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THE HINDU

281 paddy purchasing centres in Krishna district

PADDY PURCHASE CENTRES

Krishna District Joint Collector Gandham Chandrudu has said that 281 Paddy Purchasing Centres (PPS) have been set up in the district to purchase paddy in the ongoing rabi season.

According to an official release, 98 centres were opened in Machilipatnam revenue division, while 43 and 74 centres were opened in Vijayawada and Gudivada revenue divisions respectively. In Nuzvid division, 66 centres have been opened. Self Help Groups and Co-operative Marketing Societies and Primary Agriculture Credit Societies would run the centres. Purchase of paddy has already begun in the district.

Scanty pre-monsoon rain hits kharif crop cultivation across Mysuru district

The failure of pre-monsoon showers in the district has discouraged farmers from preparing the fields for the kharif season.

With this, agricultural activities in the district have come to a standstill.

The district has received 10.8 mm rain in the last three months — January, February and March— as against the normal 19.5 mm.

The district had received 29.7 mm rainfall in the same period last year and farmers had started agricultural activities.

In the previous years, including last year, farmers had sown Bt cotton, pulses (black gram, green gram and cowpea) and oilseeds (sunflower and sesame) during this period.

However, owing to scanty rainfall, farmers this year are yet to even prepare their fields for cultivation. Farmers, particularly in H.D. Kote, Nanjangud, Hunsur, and Mysuru taluks, are anxiously waiting for showers to occur at least by Ugadi (Friday) to commence agricultural activities.

Though the district had received above normal pre-monsoon showers last year, poor rains after June resulted in drought and crop failure.

The district had received 12.9 mm rainfall in March last year as compared to 6.7 mm this year.

M. Mahanteshappa, Joint Director of Agriculture, told *The Hindu* that the total cultivable area in the district for kharif season is 3,90,000 hectares and the department has stored sufficient stock of seeds and fertilizers to be distributed to farmers.

The Agriculture Department pins its hopes on the “customary” rain that occurs during Ugadi to improve the condition.

Meanwhile, a few private seed and fertilizer dealers in the district said that the sale of Bt cotton seeds and fertilisers this year was below normal compared to previous years.

The district has got 10.8 mm rain in the last three months as against the normal 19.5 mm

Tobacco growers stall auctions for the second day

E-auctions on four platforms were suspended in the Southern Light Soil (SLS) and Southern Black Soil (SBS) regions on Tuesday as farmers stalled the proceedings in protest against the lacklustre market in the wake of

cigarette manufacturers' decision to shut shop over the issue of larger pictorial health warning on cigarette packs.

The farmers on Ongole I auction platform as also in Tangutur II did not allow the auctions to commence as manufacturers partially withdrew from the market, while exporters tried to take advantage of the reduction in prices in the auction platforms across the SBS region, Tobacco Board sources said.

The situation was no different on the auction platforms of Kandukur II and D.C. Palli in Southern Light Soil(SLS) region with the farmers withdrawing their produce upset over low prices offered by the traders. There was only a minimum inflow of bales in the other SBS and SLS platforms with the manufacturers reducing their offtake "to about 20 to 25 per cent," Indian Tobacco Association sources said.

Sivaji's plea

Taking note of the lack of buoyancy in market, noted farmer leader and former MP Y. Sivaji urged the Tobacco Board to suspend the auctions on all the platforms till the impasse was broken. While the manufacturers reduce the offtake of Virginia tobacco, there was no let-up in the buying burley tobacco by the manufacturers, who according to information, had two to three months excess stocks with them and unutilised production capacities, Dr. Sivaji said.

Quantity traded

Only 40,540 kg of tobacco could be traded on SLS auction platforms and the average price realised was only rs 129.05 per kg, SLS Regional Manager said.

The quantity traded was still less at 34,989.80 kg on SBS platforms and the average price realised by growers was only rs 126.01 kg, SBS Regional Manager G. Bhaskar Reddy said. YSR Congress Whip in Parliament Y.V. Subba Reddy observed the auction proceedings in Vellampalli I and II and urged the cigarette manufacturers not to put the farmers to hardship.

It would be proper on their part to take up the issue of health warning with the Centre, instead of troubling the growers who had produced the crop as per the indents raised by them at the time of fixation of crop size by the Tobacco Board.

The Centre should come to the rescue of the growers, who were hoping to make good the losses incurred during last year, the worst one since the crop holiday declared in the year 2000, he said.

