

03.08.2016

THE HINDU

‘India is short of around 5 million tonnes of pulses’

Despite producing 27 per cent of the global requirement of pulses, India is still short of around five million tonnes, said S.A. Patil, consultant, Indo-Morocco Food Legume Initiative, at the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference to announce a three-day consultation on ‘Enhancing the productivity and profitability of pulses for Addressing Food and Nutrition Security,’ at the MSSRF from Sunday, Dr. Patil said the meet would set the stage for an in-depth discussion on issues and challenges in increasing pulse cultivation.

He said increasing the area under pulse cultivation was pertinent as the government was taking various steps, including importing, to bridge the gap.

“If farmers give up one of the three rice crops in a year, pulse cultivation can be taken up on an additional 11 million hectares through rice fallow cultivation method where the pulses are sown as soon as the rice crop is harvested,” he said.

V. Selvam, executive director, MSSRF, said that Mahmoud Solh, director General, International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, Beirut; and K. Ramasamy, vice-chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, will be among the key speakers at the conference.

Dr. Patil also released a booklet on pulses and K. Muthukumar, Additional Director General, Press Information Bureau, received the first copy. The latter also spoke.

High Court orders release of 10 lakh tonnes of pulses

The Madras High Court Bench here has ordered release of 10,38,490 tonnes of pulses seized by Thoothukudi District Crime Branch police and stored in Tamil Nadu Warehousing Corporation godown since last year due to a trade dispute between the importer and the local purchaser.

Justice S. Vimala directed the police to return the commodities in view of a compromise reached between the importer, who had lodged a cheating complaint, and the local purchaser who agreed to fulfil his liability in order to make sure that the commodities did not perish due to prolonged legal battle.

In the police complaint, the importer had accused the local purchaser of storing the commodities worth Rs. 8.21 crore in the government warehouse in the names of his family members and not in the name of his company and filing a false declaration that they were agricultural products from their own lands.

After registering a case under Sections 406 (criminal breach of trust) and 420 (cheating) of the Indian Penal Code, the police seized the commodities, leading to filing of a number of petitions before a Judicial Magistrate in Thoothukudi seeking return of the commodities after staking ownership claim over them.

While a private bank claimed that the commodities had been mortgaged to it and hence it had the first lien over them, Tamil Nadu Warehousing Corporation claimed that the police did not follow procedures contemplated under the Code of Criminal Procedure before seizing the properties.

Amicable settlement

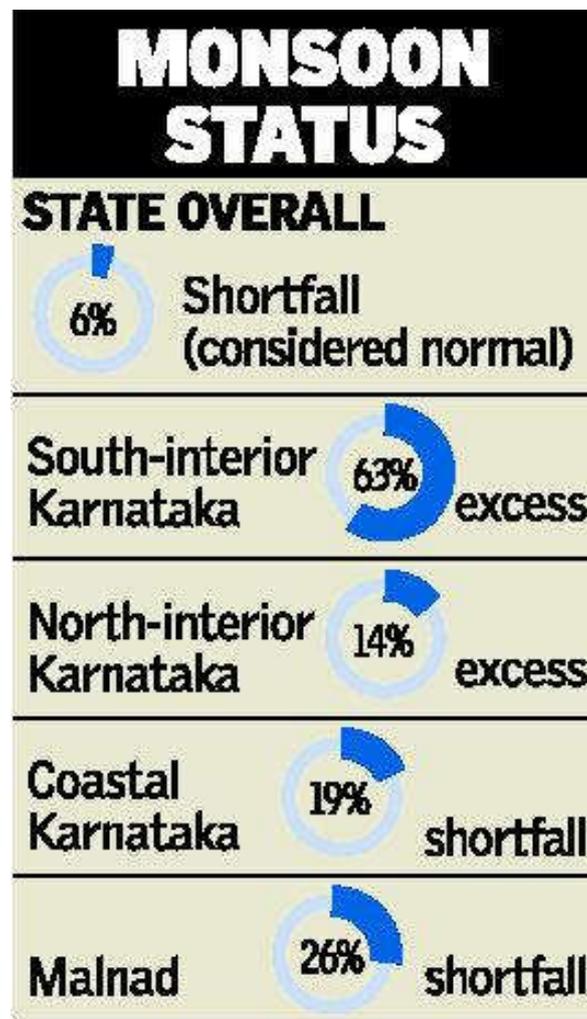
Even as the dispute got complicated more and more, the importer and the local purchaser participated in a conciliatory meeting in Chennai on June 28 and arrived at an amicable settlement to sell the pulses, realise the money and withdraw all criminal cases related to the issue.

Training centre for aqua farmers

A farmers' training centre has been developed at the M.V.K.R. Fisheries Polytechnic College at Bhavadevarapalli. Agriculture Minister P. Pulla Rao will inaugurate the centre. M.V.K.R. Fisheries Polytechnic College Principal N. Veerabhadra Rao on Tuesday said that Deputy Speaker Mandali Buddha Prasad and BC Welfare Minister K. Ravindra would lay stone for hostel buildings of the college on August 4. The training centre was set up at a cost of Rs.81 lakh.

Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University Vice Chancellor Manmohan Singh and other officials would release fish into ponds meant for research and academic activities.

Rains are good, but dam levels continue to dip



After years of drought and wilting farms, the enthusiasm over this year's good rain is apparent. However, behind the joy of farmers — for, an additional 13

lakh hectares have been sowed this year around — lies portentous dark clouds: that of a possible “hydrological drought” or a crisis in our river systems.

Though the State has received good rainfall, what is clear is that Malnad and coastal Karnataka have received deficient rainfall. The State is currently just 6 per cent deficient — considered normal otherwise — but Malnad region is seeing nearly 25 per cent lower rain. This is significant considering that most of the State’s big rivers and dams are fed by rain falling in the Western Ghats area. As a result, water levels in reservoirs on Cauvery, Tungabhadra, and Kali have fallen even when compared to last year, which was considered a drought year. “The rain has been strong in the plains of Karnataka and has been good for agriculture. However, hydrologically it has not been satisfactory as catchment belts have not received water,” says G.S. Srinivasa Reddy, Director, Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre.

KSNMDC has met with the Agriculture Department officials to apprise them of “conserving” water in reservoirs.

Whitefly forces farmers to uproot cotton crop

While farmers in parts of Punjab have started uprooting cotton crop fearing whitefly pest attack, officials from the State government and the Centre are touring the cotton-belt to monitor the situation.

The pest attack, which caused extensive damage to Bt cotton crop last year in Punjab and neighbouring Haryana, had been reported this year as well in a few villages of Malwa region, mainly Fazilka district of Punjab.

An increase in jassid pest attack, which too sucks the crop like the whitefly, is worrying farmers in parts of Mansa and Bathinda.

