Kodinar and Mangrol talukas in Junagadh district and Dhari, Khambha, Rajula and Jaffrabad in Amreli. The fruit was auctioned off for about Rs 250 per 10 kg box on the first day, said officials of the Talala APMC.

"The prices are higher this year because of damage to fruit due to unseasonal rains in February and March. The prices are at three year high despite high arrival," said an AMPC official.

On Friday 2,686 tonne mangoes arrived in the main Talala market and were auctioned between Rs 430 to Rs 185 per 10 kg box. According to Talala APMC officials the arrival is likely to increase in the next few days, but overall kesar arrival was likely to dip compared to previous years.

The kesar mangoes usually start arriving in the main market in the last week of April. But this year due to unseasonal rains in October 2014 the flowering in the plant got delayed by over month and a half; hence the arrival was delayed by over a fortnight.

The 'Gir Kesar' mango also has Geographical Indication (GI) tag. It is only second variety of mango in India to get GI registration after the Dussheri mango grown in Uttar Pradesh.

Year	Arrival (in tonne)	Prices in Rs (per 10 kg box)	2013	3736	360	2014
	1802	410	2015	2686	430	

[Sunflower cultivation improves rural economy in Kendrapada](#)

Farmers in Kendrapada district are making good profits by cultivating sunflower. This is evident from more people taking up its farming in the past five years.

At present, around 30,000 farmers are cultivating it over 8,000 hectare in Aul, Rajkanika, Garadapur, Mahakalapada, Rajnagar and Kendrapada blocks. "I started cultivating sunflower in 2012. It was a new crop whose

outcome I wasn't aware of. I tried out on one acre and made good profits. I never looked back since then," said Sarat Chandra Pradhan, 54, a farmer of Rajkanika.

Farmers prefer sunflower to paddy because it can be harvested in three months compared to five in case of paddy, requires less water and has good market value. "The returns are good. A hectare of land produces a minimum of 15 quintal of sunflower with each quintal selling for Rs 5,000," said Bijaya Parida, 45, a sunflower farmer of Patkura.

The increase in edible oil prices holds promise for sunflower growers. "Earlier, farmers used to earn Rs 18,000 an acre, now it is Rs 22,000 for the same cultivated area," said Samarkanta Sahoo, 43, a sunflower farmer of Bharatapur village.

Oil companies are keen to buy sunflower at good prices. "Many paddy farmers have switched over to sunflower and are reaping a fortune," said secretary of Krusaka Sabha, district unit, Gayadhar Dhal.

[‘DD Kisan’ to go live today at 4pm with programmes to guide farmers](#)

Doordarshan's farmer-centric channel DD Kisan is all set to be launched on Tuesday by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The 24-hour-channel will telecast programmes related to agriculture and weather round-the-clock. After the official launch, the channel will start telecast from 4pm.

N Chattopadhyay, deputy director general of meteorology (agriculture), agricultural meteorology division of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), said the channel would not only provide the 700 million farmers in the country with weather and agriculture-related information but will also involve expert views on agriculture and the impact of weather phenomenon. The channel aims to bring farmers into the loop so that they could voice their concerns.

Chattopadhyay said that as of now, Agrimet sends messages to around 10 million farmers in the country related to alerts and warning about weather phenomena and extreme weather conditions which affect agriculture. "However, reaching all the farmers in the country through SMSs is difficult.

That is where this channel comes in. It is likely to reach every farmer in the country, including poor and underprivileged ones, who contribute significantly to the country's agricultural output," he said.

Chattopadhyay said the Met office has an important role to play in the process, in terms of what information reaches the farmers through the channel. "Information on how monsoon is likely to behave in the coming days, the extreme events that could come, weather advisories and advisories on land preparation, sowing and other agricultural processes will be issued through the channel by the IMD. Advisories will also be given on the scroll during programme telecasts. Scientific weather terms will also be explained to the farmers on DD Kisan," he added.

Farmers will, therefore, be able to get live advisories through the channel, with different expert organizations and government agencies roped in to share their views. Extended range forecasts and contingency plans will also be telecast through the channel, said Chattopadhyay.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Nearly 32% Coonoor tea unsold



As much as 32 per cent of the year's largest offer of 20.70 lakh kg at Sale No: 21 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction remained unsold for want of bidders at high prices despite dropping average prices by Rs. 3 a kg.