There is minimum inflow of bales

with manufacturers reducing their offtake

Potato seeds: farmers told to book in advance

The Horticulture Department has appealed to farmers, who need certified seeds of potato, to register with the department. They can register their names by paying Rs. 10 per kilo in advance. The State government has announced a subsidy of Rs. 10 per kilo for potato seeds.

B. Suma, Deputy Director of the department, asked farmers to register their names at the earliest. Depending upon the number, the department would make arrangements to procure certified seeds, which will be distributed on first-come-first-serve basis.

Hassan has been known for potato cultivation for the past several decades. However, in the last few years, potato growers suffered huge losses owing to late blight disease that reduced the yield substantially. Farmers were then dependent on potato growers in Punjab, who send them treated table potatoes for cultivation. In the last few years, farmers have been demanding certified seeds so that they can claim compensation.

Last year, on an experimental basis, the department procured certified seeds for 60 farmers. Studies showed that the crop using certified seeds did not attract late blight disease. A subsidy was announced this year as the cost of certified seeds is higher than non-certified ones.

Ban on carbide, a bane for horticulture farmers

With no alternative ripening facilities, they face a fall in prices



Horticulture farmers in Anantapur district, especially those cultivating mango, sapota and banana, are a worried lot with the government implementing the ban on use of carbide in ripening of the fruits in spite of a clear absence of alternatives.

Sapota, which used to be one of the largest grown fruits in the district, is dwindling in acreage over the last several years owing to lack of marketing facilities. Coupled with the ban on carbide, the acreage has reduced to around 2,500 hectares from almost double that of the current acreage a few years ago.

“Sapota farmers, in the last year alone, have lost over Rs. 100 per packet (a packet equals 30 kg) as traders decided to cite lack of alternatives to carbide, and reduced the price staging that there was a risk of not able to market the fruit within the right time”, said B. Ravindranath Reddy of Chukkaluru village of Tadipatri mandal, who besides being a farmer also aggregates the fruit for traders in Hyderabad.

There is a lone ripening centre in the district headquarters with a capacity to ripen 20 MT every day, which would more or less cater to the demand of

Anantapur town and its outskirts, while all other fruit leaves the district invariably unripe.

While the government, on its part, is sensitising farmers and the common public to not use or buy carbide-ripened fruits, it does not seem to be doing anything to inform farmers of either the existing ripening chambers available at Tadipatri and Anantapur, although both are private owned, which use ethylene gas to ripen the fruits.

While the district is set to produce about 1.3 lakh tonnes of mango in the coming months, it lacks the infrastructure to ripen anything more than 2,000 MT.

Kozhikode gears up for an organic Vishu

In the run-up to Vishu, a collective of farmers will open 85 outlets in the district to sell organic vegetables. These will function on April 11, 12 and 13, Janakiya Jaivapachakari Krishi Sankataka Samithi has said in a press release.

Organically produced vegetables, estimated to be over 2,000 tonnes and cultivated on 645 acres, were ready for harvest. Already, the outlets had been opened at 20 cultivation centres. The harvest for Onam was 1,075 tonnes, the release said.

The Samithi said it was being guided by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] as part of the party's thrust on an agriculture-rich Kerala with people's participation.

“Out of the 645 acres, CPI(M) members alone had cultivated vegetables on 240 acres,” Samithi chairman and the party's district secretariat member K.P. Kunhammad Kutty said.

The rest was done by various farmers' organisations, Kudumbasree units and citizens' groups, with the involvement of agriculture department, local self-government institutions and the co-operative sector.

“Though our party is leading this programme, farmers owing allegiance to other organisations also have joined this not-for-profit initiative,” he said.

In addition to the 645 acres of cultivation, more than 10,000 individual residents were said to have organically cultivated vegetables on their premises.

Such widespread networked and individualised organic cultivation would help in averting health risks from pesticide-ridden vegetables and fruits, and also in ensuring availability of locally grown produce at lower price. The Samithi believed that this would help meet at least 50 per cent of the demand for vegetables and fruits, which was otherwise being met by procuring vegetables and fruits from other States.

According to the release, some of the places where the shandies will come up are — Kaiveli in Naripatta panchayat, Kainatti in Cherod panchayat, Vadakaram, Balussery, Pannur, Kayana, Pannikodu, Pudhupadi, Cheruvannur, Feroke, Ramanattukara, Olavanna, Kavil Road in Vilyapalli panchayat, Koyilandi town and Kappad.

On fake organic produce, with pesticide residue, having been detected during festival time last year, Mr. Kutty said what the Samithi produced was purely organic, especially with local self-government institutions, agricultural department and co-operative banks providing organic seeds and manure. “There are organic clinics too that helped farmers raise the produce,” he said.