After facing farmers’ wrath in the poll-bound State last year, the Akali government and the Centre are taking no chances. Officials and experts touring the belt for surveillance will hold a review meeting on August 3.

“We have been able to control the spread this season as it is limited to 132 acres in a few villages... But the next 20 days are critical. If it rains it will be good. Whitefly pest spreads in dry conditions,” Jasbir Singh Bains, Director, Punjab Agriculture Department, told *The Hindu* .

Off-shore fish farm attracts farmers



Collector K.S.Palanisamy inspecting a fish pond at Mettupatti.

The off-shore fish farm funded under the National Agriculture Development Programme and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development schemes have been attracting farmers in the district.

Under the NADP-sponsored programme, fish seed farm has been set up at Mettupatti village near Lalgudi and it has started paying dividends, said Collector K. S. Palanisamy.

In a release issued here after visiting various sites where the fish farms had been developed in the district, he said that 50 per cent of the cost for setting up the farm had been released as subsidy to farmers.

He said that off-shore fish farms had been set up on 15.06 hectares with financial assistance from the Central and State governments. As many as 48 farmers had benefited under the scheme.

On the multipurpose fish farm, he said that another 255 farmers had got Rs. 12.20 lakh under the subsidy-based scheme implemented through the Drought Relief scheme for delta district farmers.

Free seedlings, numbering 40,000 and worth Rs. 42,000, had been released under the community fish farm development scheme in three major tanks in Natarajapuram panchayat with a total extent of 23.53 hectares. The fish market

at Kasi Vilangi village would be developed at an estimate of Rs. 10 lakh under the Fish Farmers Development Agency, he said.

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development had sanctioned Rs.1.81 crore for providing basic infrastructure at the fish farm in the district.

Coconut trees infested with black-headed caterpillar disease in K.R. Pet taluk



Expert advice:Entomologist Puttaraju speaking to coconut growers on how to deal with the black-headed caterpillar infestation at Doddayachenahalli, in Mandya on Tuesday.

Puttaraju, a senior entomologist at the agricultural research centre in Mysuru, has urged coconut growers to take the guidance and assistance of experts to fight black-headed caterpillar infestation that has hit coconut trees in some parts of K.R. Pet taluk.

He was addressing coconut growers at Doddayachenahalli in K.R. Pet taluk of the district on Tuesday.

The growers should use neem-based pesticides, take up the root-feeding method and spray bio-agents under the guidance of the entomologists or experts to tackle the infestation and curb its spread, he suggested.

Several thousands of trees have been affected in the area, the growers said.

They demanded compensation from the district administration and authorities concerned. Officials of various departments of growers from nearby villages were present.

The Department of Horticulture had organised the programme as the black-headed caterpillar infestation had hit trees in over 400 acres in the vicinity of Doddayachenahalli.

Rainfall proves detrimental to cotton crop

The plants in the lower level of the fields are likely to suffer more due to water logging



STUNTED GROWTH:An adivasi woman working in a field showing lack of growth in plants of the cotton crop at Vadgam in Indervelli mandal of Adilabad district.- Photo: S. Harpal Singh

The long period of rainy days this monsoon has started worrying cotton farmers in Adilabad. The prolonged cloudy weather has already caused stunting of growth in cotton plants and another 10 days of similar conditions could spell doom for the entire crop.

Though the normal rainfall in Adilabad is about 110 cm during monsoon, the rainy days are usually spread over the four-month period under ideal conditions.

Increased rainy days

This year however, the average rainfall during the first two months has exceeded the normal for the corresponding period by 35 per cent as the additional number of rainy days was recorded in June and July.

The initial anxiety of the dry spell in June gave way to spells of good rainfall and June recorded 13 rainy days. The trend continued in July which had 23 rainy days, there being no proper sunny day.

Lack of photosynthesis due to the absence of sunlight and heavy weeding impeding the growth are the main reasons for the stunted plant growth.

“There is hardly any aeration in the root zone for the plant to grow,” pointed out Adilabad Assistant Agriculture Officer Asuri Ravinder as he talked of the phenomenon.

“Wherever the soils are uneven and the district has a large extent of it, the crop in the lower level of the fields is likely to suffer more due to water logging. Under these conditions, the leaf of the plant shows reddening which reduces the life of the plant,” he explained.

According to cotton farmer Narhari Vittal of Ichoda mandal headquarters, the plant had lost growth of about 6 inches due to the damp weather. “The plants need sunlight immediately otherwise the yield of cotton will decrease abnormally”, he opined.

“Yes, under these conditions, the plants go to their reproductive stage sooner than they would have done under normal conditions. The bolls formed under these conditions are smaller with much less cotton in them,” concurred Devtade Tulsiram, another cotton farmer from Bazarhatnoor mandal headquarters.

Added expenditure

Even if the clouds relent and make way for sunny weather, the farmers will be required to spend more on administering suitable fertilisers before the plant reaches flowering stage. This will increase their expenditure but will give a fillip to the plant growth, according to Mr. Ravinder.

College cultivates brinjal using sprinklers

Demonstration plot raised on 320 square metres with micro sprinkler system

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University's Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute at Kumulur has taken up cultivation of brinjal under sprinkler-irrigated conditions to demonstrate conservation of water.

The college has raised brinjal in its demonstration plot on an extent of about 320 square metres with micro sprinkler system.

Excess water use for irrigation only causes leeching but not many horticultural farmers are aware of this fact, said K. Ramaswamy, Dean of the Institute. The demonstration plot had been developed with a view to exposing the farmers to the advantage of using micro-sprinkler, he said.

Apart from saving water, the growth of the plants and the quality of vegetables are also enhanced as compared to the traditional method of cultivation, said K. Arunadevi, Assistant Professor, Soil and Water Conservation Engineering Department of the Institute, who has been closely monitoring the growth of the plant. She said that the use of micro sprinkler would help achieve a yield 20 tonnes or more against the normal average of 18 tonnes per hectare under conventional irrigation.

Uniform distribution of water at low pressure was the special feature of the system. The rate of supply was 26 litres per hour. The flowering of the plants was not affected as water is sprayed at low pressure.

The timing of spraying could be adjusted depending on the wet condition of the plants.

Farmers would be exposed to the micro sprinkler technique in the course of time, after the plants registered appreciable growth.

Centre to meet diplomats for boosting food products' trade



Through a liberal policy, the government aims to ensure greater value addition to farm produce. Photo: M. Periasamy

India aims to attract the latest technologies in food processing.

The Centre will hold a meeting with ambassadors and high commissioners in the country to attract foreign direct investment into trading of food products.

The meeting is being convened by the Food Processing Industries (FPI) ministry along with the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (or DIPP — the nodal government agency on FDI policy) — the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Prime Minister's Office, official sources said.