Darmona Estate tea, auctioned by Paramount Tea Marketing, topped the Dust and the entire CTC market when Om Enterprises bought it for Rs. 201 a kg. This was the same grade which had won 'Golden India Leaf Award 2015'. It was the only grade which entered the high-price bracket of Rs. 200-a-kg.

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the Leaf market at Rs. 186. In all, 53 marks got Rs. 125 and more. Havukal topped orthodox teas from corporate sector fetching Rs. 240, followed by Kairbetta Rs. 238 and Chamraj Rs. 225. In all, 34 marks got Rs. 125 and more.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 40-45 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 100-135 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs. 45-50 for plain dusts and Rs. 110-160 for brighter liquoring dusts.

There was some purchase for Pakistan in wide range Rs. 47-116 a kg.

Selling pressure powders sugar



Continuous selling by mills kept sugar prices under pressure this month.

Limited local demand and lack of upcountry/export demand resulted in a drop of Rs. 100 at producing level while at Vashi market prices declined by Rs. 50-60 a quintal.

Freight rates were unchanged as volume was routine.

Arrivals were at 59-60 truck loads and local dispatches were also at the same level.

On Saturday evening, 15-16 mills offered tenders and sold about 44,000-45,000 bags at Rs. 2,280-2,400 (2,280-2,400) for S-grade and Rs. 2,380-2,540 (2,380-2,540) for M-grade.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs. 2,446-2,602 (2,452-2,602) and M-grade Rs. 2,582-2,742 (2,590-2,742).

Naka delivery rates: S-grade Rs. 2,375-2,500 (2,375-2,500) and M-grade Rs. 2,500-2,640 (2,500-2,640).

‘Speculators distorting soyabean industry’

Speculators on the futures market have distorted the soyabean cultivation and processing industries' operations, according to the Soybean Processors Association of India (SOPA).

“In the last couple of years, the aggressive participation of unscrupulous speculators in the futures market have entered and distorted the industry's operations...the current system of spot market polling needs to be streamlined and daily prices ought to be taken mostly from the processors,” said a SOPA statement, released after a meeting held in Indore on Saturday between industry officials and those from the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX).

“...Representatives from NCDEX assured that they will cooperate with the industry in every possible way and will take up the issues raised with higher authorities and also Forward Markets Commission to effectively curb speculative trade practices,” it added. The association also put forward its demands at the event including the cessation of futures trading after 5 pm and at least 10 per cent of all soyabean futures contracts being made to have compulsory delivery “in order to have futures market aligned to cash market” so that prices move in tandem.

Overseas buyers shun Indian soyameal on higher prices



Farmers in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra might be celebrating the average price of soyabean touching Rs. 3,900/quintal, much higher than the government rate of Rs. 2,700, but the processing industry is in trouble.

Higher domestic prices, a loss of key markets, such as Iran and Vietnam, and a global bumper crop have impacted soyameal exports, which were down nearly 80 per cent in April compared with a year before, from 89,883 tonnes to 18,017 tonnes.

“The price increase has happened due to speculators holding stock. They obviously want prices to remain high, that’s why a bull run has been triggered. Unless there’s a price correction soon, since the commodity is overvalued, I don’t see things improving on the export front,” said Davish Jain, Chairman, Soybean Processors Association of India (SOPA).

Outpriced meal

Indian meal has been rendered far more expensive currently at a freight-on-board (FOB) price of \$590/tonne than the produce from competing nations such as Argentina and Brazil, said experts.

“On the Rotterdam market, soyameal from Argentina is selling at \$396/tonne while Brazilian exporters are selling at \$385. This completely

outprices Indian meal,” said BV Mehta, Executive Director, Solvent Extractors’ Association of India (SEAI). “Even with a price correction, this kind of disparity might not be mitigated,” said Jain.

Mehta said the ‘overpriced’ crop was hurting the industry domestically with processing becoming unviable at almost Rs. 1,000/tonne and said the Centre needed to raise import duty on crude edible oil to 25 per cent from the present 7.5 per cent to give local units a chance.

Better returns, compared with cotton, may prompt farmers to plant more soyabean this kharif season, said Jain, mainly due to the crop needing less water – between 18 and 22 inches being sufficient – with a deficient monsoon possibly in the offing.