‘There is no fodder scarcity’

The State has stocks of fodder enough for supplying to 12 districts, where drought-like situation prevails, for the next four weeks, according to A. Manju, Minister for Animal Husbandry and Sericulture.

Speaking to media here on Tuesday, he said that as the government has distributed fodder seeds to farmers and as they have sown it, new fodder would be ready by the time the stock gets over. Hence, there would not be scarcity.

The fodder seeds have been distributed at an estimated cost of Rs. 20 crore.

The government was supplying fodder at subsidised rate of Rs. 3 per kg to farmers against the actual price of Rs. 6 a kg.

The Minister said that the government on Monday released Rs. 7 crore to recognised “gou shalas” taking care of cows in the State.

In Dakshina Kannada, Rs. 83 lakh was released to seven “gou shalas”. Of that, Rs. 35 lakh was given to the “gou shala” of Pejawar Mutt in Udupi.

Panel to tour drought-hit district

The BJP district unit has formed a committee to study problems faced by people in drought affected areas, Leader of the Opposition in Legislative Council K.S. Eshwarappa has said.

Zilla panchayat member K.B. Ashok, party functionaries H.C. Basavarajappa and Rathnakar Shenoy are part of the committee, which will visit drought-hit gram panchayats from April 10 to 13 and speak to local farmers. The report prepared by the committee after assessing the situation will be submitted to the district administration, he told presspersons here on Tuesday.

He said that Sorab taluk is among the 136 taluks declared as drought-affected in the State. In addition to this, few villages in Shikaripur and Sagar taluks are also suffering from acute shortage of drinking water and fodder for cattle.

Mr. Eshwarappa expressed displeasure against the State government for going ahead with its decision to establish an Anti-Corruption Bureau.



Gujarat govt declares 623 villages scarcity-hit

It is to be noted that last week Gujarat Government had announced 527 villages as semi-drought-hit.



An official release said that 64 of these villages are in Porbandar, 190 in Jamnagar, 68 in Devbhumi- Dwarka and 301 in Kutch districts. The Gujarat government has declared 623 villages as scarcity-affected owing to scanty rains last year.

An official release said that 64 of these villages are in Porbandar, 190 in Jamnagar, 68 in Devbhumi- Dwarka and 301 in Kutch districts. The decision was taken in the meeting of Cabinet Sub- Committee on Drought attended by education minister Bhupendrasinh Chudasama, agriculture minister Babubhai Bokhiria, minister of state for health Shankar Chaudhary and minister of state for cow protection Tarachand Chheda.

The release added that these villages will get fodder at the same rate at which it is being provided to drought- affected areas. It, though, specifically added that these villages had been declared as scarcity-affected and not as drought-affected. It is to be noted that last week Gujarat Government had announced 527 villages as semi-drought-hit.

Valuation hike and price rise fail to cheer sugar millers

While only a handful of mills are operating in the state, the total unpaid dues to growers is to the tune of Rs 3,000 crore and millers are not optimistic of clearing it soon.

THE recent increase in valuation of sugar by the apex Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSC Bank) and the steady rise in prices of the commodity in the market have failed to cheer sugar millers.

While only a handful of mills are operating in the state, the total unpaid dues to growers is to the tune of Rs 3,000 crore and millers are not optimistic of clearing it soon.

On Monday, MSC Bank increased valuation of sugar to Rs 2,975 per tonne and announced 5 per cent of extra margin per tonne of sugar. Pramod Karnad, managing director of MSC Bank, said this was the eighth time the bank had raised valuation of sugar since October.

Increased valuation and increase in margin allow mills to have more money to pay cane growers. Sugar prices on NCDEX platform has been bullish with prices hovering above the Rs 3,500 mark.

The future prices of July, October shows that the price of the commodity can cross the Rs 3,700 mark easily. Also in the international market the price has been on the rise. The increase in price of sugar failed to help millers clear dues to growers.

As of March-end, cane worth Rs 15,000 crore has been crushed in the state with millers paying Rs 12,000 crore towards payment of Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP).

Although the state stares at a backlog of Rs 3,000 crore, officers of the sugar commissioner say last month was better in payment as most mills have adhered to the 80-20 formula for payment of FRP. Officers say that around 12 mills have unpaid dues worth Rs 200 crore carried forward from the crushing season of 2014-15.

As of Tuesday, 144 of the 177 mills that had gone for crushing have closed down for the season leaving only 33 operational. The state has seen 727.24 lakh metric tonnes of cane being crushed and 819.54 lakh quintals of sugar being produced. Increase in sugar prices has also seen Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghathana upping the ante for more payment for growers.