Eighteen nations

On June 20 the Centre allowed 100 per cent FDI under government approval route (through Foreign Investment Promotion Board) for trading, including through e-commerce, of food products manufactured or produced in India to give a fillip to the food processing sector.

The meeting, slated for August 3, is likely to be attended by ambassadors and high commissioners to India from as many as 18 countries, including Japan,

Thailand, the U.K., the U.S. and South Korea, the sources said. The FPI ministry was earlier in touch with countries including Netherlands and France in this regard, the sources added.

During the meeting, scheduled for about two hours, FPI minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal will speak on FDI policy concerning the sector and then hold separate meetings with each participating country to learn about their demands and queries on the policy, the sources said.

Efforts will be made to sign Memorandum of Understanding with these countries to boost trading of food products made or produced in India.

Value addition

During April 2000-March 2016, the food processing industries attracted FDI worth \$6.81 billion (or 2.36 per cent of the overall FDI inflows of \$288.5 billion during the same period). Food processing sector exports are worth around \$38 billion (or 2.5 per cent of world exports in the sector).

Through a liberal policy, the government aims to ensure greater value addition to farm produce, bring down wastage of perishables, curb inflation and price fluctuation of food items, raise farmers' income and generate more employment. Through a more open policy, the government also wants to ensure that India attracts the latest technologies in the food processing sector.

Prior to the June 20 decision on allowing 100 per cent FDI trading of food products, FDI flow into the sector did not match the expectations. This, according to experts, was because of the crucial missing link — which was FDI in trading of food items.

According to the Confederation of Indian Industry, the move to allow 100 per cent FDI in trading of food products manufactured or produced in India, will help drastically reduce post-harvest losses and ensure that farmers get better prices. It will also result in the strengthening of backend infrastructure and lead to a direct purchase by retailers, according to the industry body.

Inflows increase in Somasila reservoir

In the past few days, there have been steady inflows into the Somasila reservoir in Nellore district following rains in the upper catchment regions, mostly in Rayalaseema region. The inflows have increased to nearly 3,000 to 3,500 cusecs with the total storage of water in Somasila being nearly 11.07 tmcft now. The officials have been releasing water up to 2,000 cusecs to meet the irrigation requirements of farmers under the Penna delta in the district.

A finger on the pulse



FOOD FOR THOUGHT:Visitors at an exhibition on pulses at Sacred Heart College, Thevara, on Tuesday.— Photo: H. Vibhu

Pulses come in different shapes, sizes and colours and play a big role in ensuring food security.

A seminar and an exhibition held here on Tuesday highlighted the role of pulses in ensuring a healthy food habit and the vast potential for their cultivation.

The exhibition was organised at the Sacred Heart College, Thevara, as part of the ongoing celebrations of the International Year of Pulses, declared by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

Organised under the aegis of the Organic Kerala Charitable Trust, which is engaged in promoting organic cultivation of vegetables and fruits, the day-long programme included the launch of a project to popularise organic vegetable cultivation in small areas around urban dwelling units.

The refurbished website of the Organic Kerala Charitable Trust was also launched on the occasion.

Speakers at the seminar highlighted the right to safe food. Popular poet Murukan Kattakakkada, who interacted with students after the inaugural, helped draw their attention to the need for a healthy way of life and safe eating habits.

The exhibition on pulses highlighted the vast variety of seeds available in the State and its immediate vicinity.

From the ubiquitous cowpea to the more exotic beans varieties from cold climes, the exhibition was an eye-opener on the immense potential the State has for the cultivation of pulses.

The State Department of Agriculture has been taking special measures to promote pulses cultivation.

The crops being popularised include black gram, cowpea, French beans, green gram, horse gram, red gram and soya bean.

Stage set for roll-out of GST regime

KEY DIFFERENTIATORS	
Proposed amendments to the 2014 Bill in the Lok Sabha that have been incorporated in the 2016 Bill	
Entry tax 2014 Bill (Clause 18): An additional tax of 1% on supply of goods will be levied by the Centre on inter-State trade or commerce	Dispute resolution 2014 Bill (Clause 12): GST Council may decide upon modalities to resolve disputes
 2016 proposed amendment: Deletes the provision.	2016 proposed amendment: The GST Council shall establish a mechanism to adjudicate any disputes
	Compensation to States 2014 Bill (Clause 19): Parliament may, by law, provide for compensation to States for any loss of revenues up to five years
	2016 proposed amendment: Parliament shall, by law, provide for compensation to States for any loss

SOURCE: PRS LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH

The stage is set for the roll-out of a uniform goods and services tax (GST) regime in the country with the Congress deciding to vote for the long-pending Constitution Amendment Bill in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, despite some disquiet among a section of the party's senior leadership over the absence of a cap on the tax.

The government circulated among the Rajya Sabha members the official amendments to the GST Bill dropping the one per cent additional tax and including a provision for compensating the States for revenue loss arising from the implementation of GST for five years.

Congress MPs on Tuesday wanted to know from their party colleagues who had negotiated with the government why they had eventually agreed to forego the demand for a cap of 18 per cent.

They also wanted to know what explanation the party would give to the people on delaying the passage of the Bill if this point was to be conceded eventually.

Former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram and the party's Deputy Leader in the Rajya Sabha Anand Sharma, who were the lead negotiators for the Congress, explained that the government had promised that the GST Council — in consultation with the States — would work out a set of bands to ensure a revenue neutral tax.

The amendments were submitted to the Secretariat of the House two days ago and these had been circulated among the members.

“Parliament shall, by law, provide for compensation to states for any loss of revenues, for a period which may extend to five years,” PRS Legislative said in a note.

“This would be based on the recommendations of the GST Council.

This implies that (i) Parliament must provide compensation; and (ii) compensation cannot be provided for more than five years, but allows Parliament to decide a shorter time period.”

The removal of the one per cent additional tax was an amendment welcomed by industry and parliamentary opposition alike.

“The point of GST is to create a common market in the country and remove supply chain distortions arising from different tax rates in different States,” Pratik Jain, Partner and leader – Indirect Tax, at PwC India told *The Hindu* .

Valvil Ori festival begins



The flower show held at Botanical Garden in Kolli Hills in Namakkal on Monday.

The two-day Valvil Ori festival, flower show, and tourist vizha began at Semmedu in Kolli Hills here on Monday.

The celebrations began with the District Revenue Officer K. Palanisamy garlanding the statue of the king Valvil Ori followed by inauguration of the flower show at the Botanical Garden.

Addressing the gathering, C. Chandrasekar, MLA, said that a request for starting new arts and Science College in the hilltop was taken up with the Chief Minister.

He added that efforts were on to establish a TNEB sub-station in Kolli Hills.