Acreage may edge up

“There could be a marginal 1 or 2 per cent rise in acreage, I don’t see a huge jump, but there could be better yields this season. This could add pressure to prices since there is already a surplus stock of 40.89 lakh tonnes,” he said.

The carryover norm is usually not more than 20 lakh tonnes. Short duration varieties such as JS 9560, used extensively across MP’s Malwa region last year, could become more widespread to counteract a weak monsoon.

A bad monsoon may lead to further hoarding and a continuation of the trend against market fundamentals, warned Mehta. “There’s surplus stock and no exports. Why should prices rise this much if it’s not due to hoarding,” he questioned.

The crop was grown across an estimated 108 lakh hectares in 2014-15 with 104 lakh tonnes produced, some of it destroyed due to inclement weather. Soyabean is generally rain-fed and is sowed between mid-June and early-July.

Mixed trend in edible oils

Edible oils market witnessed a mixed trend on the back of slack demand amid cautious mood on futures markets.

On the Bombay Commodity Exchange, palmolein and groundnut oil rose by Rs. 3 and Rs. 5 for 10 kg each. .

Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs. 493 JNPT, super palmolein Rs. 530, soyabean refined oil Rs. 590. Ruchi's rates: palmolein Rs. 491, soyabean refined oil Rs. 585, sunflower refined oil Rs. 700. Allana traded palmolein at Rs. 496, super palmolein Rs. 530, soyabean refined oil Rs. 585 and sunflower oil Rs. 700.

In Saurashtra-Rajkot, groundnut oil *Telia* tin ruled steady at Rs. 1,510 (1,510) and loose (10 kg) at Rs. 950 (950).

BCE spot rates (Rs. /10 kg): groundnut oil 930 (925), soya refined oil 585 (590), sunflower exp. ref. 635 (635), sunflower ref. 700 (700), rapeseed ref. oil 830 (800), rapeseed exp. ref. 800 (770), cottonseed ref. oil 598 (598) and palmolein 494 (491).

SKM Egg Products eyeing newer markets

The upside potential for the Indian poultry industry is expected to be huge due to the outbreak of avian flu in the US. And Erode-headquartered SKM Egg Products Export (India) Ltd will be no exception to this development.

The 100 per cent export-oriented egg-processing unit has started to bet big on its prospects. It recently started shipments to Russia.

"This is in addition to the exports to Japan, Europe and Middle East countries. Egg yoke market is really huge in Russia and we foresee significant growth in the coming years," said the company's Chief Executive Shree Shivkumar.

That's not all. Recent reports of avian flu outbreak among chickens in three large egg producing states such as Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin in the US would probably benefit SKM Egg Products.

Shree Shivkumar told *Business Line* that the company would be eyeing the US and China markets.

The company, which is among the largest egg processing units in Asia produces processed egg products like different varieties of egg powder and liquid egg and supplies to various international markets. The daily egg processing capacity of the plant is 1.8 million eggs, and the annual production of egg powder is around 6900 tonnes.

The egg processing unit touched new heights in export turnover and profitability in the just-concluded fiscal. Its net sales rose 13.5 per cent to Rs 269.20 cr from Rs 237.10 cr during the corresponding 12 months of the earlier fiscal.

It registered a four-fold increase in its net profit, a record since inception in 1997, at Rs 25.19 crore compared to Rs 6.81 crore clocked during the earlier fiscal.

The net sales during the 4th quarter of 2014-15 dipped marginally from a level of Rs.68.07 crore in 2013-14 to Rs 65.37 crore.

The company has since become a “Debt Free Company” as it chose to foreclose the entire term loans with SBI.

The company's Board has approved a 10 per cent dividend for 2014-15 fiscal.

Business Standard

Basmati rice acreage to go up despite lower realisation last year

Farmers overlook deterrents due to higher returns from basmati crop



Area under Basmati rice cultivation might see a five per cent increase this financial year. A bumper crop and decline in exports had led to lower realisation by farmers from the sale of Basmati rice in 2014-15, as compared to the previous year. This, however, would not lead to a fall in area under cultivation this kharif season. Basmati fetches higher returns than other rice varieties.