MP Raju Shetti of the Sanghathana on Sunday held a rally in Kolhapur and asked for higher payment to cane growers. Also there are talks of implementation of the Rangarajan Committee's profit sharing formula along with quick payment of balance money to growers.

However, mills appear to be pessimistic towards any such move with Shivajirao Nagavade Patil, chairman of the Maharashtra State Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories, talking about serious financial crisis being faced by millers.

“From April onwards, mills will have to pay installments towards excise subvention and soft loan of the Central government. While cumulatively both loans would translate into a financial burden of Rs 2-3 crores, the volatility in sugar prices has made business unstable,” he said.

Patil said over the last few days sugar prices have again dipped both in national and international markets. “Only if sugar prices remain stable at Rs 3,600 per tonne would sugar mills be financially viable,” he said. According

to him, the problems of millers would be more acute given the bleak outlook of the crushing season 2016-17.

“Solapur, Ahmednagar and major portions of Pune and Marathwada will face a huge dearth of cane. Mills will find it difficult to go for crushing,” he said. In view of the present situation the Federation has asked the central government to reschedule the payment of loans. “We have asked for time from the chief minister to discuss the matter and we would be meeting him again,” he said.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Sugar exports halt as prices surge on lower output forecast



Sugar exports have come to a halt as dealers have not signed new contracts in the past five days after prices surged on expectations of lower output, trade sources said on Tuesday.

India, the world's biggest sugar producer after Brazil, has contracted to export 1.6 million tonnes since the season began on October 1. Dealers have shipped out 1.3 million tonnes so far.

Local prices have surged nearly 8 per cent in the past 10 days after domestic output estimate were cut by 1.4 per cent from an earlier forecast. Output is expected to fall this season after six straight years of surplus production.

The government was instrumental in persuading mills to agree to a target of 3.2 million tonnes of sugar exports in 2015/16. With forecasts of lower output and higher local prices, traders say the export target may not be met.

Tobacco auctions disrupted on 6 floors in Andhra Pradesh

The crisis in tobacco market assumed gravity on Monday, as auctions were disrupted on six floors in Andhra Pradesh, as the farmers were upset over the high rate of rejections and the low prices being offered by the companies.

Auctions were disrupted at Ongole, Tanguturu, Kondepi, DC Palli, Kanigiri, Kaligiri and Jangareddigudem (2) floors as dissatisfied farmers boycotted the auctions.

So far roughly 11 million kg of tobacco has only been sold on the floors in AP at an average price of ₹135 per kg, and there is no active trade participation, allege farmers.

The authorised crop size in the State is 125 mkg.

According to Y. Sivaji, the representative of tobacco farmers who once organised crop holiday by the farmers in the State, it is “most unfortunate that the Union government does not have a clear and comprehensive policy on the issue.

As usual, the trade is playing foul. Showing the pictorial warning issue as a pretext, the major companies have almost withdrawn from the auction floors and the prices have plummeted. The farmer is left high and dry.”

He said the tobacco farmers in AP were willing to switch over to alternative crops provided the government facilitates the switch-over.

Sivaji said the Government should formulate a comprehensive policy to discourage tobacco production and consumption and take steps to enable farmers to go in for alternative crops.

Ch Sessaiah, President, Virginia Tobacco Growers' Welfare Association, said the Centre should address the issue immediately and arrest the price fall.

Groundnut oil's bull run halted

Continuous uptrend in groundnut oil ended as demand at the higher level declined on Tuesday. Groundnut oil loose was at ₹1,095-1,100 per 10 kg, Jamnagar line *telia* tin at ₹1,690-1,691 per 15 kg.

New tin of 15 kg remained steady at ₹1,785-1,790 at Rajkot. Washed cotton oil went for ₹622-625 per 10 kg and cotton oil new tin traded at ₹1,050-70 per 15 kg.

Pepper shoots up on tight supplies

Pepper markets on Tuesday shot up on tight supply . The arrivals stood at only six tonnes and were traded at ₹670-685 a kg respectively. Exchange released pepper traded at ₹665.

Spot prices shot up by ₹700 a quintal to ₹66,000 (ungarbled) and ₹69,000 (garbled). All the active contracts hit the ceiling with April, May and June increasing by ₹1,000 a quintal each to ₹69,000, ₹68,000 and ₹67,000 respectively.

Export prices also moved up to \$10,700 a tonne c&f for Europe and \$10,950 for the US.