A total of 903 beneficiaries were given assistance to the tune of Rs. 2.8 crore by various departments on the occasion.

S. Kavitha, Project Director, District Rural Development Agency spoke.

District Collector M. Asia Mariam who took charge on Sunday was not present during the celebrations.

Stalls of various government departments exhibiting schemes being implemented were inaugurated.

The flower show at botanical garden attracted reasonable crowd apart from cultural programmes by school students.

Officials said that archery competition would be held on Tuesday. The district administration had declared local holiday on Tuesday for the convenience of the public to attend the festival.

Special buses were operated from Karavalli in the foothills to Semmedu in the hilltop as forest department personnel checked vehicles proceeding to the hill.

Police personnel were posted on the Ghat Road to prevent untoward activities. Two check posts, one at Karavalli and Mullukurichi were in place as police checked the vehicles to prevent liquor bottles or suspicious items taken to the hilltop.

Officials are hopeful that tourists will throng the hilltop in large numbers on Tuesday.



Punjab: Area under rice goes up; basmati, cotton slide

Paddy rice acreage saw an increase of around 12 per cent from last year with almost 25 lakh hectares dedicated to the crop. Basmati rice may soon touch 5 lakh hectares only.



Basmati rice consumes less water than paddy rice. However, 33 per cent less land is under cultivation this time compared to last year. (Source: File)

Farmers have taken to rice cultivation after their cotton crop failed last season and losing trust in Basmati's returns. The area under rice this year has touched 30 lakh hectares — the highest in over a decade.

Paddy rice acreage, too, saw an increase of around 12 per cent from last year with almost 25 lakh hectares dedicated to the crop. Basmati rice may soon touch 5 lakh hectares only.

The news will certainly put pressure on the state's groundwater resources with 102 of 141 agricultural blocks already "dry". Rice is a water-intensive crop.

"This would be a big blow to our crop diversification policy," said a senior officer in the agriculture department. Under the state's New Agriculture Policy, around 12 lakh hectares was to be diverted from paddy rice to other crops mainly basmati, maize and cotton.

Basmati rice consumes less water than paddy rice. However, 33 per cent less land is under cultivation this time compared to last year.

“Farmers are looking for a secure market and paddy rice provides that,” said Dr J S Bains, director, Punjab Agriculture department. Last year, whitefly infestation wrecked the cotton market while Basmati’s prices fluctuated during last few years.

TMC alleges Tea Board headquarters being shifted out of Kolkata

Kolkata has not just a sea port for movement of tea but also a tea auction house, he said, adding that any move to shift the headquarters would result in job losses.

Alleged shifting of Tea Board headquarters from Kolkata to Guwahati and a demand for setting up a High Court in Andhra Pradesh were among the issues raised by members in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

Vivek Gupta (TMC) raised the issue of the alleged move to shift Tea Board headquarters to Guwahati after the BJP came to power in Assam, likening the move to “chopping off the hands” of Kolkata.

The Centre, he alleged, has not been consulting the state government on the appointment of chairman of Kolkata Port Trust and Damodar Valley Corporation and was now shifting the Tea Board headquarters.

Kolkata has not just a sea port for movement of tea but also a tea auction house, he said, adding that any move to shift the headquarters would result in job losses.

Shadi Lal Batra (Congress) raised the issue of Rs 50,000 crore ponzy scheme fraud by PACL and demanded that the company’s directors and chairman be arrested and their properties seized and sold to refund money to 6 crore poor farmers, shopkeepers, retired officials and widows who, he alleged, have been defrauded.

Ananda Bhaskar Rapolu (Congress) said with the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, the High Court at Hyderabad has gone to Telengana state. Andhra

Pradesh is now eagerly awaiting its own High Court, he said, adding that the court complex in Vijawada be allocated for setting up of the High Court.

Pulses output down 4% in 2015-16, foodgrains slightly up

Retail prices of pulses have risen sharply due to lower production in last two crop years compared to record 19.25 million tonnes in the 2013-14 crop year.



Production of pulses has been revised downwards to 16.47 million tonnes from 17.06 million tonnes in the third advance estimate released in May.

Pulses production fell by 4 percent to 16.47 million tonnes in the 2015-16 crop year due to drought in many states but the country's total foodgrains output rose marginally to 252.22 million tonnes on the back of bumper wheat crop.

India's foodgrains production stood at 252.02 million tonnes in the 2014-15 crop year (July-June). According to the fourth advance estimate of foodgrains production for 2015-16 released on Tuesday, the output of rice, coarse cereals and pulses have fallen while that of wheat has risen compared to the previous year.

Production of pulses has been revised downwards to 16.47 million tonnes from 17.06 million tonnes in the third advance estimate released in May. Pulses output stood at 17.15 million tonnes in the 2014-15 crop year. Retail prices of pulses have risen sharply due to lower production in last two crop years compared to record 19.25 million tonnes in the 2013-14 crop year. The downward revision may put further pressure on domestic prices.

As per the data, rice output is estimated to decline to 104.32 million tonnes during 2015-16 crop year from 105.48 million tonnes in the previous year.

Rice production has been revised upwards from 103.36 million tonnes in the third advance estimate. Wheat production has been revised downward to 93.5 million tonnes from 94.04 million tonnes in May estimate, but still it is much higher than 86.53 million tonnes in 2014-15.

Coarse cereals production is estimated to have declined to 37.94 million tonnes in 2015-16 from 42.86 million tonnes in the previous year.

The country faced two consecutive drought due to poor monsoon in 2014 and 2015 calendar year. “Despite setback due to deficient rainfall and due to shortage of water in reservoirs, as per the 4th Advance Estimates for 2015-16, the total foodgrains production in the country has been higher than that in the last year,” an official statement said.

In non-foodgrains category, production of oilseeds, sugarcane, cotton and jute are estimated to decline during the current 2015-16 crop year. Oilseeds output is pegged at 25.30 million tonnes against 27.51 million tonnes, while sugarcane output is estimated at 352.16 million tonnes against 362.3 million tonnes.

Cotton output is estimated to decline to 30.14 million bales (of 170 kg each) in 2015-16 from 34.80 million bales last year, while jute output is seen lower at 10.46 million bales (of 180 kg each) from 11.12 million bales in the said period.

India had achieved a record foodgrain production of 265.04 million tonnes in the 2013-14 crop year.

Dilip Rath assumes additional charge as NDDB chairman

Dilip Rath is currently the managing director of NDDB, an organisation he joined in 2011 after taking premature retirement from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

Dilip Rath, took over as the chairman of National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), Monday, after the department of personnel and training (DoPT), Government of India gave him the additional charge of the post until the appointment of a regular incumbent.

The chairman's post fell vacant last week after T Nandakumar resigned before his five-year term ended.