In 2014-15, the total area under Basmati cultivation was 2.1 million hectares, compared to 1.6 million hectares in 2013-14 — an increase of 31 per cent. Further, exports from India registered a nominal drop in 2014-15 compared to last year. According to the Agricultural and Processed Food Export Development Authority (Apeda), in 2014-15, total exports were 3.70 million tonnes, while during the previous year they were 3.75 million tonnes. In value terms, it has fallen from \$4.40 billion in April-February, 2013-14, to \$4.11 billion in the same period in 2014-15.

The decline in export was mainly due to a fall in export to Iran, the largest importer of Indian Basmati. India had exported 1.44 million tonnes of Basmati to Iran in 2013-14, while in 2014-15, it was 9.35 lakh tonnes.

R Sundaresan, executive director, All India Rice Exporters Association, said, “The aromatic rice variety offers high returns to farmers. Even during last year, when there was significant increase in area and production, it gave higher returns to farmers. Moreover, it consumes less water than the non-Basmati varieties. With uncertainty over monsoon looming large, we think more farmers would sow Basmati. There could be at least a five per cent increase in acreage.”

HIGH ON HOPE

Basmati rice data for the country

Year	Area(million hectares)	Production (million tonnes)	Exports (million tonnes)
2012-13	1.85	5.75	3.46
2013-14	1.60	6.60	3.75
2014-15	2.10	8.70	3.70

Source: AIREA & Apeda

Punjab and Haryana account for about 70 per cent of total Basmati grown in India. In 2013-14, Basmati prices were at Rs 1,850-3,700 a quintal, while in 2014-15, due to bumper harvest in these two states, the price of the crop was at Rs 1,700-2,900 a quintal.

Kohinoor Foods Joint Managing Director Gurnam Arora said, “Last year, there was a shortfall in exports to Iran. However, exports to the US, Saudi

Arabia and other West Asian countries were on the higher side. Despite bumper production, the average realisation for the farmers was better. So, we are anticipating there will be a five per cent increase in acreage.”

“Basmati fetches better returns than other rice varieties. We request the Centre to fix the minimum support price for the crop so the farmers should not depend at the mercy of exporters,” said Manjeet Singh, a farmer from Amritsar.

In Punjab, the government is encouraging farmers to grow Basmati as it consumes less water.

Soybean sowing may remain muted this kharif season

Despite massive stock, bean prices at the benchmark Indore mandi are trading at Rs 3,978 a qtl as against Rs 3,403 a qtl in March



Soybean sowing might remain muted in the ensuing kharif season, due to a negative price arbitrage between sowing and harvesting months in the futures market and a massive carryover stock from the earlier season.

Soybean is sown with the onset of the monsoon rainfall in June, for harvesting in October. The price of any commodity for delivery in the far months is usually higher than the prevailing price for the near month and spot trade. However, the price for delivery in October on the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange is quoted at Rs 3,455 a quintal, about 15 per cent lower than the prevailing Rs 3,930 a qtl for delivery in June. Indications are a subdued price through next year.

“The current prevailing price is speculative, as a huge quantity of uncrushed

soybean is left with farmers, stockists and crushing mills. Crushing units have abstained from buying. Therefore, around 40 per cent of soybean is still available with industry stakeholders which might affect sowing this season. However, much would depend upon rainfall and their even distribution this monsoon season,” said Davish Jain, president, Prestige Agro-Tech Ltd, an Indore-based oil producer.

According to the Soybean Processors’ Association, stakeholders had 4.1 million tonnes of stock as of May 1, of 9.9 mt total output in the 2014 season. Since mills await a turnaround in crushing parity before commencing processing of the bean, and realisation from refined soya oil and meal is inadequate to make the business profitable, edible oil mills are staying away from fresh buying.

“Mills are awaiting a recovery in oil prices to make soybean crushing worthwhile. So, with five to 10 per cent variation, sowing might get affected this year,” said B V Mehta, executive director, the Solvent Extractors’ Association.

Despite the massive stock, bean prices at the benchmark Indore mandi are trading at Rs 3,978 a qtl as against Rs 3,403 a qtl in March. Jain senses speculators’ role in the price rally as refined soy oil showed hardly any rise in the same period, to trade range-bound at Rs 6,017 a qtl.

“Farmers did not get the benefit of high soybean prices to encourage them to bring additional area this season. Traders and aggregators are reaping all benefits of high soybean prices. If farmers have a choice, they will shift to other crops,” said Satyanarayan Agarwal, advisor, Central Organisation for Oil Industry & Trade.