Spot rubber continues bull run

Spot rubber continued to post moderate gains on Tuesday. RSS 4 improved to ₹118 (₹117.50) a kg, according to traders.

The grade finished higher at ₹117.50 (₹117) and ₹114.50 (₹114) respectively, according to the Rubber Board and the dealers. April futures firmed up to ₹120.70 (₹119.54), May to ₹122.70 (₹121.04) and June to ₹123.45 (₹121.58) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) flared up to ₹104.27 (₹102.59) at Bangkok. April futures closed at ¥177 (₹106.63) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (₹/kg): RSS-4: 118(117.50); RSS-5: 115 (114.50); Ungraded: 110 (109); ISNR 20: 112 (110) and Latex (60% drc): 90 (87.50).

Business Standard

Failure of Bt cotton forces govt to promote native seeds

Agriculture Ministry decided to revive cultivation of indigenous varieties of cotton in a meeting yesterday



With bollworm developing resistance to Bt cotton crop, the government has decided to promote cultivation of indigenous varieties of the crop in a big way this year.

In 2015-16 crop year (July-June), there was a significant damage to cotton crop because of whitefly and pink bollworm pest attack in states like Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.

Almost 90% of the country's cotton cultivation area is under Bt cotton, which was introduced in 2002.

A decision to revive cultivation of indigenous varieties of cotton was taken in a meeting yesterday, headed by Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh.

Senior officials of Agriculture Ministry, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) and seed industry companies were also present in the meeting.

"The issue of pests like pinkbollworm and whitefly developing resistance to Bt cotton crop was discussed at length with all stakeholders yesterday.

To protect farmers, it was decided to popularise cultivation of desi varieties this year," a seniorAgriculture Ministry official told PTI.

Though the productivity of native varieties is lower by 10-15% as compared to Bt cotton, but expenditure on pesticides and sprays would be less and farmers can reuse the seeds for next sowing, the official said.

Prior to the introduction of Bt cotton in 2002, at least 25% of the cotton cultivation area was under indigenous varieties. The efforts would be to regain this lost area, the official added.

Already, the ministry has issued directives to states like Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan to use only recommended native seeds for preventing pest attacks.

These states have also been asked to go for timely sowing of the crop and keep a close watch on the movement of whitefly besides ensuring timely sprinkling of pesticides to check its menace.

Cotton sowing begins this month in Punjab and Haryana which have irrigation, while sowing in the rest of the country will begin with the onset of the next monsoon rains in June.

As per the second advance estimate of the Agriculture Ministry, cotton output is expected to decline to 33.51 million bales in 2015-16 from 35.47 million bales (of 170 kg each) in the year-ago period due to pest attack in some states and poor monsoon.

Nurture agriculture to make 'Make in India' a reality

Keeping the rural youth engaged in fruitful employment (through investment in agri-related activities) is the only way to keep the wheels of economic rolling and realising the goals of Make in India



Taking cognisance of the fact that agriculture, and in general rural area, is under distress, the budget 2016-17 allocated Rs 35,984 crore, the highest amount so far, for agriculture and farmers' welfare. With this, the government intends to address issues of optimal utilisation of water resources, create new infrastructure for irrigation, conserve soil fertility with balanced use of fertiliser and provide connectivity from farm to market. With an intention to revive the fortunes of farmers for better overall growth

of the economy, the government aims to double the farmers' income by 2022.

This is indeed a tall ask given the fact that the contribution of agriculture and allied sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been declining over the years. Agriculture and allied sector employs about 49 percent of the nations' total workforce, however, it accounts for only 14 percent of the GDP - indicating the dependence of a large worker population on a relatively small income.

Agriculture has been neglected all these years. Investment, if any, has been targeted at low-productive instruments and mis-targeted subsidiaries. Minimum support prices (MSP) for crops given to farmers has failed to provide sufficient income at the hands of farmers to buy two-time meals, forget about the leisure of 24-hour electricity and water supply.

To improve conditions of farmers, the government will have to emphasis on irrigation, development of rainfed agriculture, promotion of integrated farming, high-value agri-produce, etc. At the same time, diversification beyond crops into horticulture, vegetables, livestock, poultry and fisheries, etc followed by the enhanced investment in seeds will also be required. "Further, the research sector needs to be bolstered so that top notch irrigation procedures can be developed in the country itself. More centres for agricultural studies should also be opened and students need to be encouraged to pursue career paths of agricultural scientists. The government should also attract investments in agriculture so that scientific techniques can bolster the country's crop production," said Rajesh Aggarwal, MD, Insecticides India Ltd.