Rath is currently the managing director of NDDB, an organisation he joined in 2011 after taking premature retirement from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Holding a MA degree in economics from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Rath went on to complete MSc from the London School of Economics.

He joined the IAS in 1979 and served in different capacities under the state governments of West Bengal and Odisha. He was also the joint secretary in the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, GoI from 2008-10.

As a mission director of the National Dairy Plan (NDP), Rath is involved in project conceptualisation and formulation of NDP.

He was instrumental in implementing various schemes of the Central Government, viz.,

National Project on Cattle and Buffalo Breeding, Intensive Dairy Development Programme, Clean Milk Production, Assistance to Cooperatives, besides being the divisional head of 12 cattle development organizations under Central Government.

He was chairman of the Delhi Milk Scheme's management committee and was also responsible for monitoring country's milk situation in the context of inflation of essential commodities.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Food output to remain flat in 2015-16; commercial crops to dip



Fourth advance estimate pegs wheat production at 93.5 million tonnes

Reinforcing its earlier assessment, the Centre has pegged foodgrain production in the country at 252.22 million tonnes (mt) in 2015-16 in its fourth advance estimates — almost the same as 2014-15's (July-June) production of 252.02 mt.

Production of major commercial crops in 2015-16, including cotton, sugarcane and oilseeds, was lower than in the previous year, according to the fourth advance estimates.

While overall foodgrain production is the same in the fourth advance estimate as in the third estimate announced in May, there are small changes in individual projections for most major crops, including rice, wheat and pulses.

All foodgrain crops, with the exception of wheat and cereals, declined in 2015-16 compared with the previous year.



Cereals output

Rice production in 2015-16, at 104.32 mt, was lower than last year's 105.48 mt. Wheat production at 93.50 mt in 2015-16 was higher than the previous year's 88.94 mt.

Production of pulses was at 16.47 mt (17.15 mt).

Cereal production was higher at 235.76 mt compared with 234.87 mt the year before.

Production of jowar, bajra, maize, ragi, small millets and barley at 4.41 mt, 8.06 mt, 21.81 mt, 1.79 mt, 0.37 mt and 1.51 mt, respectively, in 2015-16 were all lower than the previous year.

Sugarcane production, as per the fourth estimate, at 3,521.63 lakh tonnes (lt), was lower than the previous year's production of 3,623.33 lt.

Cotton production was 301.47 lt (348.05 lt).

Oilseeds production, at 253.04 lt was also lower than the previous year's production at 275.11 lt.

CWC forecasts floods in Godavari, Krishna basins

Heavy to very heavy rains and isolated heavy rains for two more days in the catchments areas.

The Central Water Commission has forecast floods in Godavari and Krishna basins with heavy to very heavy rainfall likely over the next two days.

In an advisory forecast for flood in Godavari and Krishna basins issued on Tuesday at 1 p.m., the CWC has said that due to heavy to very heavy rains and isolated heavy rains for two more days in the catchments areas of these two basins in Maharashtra, the river levels are raising rapidly in the districts of Nashik, Ahmednagar, Pune, Satara, Sangli and Kolhapur districts.

Due to these rains, good flows are expected in Jaikwad dam in Aurangabad over the next 3 days.

In the case of Krishna river, the level in its upstream tributaries -- Panchganga, Dudhganga have been rising rapidly.

The rain continues to lash Mahabaleshwar, in Satara district, where Krishna originates. Due to heavy rains, the water level is rapidly increasing along its course in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh up to the Srisailem dam.

This is because most of the upstream dams are already full and they are set to release water downstream .

The CWC has called for a strict vigil at all the reservoirs which are full such as Almatti and Narayanpur dams in Karnataka, Priyadarshini Jurala in Telangana, and the Srisailem dam in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh.

The Srisailem dam is expected to receive good inflows over the next 4-7 days.

Cooking oils stay flat

Barring palmolein and cotton refined oil which gained 2 per 10 kg each, all other oils ruled unchanged. Firm futures and renewed demand kept the volume higher. Local refineries kept their rates steady.

Indigenous oils were showing a firm trend as arrivals eased due to good monsoon rains in producing States. Ruchi traded soyabean refined oil at 627, sunflower refined oil 718.

Allana's rates: palmolein 557, soya refined oil 628, sunflower refined oil 725. At Rajkot, groundnut oil declined by 10 to 2,150 for *telia* tin and was steady at 1,400 for loose (10 kg).

Business Standard

Blow to Monsanto as Indian farmers shift to indigenous seed

Sales of Bt cotton for Monsanto see almost 15% fall in 2016 as farmers chose 'desi' seed



Monsanto is displayed on a screen where the stock is traded on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. Photo: Reuters

In a tiny hamlet at the heart of the cotton belt in northern India, Ramandeep Mann planted Monsanto's genetically modified Bt cotton seed for over a decade, but that changed after a whitefly blight last year.

Mann's 25-acre farm in Punjab's Bhatinda district now boasts "desi", or indigenous, cotton shrubs that promise good yields and pest resistance at a fraction of the cost.

Mann is not alone.

Thousands of cotton farmers across the north of India, the world's biggest producer and second largest exporter of the fibre, have switched to the new local variety, spelling trouble for seed giant Monsanto in its most important cotton market outside the Americas.

The Indian government is actively promoting the new homegrown seeds, having already capped prices and royalties that the world's largest seed company is able to charge.

"Despite the whitefly attack, farmers in northern India are still interested in cotton, but they are moving to the desi (indigenous) variety," says Textile Commissioner Kavita Gupta.

Official estimates peg the area planted with the new variety at 72,280 hectares in northern India, up from roughly 3,000 hectares last year.

That is still a tiny percentage overall, and most farmers in the key producing states of Gujarat and Maharashtra are sticking to Monsanto's GM cotton, which has been instrumental in making India a cotton powerhouse.

And the impact of whitefly, a pest that thrives in dry weather, may not be as big this year, as monsoon rains are likely to be plentiful. Experts said two straight droughts fanned last year's infestation.

But the new seed is still a setback for Monsanto, which has also been hit by a roughly 10% decline in cotton acreage in India this year as farmers switch to crops like pulses and lentils in the aftermath of the whitefly blight.

Seed Sales Slide

Monsanto's Bt cotton sales in India have fallen 15% so far in 2016, said Kalyan Goswami, executive director of the National Seed Association of India.

The firm, which last year sold some 41 million packets of Bt seeds in India, could stand to lose up to Rs 500 crore (\$75 million) due to lower sales and the

steep cut in royalties enforced by the government earlier in 2016, according to Reuters calculations. The company, which unsuccessfully challenged India's decision to slash royalties in the courts, declined to comment for this article.

But in the wake of the whitefly infestation, Mahyco Monsanto Biotech (India) Pvt Ltd (MMB), a joint venture with India's Mahyco, said last year that Monsanto and its Indian licensees marketed their product as resistant to bollworms, not other pests.