Focus on need-based research

To bring about technical change in agriculture and raise farmers' income, the government will have to hike public expenditure in agriculture - in the form of increased investments in infrastructure (in irrigation, rural roads & electrification, etc) and targeted subsidies. Farmers can be benefitted only

when the new agricultural technologies are utilised by them at the field level.



Aggarwal comments, “Institutes need to focus on need based research, should be target oriented and on the changes that can bring prosperity to Indian farmers. Any innovation that cannot be transferred to practice for the benefit of mankind is a waste of resources. India has ample resources and the conducive environment for agriculture, using the right technology and sharing the same with all is the vital key. Though the government has kept agriculture in its priority list, the essence is to percolate the schemes to the lower levels and make them reach the desired population.”

About 85 percent of farmers hold land of less than 2 ha in size. These small farms, though operating only on 44 per cent of land under cultivation, are the main providers of food and nutritional security to the country. The government initiatives have to ensure access to technology, inputs, credit, capital and markets for these small and marginal farmers.

To reduce loses due to agri-produce wastage and cut down on time to reach marketplace, the government will have to focus on strengthening rural storage infrastructure and increasing number of mandis (rural markets).

India’s varied climatic as well as soil conditions help it grow a wide range of fruits, vegetables and other horticulture products. By framing policies for enabling small-scale food processing units - which can process these agri-

produces (preferably at the farm-gate) - to mushroom in the country, the government can generate employment opportunities for rural youth in non-farm activity and boost their productivity.

While the government has announced Start-Ups India initiative for entrepreneurs, it should start similar scheme for encouraging rural enterprises focusing on agri-produce. In addition to food processing industry, the government can look to promote sectors such as handicraft, agri-tourism, rubber, jute, textile, agri-waste processing, etc to further augment rural income.

In one of his addresses, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that the country's development is not possible until our village and farmers are not developed. Almost half of the workforce in India is still dependent on agriculture and, hence, growth in agriculture and allied sector is imperative for inclusive growth.

‘Make in India’ through ‘Farm in India’

In 2014, the Government of India announced Make in India initiative to make the country a global manufacturing powerhouse and propel economic growth. The initiative is yet to show a profound effect on the ground as the global economy continues to grow in low-single digit rate, resulting in dwindling exports from India in the last few months.

The only recourse to revive manufacturing sector is to boost domestic consumption. While urban areas has shown some signs of recovery (indicated by growth in auto and consumer goods sales), the rural economy has been a laggard. In order to revitalise the sluggish economy, the government will have to invest in agriculture, which has the potential to create massive gainful employment and build domestic demand.

Hence, ‘Make in India’ can be achieved only if agriculture sector also grows at healthy rate (since while manufacturing can drive growth in urban areas,

agriculture can enhance incomes of rural dwellers, thus leading to equitable growth in the country).

“Agricultural produce is the biggest resource of economic activity and development in India. Along with fisheries, it has marked its presence as one of the largest contributors to the GDP. Whereas the manufacturing sector will fuel growth in the urban areas, the rural segment is completely dependent on agricultural growth. As a part of the ‘Make in India’ initiative, it is important to create a big base in the country for production of high quality agricultural allied industries,” opines Aggarwal.

Economists suggest that the reforms should aim to move farmers out of agriculture to provide a cheaper labour force for the industry. But, will the industry (given the current economic condition) be able to generate employment to absorb this relocated workforce?

Growth without employment generation can lead to unrest among the youth, whose population (youth of 15-29 years) is expected to swell to 156 million by 2020. Agitations by once powerful farming communities such as Jats (in Haryana, UP, Delhi & Rajasthan), Patidars (in Gujarat), Marathas (in Maharashtra), etc for seeking job quotas indicate continued neglect of agriculture, which has turned farming into a low-income occupation.

Keeping the rural youth engaged in fruitful employment (through investment in agri-related activities) is the only way to keep the wheels of economic rolling. Or else, youth unrest can reach at the doorsteps of urban dwellers.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Hailstorm, rains lash parts of Himachal; crops destroyed

A pr 5 () Hailstorm followed by intermittent rains disrupted the normal life in Shimla today along with some other parts of the state.

The storm flattened standing wheat crop in mid and lower hills and caused extensive damage to stone fruit and vegetable crops.

The local MeT office has predicted more rains, snow and thunderstorm over the next three days.

Normal life was thrown out of gear and power supply was disrupted in Shimla and Ropa valley as a severe storm hit the region.

A huge tree was uprooted in Bemloe area in the heart of the town, snapping power transmission lines and power supply remained affected for several hours.