Some experts were optimistic the indigenous cotton seeds developed by the Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), which comes under the farm ministry, would catch on over time.

"Just wait for the crucial three to four years to see a complete, natural turnaround. By then most farmers will give up Bt cotton and go for the indigenous variety," said Keshav Raj Kranthi, head of CICR. Kranthi said planting a hectare with the Indian variety cost less than half the 80,000 rupees farmers paid to sow Bt cotton over the same area, and the crop yield was almost as high.

Unlike GM seeds, farmers could also store and replant the local seeds the following year, he added.

Some experts voiced caution over the new variety, however.

"By all accounts, the indigenous cotton looks pretty promising, but it will be put to test this year," said Devinder Sharma, an independent food and trade policy analyst. "It's a potential game changer, but it has to succeed first."

Bollworms Reappear

Experts began raising doubts last year about the resilience of Monsanto's lab-altered Bt seeds, which still account for more than 90% of the cotton seeds sold in India.

Monsanto's Bollgard II technology, introduced in 2006, was slowly becoming vulnerable to bollworms, they said, as any technology has a limited shelf life.

Kranthi cited the increase in insecticide consumption as a sign of rising pink bollworm infestation.

In 2015 cotton farmers used an average 1.20 kg of insecticides per hectare, up from 0.5 in 2006, when Bt cotton seeds were at the pinnacle of their productivity.

Between 2006 and 2015, fertiliser consumption for the cotton crop doubled to 270 kg per hectare, said Kranthi, indicating rising costs of cultivation and stagnating yields of Bt cotton.

But the more pressing concern for many has been whitefly, with farmers like Mann answering the call from India's farm ministry and state agriculture universities to switch to local seeds to fight it.

"The only other option we had this year was to plant the Bt cotton again or leave the land fallow. Both were fraught with economic risk, and to obviate that risk we decided to plant the desi (indigenous) variety," he said.

Indian Bank June quarter net profit surges 43% to Rs 307 cr

Initiatives to reduce cost, improve other income improved profit, says MD & CEO



Indian Bank has posted a growth of 42.77 per cent in net profit for the quarter ended June 30, 2016, at Rs 307.36 crore as against Rs 215.27 crore net profit registered during the same quarter of previous fiscal year.

Total income saw a marginal increase to Rs 4,512.96 crore during the quarter, as compared to Rs 3,394.53 crore during the corresponding quarter of previous year.

Announcing the financial results of the first quarter of the fiscal year, Mahesh Kumar Jain, managing director and CEO of Indian Bank said that the lender has been taking various initiatives to reduce the cost and improve the other income, which has reflected in the growth in profit.

The interest expense on deposits has come down, due to shifting the strategies, not only by shedding the high cost deposits, but also by shifting the mix of the deposits.

The bank is focusing on CASA and retail deposits and less reliance on the higher deposits.

At the beginning of current fiscal year, it announced its strategy to be positioned as a mid-sized bank with focus on retail and mid-corporate segment.

"During the remaining two quarters, there will be around Rs 50,000 crore of deposits which will get repriced, which was taken at previously at higher rate. In the times to come, we are expecting an improvement there," he said.

The bank has posted quarter after quarter improvement in the treasury profit and an improvement in the other income related to the credit related or non-credit related processing fee.

Treasury income is mainly from sale of trading profit. This quarter, the bank has got around Rs 180 crore from trading profit. The bank has shifted the treasury to Mumbai during the quarter.

"Moving forward for sustaining the operating and the net profit, we are taking care to reduce the cost under each component and improving the income in every component.

That is our strategy. We have to prevent the slippages and recover the existing NPAs," he said.

During the quarter ended June 30, 2016, gross NPAs stood at Rs 8,894.23 crore (6.97 per cent of the gross advances), as compared to Rs 5,815.14 crore (4.65 per cent) during the corresponding quarter of previous year.

Net NPAs stood at Rs 5,552.04 crore (4.48 per cent) during the quarter, compared to Rs 3,193.29 crore (2.62 per cent).

The bank has seen fresh slippage of Rs 825 crore, of which around Rs 100 crore has been from the existing NPAs and

around 60 per cent of the slippages of the remaining Rs 725 crore is because of the small ticket loans such as agriculture loans, MSME and personal loans.

"Only 40 per cent, around Rs 350 crore was from the large ticket advances.

There is no high slippages comparing industry and economy trend," he said, adding that there cannot be a situation where NPAs come down, unless and until there is an improvement in the economy and the recovery.

In its NPA accounts, Iron and steel (which is around Rs 3,000 crore), Infrastructure (around Rs 1,300 crore), which includes Power sector of Rs 637 crore are the major sectors, he said.

Textiles, all engineering and mining are the other top sectors in the NPA, he added.

The Bank, which has disbursed Rs 400 crore as education loan last year, is targeting a similar disbursement in the category during this year.

IMD sees 'above normal' rains for Aug-Sept

Southwest monsoon likely to be 107% of long-period average; augurs well for farmers



The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday retained its earlier forecast of 'above normal' rains during the four-month season of monsoon that started in June. The Met Office also said rains during August and September would be 'above normal'. This could boost both kharif and rabi crops, which would not only push up economic growth but also pull down food inflation.

The Met Office maintains its June forecast for overall showers to be 106 per cent of the long-period average (LPA). It also said rains during August and September would be at 107 per cent of LPA. LPA is the average rainfall of the last 50 years, estimated at 89 cm.

The Met Office said the forecast for August and September is with an error margin of eight per cent.

The latest update means there is a strong possibility of the rains making a delayed withdrawal.

This would not only aid kharif planting but also leave enough residual moisture in the soil for a bumper rabi harvest. Already, sowing of kharif crops in the first two months of this year's monsoon season has crossed last year's level.

The southwest monsoon is the lifeline of the country's agriculture sector since two-thirds of cultivable land is still unirrigated.

Although the share of agriculture has come down in the overall gross domestic product (GDP), it still employs the largest rural folk.

With the urban demand likely to pick up from implementation of the 7th Pay Commission, rural demand might give further boost to India's GDP, estimated at 7-7.75 per cent this financial year, against 7.6 per cent a year ago.

Despite two years of back-to-back drought, agriculture growth was 1.2 per cent in 2015-16, against contraction of 0.2 per cent in the previous year.

The rains might also bring down the current pressure on inflation in food items. Retail price index-based food inflation rose to 7.79 per cent in June, against 7.47 per cent in May.

India gets 43.5 centimetres of rainfall during August and September, which is 49 per cent of the LPA.

The Met Office kept unchanged its projections for full season rainfall — from June to September — at 106 per cent of the LPA. This forecast was made in June.