A line man Om Prakash received serious injuries while rectifying the fault and was taken to hospital with serious burn injuries, an official said.

A severe storm blew off the roof of at Primary school building at Sunnam in Ropa valley in tribal Kinnaur district.

However, there was no loss of life as the incident took place at midnight and there were no students in the school.

The reports of heavy rains and storm have also been received from some other parts of the state.

Maximum temperatures dropped by three to five degrees and Una in lower hills recorded a high of 33.4 degree against 38 degree yesterday, followed by Sundernagar 28.9 degree, Nahan 28.3 degree, Solan 25.0 degree, Dharamshala 24.8 degree, Bhuntar 23.6 degree, Shimla 21.1 degree and Manali 17.6 degree C.

The minimum temperatures also dropped by two to three degrees and Keylong recorded a low of 0.4 degree, while and Manali recorded minimum

temperature at 3.4 degree, filed by Shimla 9.4 degree, Bhuntar 11.0 degree, Palampur and Solan 13.0 degree, Sundernagar 13.

7 degree, Dharamsala 14.4 degree, Una 19.0 degree and Nahan 20.5 degree.
PCL PVI

'Food processing a bridge between farmers, consumers'

Union minister for food processing industry Harsimrat Kaur Badal inaugurated the two-day conference on recent advances in food processing & biotechnology, organised by the Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IAS-BHU), on Tuesday.

Addressing the programme, she highlighted the role of food processing in the development of the country. Badal said that food processing ministry is working as a bridge between farmers and consumers and set up 42 mega food parks and 138 cold chains.

Badal said that the ministry aims to increase food processing level up to 20% from current level of 10%. Through food processing, demand for raw material is created and food loss can be minimized, which ultimately leads to better price of produce to farmers, enhanced availability, improved quality, higher employment and contributes in reduction of poverty and malnutrition.

Highlighting the achievement of the government, she said that with 38% increase in FDI, India has been upgraded to 16 and 12 from previous ranking in Global Competitiveness Index and ease of Doing Business Index respectively. The new initiatives of the budget like Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana will certainly double the income of farmers during the coming five years.

IAS-BHU director Ravi Pratap Singh said that the Institute of Agricultural Sciences is developing various food products as per current needs which ultimately reduces post harvest losses and increases farmers income as well as consumers get quality food/nutrient even in off season. The conference is

being attended by scientists from different parts of the country and abroad including US, Netherland, Yemen, Taiwan, Nepal, Sweden, UK and Nigeria.

Dairy farming could help farmers lead better life

Dairy farming could help farmers lead a better life at a time when some of them are committing suicide due to financial crisis, State Minister for Animal Husbandry and Sericulture, A Manju said here today.

Speaking after inaugurating the new Nandini flexi pack milk at Karnataka Milk Federation dairy premises at nearby Kulshekar, he said it was the responsibility of the government to support dairy farming.

He urged the people to buy Nandini milk products made from pure cow's milk and free from adulteration.

"The state government is providing milk to consumers at a lesser price as compared to other states, the minister said. The government had increased the price of Nandini milk by Rs four, of which Rs three would go to the farmers.

The animal husbandry department provides subsidy to farmers for dairy farming.

The Siddaramaiah government had given Rs 900 crore to support dairy farming in the entire state, he said.

Dharmasthala Dharmadhikari Veerendra Heggade, who inaugurated the new production unit and cold storage of Dakshina Kannada Cooperative Milk Producers' Union, was felicitated on the occasion by Dakshina Kannada Cooperative Milk Producers Union.

The minister requested Veerendra Heggade to become the brand ambassador of KMF Nandini Milk and its products.

Dakshina Kannada district in-charge minister Ramanath Rai released Nandini flexi pack milk and state minister Abhayachandra Jain released 500 ml butter milk packets.

Health minister U T Khader, Nalin Kumar Kateel MP, J R Lobo MLA, Mohiuddin Bava MLA and KMF president P Nagaraj were among those present. MVG APR

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Failure of Bt cotton forces government to promote native seeds



A decision to revive cultivation of indigenous varieties of cotton was taken in a meeting yesterday, headed by Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh.

NEW DELHI: With bollworm developing resistance to Bt cotton crop, the government has decided to promote cultivation of indigenous varieties of the crop in a big way this year.

In 2015-16 crop year (July-June), there was a significant damage to cotton crop because of whitefly and pink bollworm pest attack in states like Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.

Almost 90 per cent of the country's cotton cultivation area is under Bt cotton, which was introduced in 2002.