IMD classifies rains between 105 and 110 per cent of the LPA as 'above normal', while that between 96 and 104 per cent of the LPA is categorised 'normal'. Showers between 90 and 95 per cent of LPA are called 'below normal'.

APMC delisting: Vegetables price crash as farmers sell directly to consumers

Bitter gourd leads decline as green veggies nosedive up to 50% on Maharashtra's move to delist them from spot mandis



Vegetables price have plunged in Mumbai over the past two weeks, on a sudden increase in direct supply from farmers to retailers and bulk consumers, following the state government's removal of the legal compulsion for farmers to sell only at regulated wholesale markets (mandis).

Prices of green vegetables have fallen up to 53 per cent since July 15. The delisting of fruit and vegetables from mandis was announced in early July.

Normally, during the monsoon, vegetable supply gets interrupted due to slow harvesting in muddy fields, non-availability or delay in transport and fear of high spoilage.

Since the normal seasonal vegetables are harvested in August, the pre-season sown crop with mechanised irrigation facility is hitting the mandis, especially in Maharashtra.

“Farmers turned entrepreneurs for the first time to sell their vegetables directly to consumers.

They bring truckloads directly to consumer centres and sell directly, ignoring the middlemen,” said Shri Ram Gadhave, president, Vegetable Growers Association of India.

Middlemen say they aren’t perturbed, pointing to the slump in prices as evidence.

“Arhatiyas (middle agents) are an integral part of the trade system, as they release the quantity as required; they hold farm output for another day.

Farmers would not have such a carryover system.

Hence, farmers would not be able to execute direct sales for long.

And, unlike arhatiyas, no one would extend farmers the monetary support for their needs.

Hence, they’d have to come back to us,” said Sanjay Bhujbal, a vegetables trader in at the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC)-run mandi at Vashi, Navi Mumbai.

In January this year, the central government had proposed that state governments delist fruits and vegetables from the ambit of the APMC law.

Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka accepted earlier; Maharashtra followed suit in July.

PRICE MOVEMENTS

In cold storage (₹/quintal)

■ Delhi ■ Mumbai

Particulars	Jul-15	Aug-02	Chg (%)
Brinjal round	1,875	1,175	-37.3
	1,500	1,000	-33.3
Cauliflower	4,523	2,428	-46.3
	1,600	1,200	-25.0
Onion	912	900	-1.3
	1,000	900	-10.0
Peas	8,250	7,750	-6.1
	7,500	4,800	-36.0
Potato	1,650	1,937	17.4
	1,800	1,600	-11.1
Tomato local	2,767	1,900	-31.3
	650	900	38.5

Source: National Horticulture Board; Compiled by BS Research Bureau

Vegetable prices in Delhi and Kolkata have remained elevated, on the whole; July is a lean season for new arrivals.

In Delhi, daily arrival of for example, arrivals of okra (bhindi) declined to 76 tonnes on August 2 from 166 tonnes on July 15.

That of bitter gourd was 34 tonnes on August 2, from 83 tonnes two weeks earlier.

India's 2015/16 grains output 4.5% lower than govt target

Two years of drought shrivelled crops



India is likely to produce 252.22 million tonnes of grains in 2015/16, 4.5% lower than a target set by New Delhi,

the government said in its latest estimate on Tuesday, as two years of drought shrivelled crops.

The output for the year to June 2016 is marginally higher than 252.02 million tonnes of grains produced in 2014/15.

The farm ministry updates food production estimates as it gathers data on the progress of planting in the country.

This is the final estimate for the 2015/16 crop year.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Solar project hits snag in Bengaluru as farmers refuse to give land



The 2,000MW Pavagada Solar Park—which is being set up on 12,000 acres of land—has hit a hurdle with farmers refusing to give up land for drawing transmission lines.

"We are finding it difficult to get right of way corridors (the area between two transmission towers) required to lay transmission lines.

There are nine towers to be installed to ensure connectivity between the solar power production plant near Pavagada and the grid, but landowners are opposing the move, citing the diminution value of the land below the transmission lines.

They have been demanding higher compensation for the proposed Right Of Way (ROW) corridors," an energy department official told TOI.

The Pavagada project in Tumakuru district is the largest solar power generation plant in the country. Of the 2,000 MW, the National Thermal Power Corporation will develop 1,600MW.

Karnataka will get 500MW power in the first phase from September 2017 and the power will be shared among the five Escoms. But with farmers demanding higher compensation, work on the solar project reportedly slowed down in recent times.

The issue came up during the review meeting that energy minister DK Shiva Kumar had with deputy commissioners on Tuesday. The minister said: "The Centre has issued guidelines for payment of compensation for damages on ROW, it has to be calculated on the basis of the land category. We have told deputy commissioners to convene a meeting with the landowners, convince them about the compensation package and close the issue at the earliest."

Omega-3 fatty acids good for heart attack patients



Omega-3 fatty acids good for heart attack patients (Getty Images)

Omega-3 fatty acids from fish oil have some anti-inflammatory properties which allows the heart to contract better and reduces the fibrosis in the undamaged muscle, a new study has revealed.

According to the study, published in the journal *Circulation*, giving heart attack patients a high dose of omega-3 fatty acids daily for six months after a heart attack can improve its functioning.

A previous study found that omega-3 fatty acids from fish oil were associated with improved survival for heart attack patients but the role of omega-3 fatty acids in improving the structure and tissue of the heart in patients receiving current guideline-based therapy after a heart attack was unknown.

The study involved 360 heart attack survivors, half were given a high dose omega-3 fatty acids and half placebo, beginning within a month of the heart attack.

Because the study participants were given high doses of omega-3s in addition to their other medications, patients were under a physician's care and observed for any potential adverse outcomes.

The researchers found that compared to those taking a placebo, patients taking a dose of 4 grams of omega-3 fatty acids daily for six months experienced a 5.8 per cent reduction

in left ventricular end-systolic volume index and had a 5.6 per cent reduction in a measurement of scarred connective tissue (fibrosis) formation in the non-damaged heart muscle.

"Heart failure is still a major problem after a heart attack despite all the therapy we have and the advances in interventional care.

Our findings show that omega-3 fatty acids are a safe and effective treatment in improving cardiac remodeling,

so it may be promising in reducing the incidence of heart failure or death," said Raymond Y. Kwong, Associate Professor, Harvard Medical School.

50 farmers visit PAU for exposure



The directorate of extension education, Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), conducted an exposure visit of 50 young farmers under young farmer's training course.

The visit was organized under the guidance of Dr R S Sidhu, director of extension education, PAU.

Coordinator Dr T S Riar highlighted the role of PAU in development of agriculture.

The farmers visited the Centre for Communication and International Linkages, Farmer's Service Centre, beekeeping unit, mushroom unit, vegetable research farm and new orchard of the university.