A decision to revive cultivation of indigenous varieties of cotton was taken in a meeting yesterday, headed by Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh.

Senior officials of Agriculture Ministry, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) and seed industry companies were also present in the meeting.

"The issue of pests like pinkbollworm and whitefly developing resistance to Bt cotton crop was discussed at length with all stakeholders yesterday. To protect farmers, it was decided to popularise cultivation of desi varieties this year," a senior Agriculture Ministry official told PTI.

Though the productivity of native varieties is lower by 10-15 per cent as compared to Bt cotton, but expenditure on pesticides and sprays would be less and farmers can reuse the seeds for next sowing, the official said.

Prior to the introduction of Bt cotton in 2002, at least 25 per cent of the cotton cultivation area was under indigenous varieties. The efforts would be to regain this lost area, the official added.

Already, the ministry has issued directives to states like Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan to use only recommended native seeds for preventing pest attacks.

These states have also been asked to go for timely sowing of the crop and keep a close watch on the movement of whitefly besides ensuring timely sprinkling of pesticides to check its menace.

Cotton sowing begins this month in Punjab and Haryana which have irrigation, while sowing in the rest of the country will begin with the onset of the next monsoon rains in June.

As per the second advance estimate of the Agriculture Ministry, cotton output is expected to decline to 33.51 million bales in 2015-16 from 35.47 million bales (of 170 kg each) in the year-ago period due to pest attack in some states and poor monsoon.

HC seeks Monsanto's reply on Nuziveedu seeds' plea on CCI



Monsanto, a US-based genetically modified seed giant, had contended before the court that CCI does not have the jurisdiction to deal with matters pertaining to intellectual property, like patents and trade marks.

NEW DELHI: MonsantoBSE 0.78 % Holdings Pvt Ltd was today asked by Delhi High Court to respond to a plea of Nuziveedu Seeds Ltd seeking vacation of its interim order asking the Competition Commission of India not to pass a final order in a matter relating to alleged abuse of dominance by Monsanto's Indian arm.

Justice Manmohan issued notice to Monsanto and sought its reply within a week on Indian seed company Nuziveedu's plea seeking vacation of the February 29 decision of the high court, which had also said that any interim order of CCI shall not be given effect to without the leave of the court.

The court had, however, allowed CCI to carry on with its probe and hearings in the matter in which the commission had on February 18 ordered a detailed probe into the alleged abuse of dominance by the firm's Indian arm, Mahyco Monsanto Biotech India Limited (MMBL).

The February 29 order was passed by the high court on Monsanto's plea challenging CCI's February 18 order.

Monsanto, a US-based genetically modified seed giant, had contended before the court that CCI does not have the jurisdiction to deal with matters pertaining to intellectual property, like patents and trade marks.

Nuziveedu today told the court that a division bench of the High Court has held that CCI does have the jurisdiction to deal with patent matters.

It also said that the interim order was appealable before the Competition Appellate Tribunal (COMPAT).

Monsanto, represented by senior advocate Pratibha M Singh, told the court that Nuziveedu has moved another application in a separate civil suit between the two for reinstatement of the licence between them.

Singh told the court that Monsanto would be making a proposal to Nuziveedu regarding the licence agreement.

Justice Manmohan, thereafter, listed the matter for further hearing on May 5.

Farmers want higher sugarcane price, millers reluctant

PUNE: Sugar is going the pulses way, and with sugar prices having risen by about 15% in 10 days, everyone's trying to get a bigger piece of the pie. Farmers want higher cane price, which millers aren't ready to pay yet. The central government is concerned about taming the rapidly rising sugar prices for which it has stopped pushing mills to export the sweetener and instead is trying to make them sell more in the domestic markets.

The central and state governments have stopped putting pressure on sugar mills to export. "With unprecedented white sugar exports, our purpose has

been served," said a high level official of the Maharashtra sugar commissionerate, who did not wish to be identified.



The central government is concerned about taming the rapidly rising sugar prices for which it has stopped pushing mills to export the sweetener.

Last week, the central government had asked industry representatives to ensure that sugar prices stay within the 'comfort zone' and asked cane commissioners to make sure that mills clear all cane payment arrears as prices have improved now. Accordingly, the Maharashtra government has asked mills in the state to clear their dues by April 15.

In light of the subdued cane prices, farmer leaders from Maharashtra had accepted 80:20 formula by which farmers could get only 80% of the fair and remunerative price (FRP) as first installment of cane payment and accept 20% after the crushing season was over. As per the law, it is binding on the mills to pay the entire FRP within 14 days after buying cane from farmers.