The experts apprised farmers about PAU farm publications, PAU's extension mechanism, technology dissemination to farmers, beekeeping practices, mushroom cultivation, and vegetable and fruit cultivation. Tnn

Farmers warn traders to stop onion auction in gunny bags



Farmers on Monday gave a three-day ultimatum to the traders and the agriculture produce market committees (APMC) to start onion auction in a loose format, instead of gunny bags.

Farmers said they will stop onion auction at the country's largest wholesale onion market at Lasalgaon and Pimpalgaon APMCs from Wednesday if the traders did not start auction of loose onions.

They are up in arms against the gunny bags as they are incurring additional expenses on these.

Farmers from Niphad, which houses the Lasalgaon and Pimpalgaon wholesale onion markets, met sub-divisional magistrate of the tehsil and presented him a memorandum seeking commencement of loose onion auction.

Nanasaheb Patil, a member of the joint action group of farmers, said, "Onion auction was held in loose or unpacked form before July 9. Now, the APMCs have started onion auction in gunny bags following demands from the traders.

Such an auction in gunny bags has led to additional expenses for the farmers.

The other APMCs called off strike and immediately started auction after the government assured of amendments in the GR of delisting vegetables and fruits from the APMC Act by August 6."

"At this juncture, the traders should have shown maturity. However, they did not start onion auction in a loose format. The APMC also allowed onion auction in gunny bags without holding discussions with the farmers," he said.

"Hence, we have given an ultimatum to the traders and APMC management to stop onion auction in gunny bags and regularise the process as earlier in loose or unpacked format. We will halt onion auction at Lasasgaon APMC from Wednesday if the traders and APMC management fail to take cognizance," he added.

"Onion prices have already declined a lot. At this juncture, onion auction in gunny bags is causing an additional expense of Rs 70 per quintal.

How will the farmers survive if they are trapped by the traders as well as APMCs? We will launch a severe agitation if auction of onions is not started in the loose format," said Nivrutti Nyaharkar, Nashik divisional president of Jai Kisan Farmers' Forum.

The government has decided to delist vegetables and fruits from the APMC Act and recovery of 6% commission from traders, instead of farmers. The traders had gone on a strike from July 9. On July 26, they called off the strike and readied for onion auction in gunny bags, instead of open auction.

Earlier, the farmers would pay 6% commission to agents, who facilitate accounts and payment between them and the traders. But the government has decided that the commission should be paid by the buyers and not the farmers.

LKVS, in turn, commenced auction of agricultural produce in a private market parallel to the Lasalgaon APMC on Monday, with the backing of the cooperative department.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Foodgrain output up despite low rains



Total oilseeds production in the country during 2015-16 is estimated at 25.30 million tonnes compared to 27.51 million tonnes.

NEW DELHI: India's foodgrain production increased marginally to 252.22 million tonnes in the 2015-16 crop year (July-June), as per the fourth advance estimates, despite setback due to deficient rainfall and shortage of water in reservoirs.

Production of rice, wheat, coarse cereals, pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane, cotton and jute was lower due to erratic rainfall during the 2015 monsoon season.

As per the data given out by the Agriculture ministry, the total foodgrain production in the country has been higher than that in the last year.

The total foodgrain production during 2015-16, is estimated at 252.22 million tonnes compared to 252.23 million tonnes as per the third advance estimate.

In 2014-15, total food grain production was 252.02 million tonnes and 2013-14 was 265.04 million tonnes.

Rice production during 2015-16 is estimated at 104.32 million tonnes, compared to 103.36 million tonnes in the third advance estimate and 105.48 million tonnes during 2014-15.

Production of wheat is estimated at 93.50 million tonnes, compared to 94.04 million tonnes in third advance and 86.53 million tonnes in 2014-15.

Total production of coarse cereals is estimated at 37.94 million tonnes compared to 37.78 million tonnes in the third advance estimate and 42.86 million tonnes during 2014-15.

Output of pulses is estimated at 16.47 million tonnes during 2015-16, marginally lower than the previous year's production of 17.15 million tonnes.

Total oilseeds production in the country during 2015-16 is estimated at 25.30 million tonnes compared to 27.51 million tonnes.

Production of sugarcane estimated at 352.16 million tonnes, is lower than its production during 2014-15 which was at 362.33 million tonnes.

Pulses output down 4% in 2015-16, foodgrains slightly up



Coarse cereals production is estimated to have declined to 37.94 million tonnes in 2015-16 from 42.86 million tonnes in the previous year.

NEW DELHI: Higher output of wheat helped India's foodgrain production to increase marginally to 252.22 million tonnes in the crop year ended June, despite setbacks due to deficient rainfall and a shortage of water in reservoirs, according to the government's latest estimates.

Production of rice, coarse cereals, pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane, cotton and jute was lower due to erratic rainfall during the 2015 monsoon season, the Ministry of Agriculture said in its fourth advance estimates of major crops.

Total foodgrain production is estimated at 252.22 million tonnes during 2015-16 compared with 252.02 million tonnes in 2014-15. The figure was little changed from 252.23 million tonnes as per the third advance estimate in May.

India had two consecutive years of below-normal rainfall, hurting farmers in many parts of the country who rely on the monsoon to water their crops. The weather office has predicted an above-normal monsoon this year.

Production of wheat is estimated at 93.5 million tonnes in 2015-16, an 8% increase from 86.53 million tonnes in 2014-15.

Rice output is expected to have fallen 1.1% to 104.32 million tonnes from 105.48 million tonnes a year earlier.

Total production of coarse cereals is pegged at 37.94 million tonnes compared with 42.86 million tonnes.

Output of pulses is estimated at 16.47 million tonnes, lower than the previous year's 17.15 million tonnes.

Total oilseed production dropped to 25.3 million tonnes from 27.51 million tonnes.

Production of sugarcane is estimated to have declined to 352.16 million tonnes from 362.33 million tonnes.

Cotton output likely fell to 30.15 million bales (of 170 kg each) from 34.8 million bales.

Sugarcane arrears at Rs 5,695 crore in current season



The Centre has taken several steps to help the sugar industry resolve the liquidity problems and facilitate clearance of cane price arrears of farmers.

NEW DELHI: Sugar mills owe Rs 5,695 crore dues to cane growers so far in the 2015-16 marketing year ending next month, Parliament was informed today.

As per the data placed by Minister of State for Food C R Chaudhary before the Lok Sabha, sugarcane dues of Rs 5,695.15 crore are outstanding against the sugar mills as on July 27 of of the 2015-16 season (October-September).

Of the total cane arrears, private sugar mills owe maximum dues of Rs 4,375.29 crore, followed by cooperatives at Rs 1,212.28 crore and public mills at Rs 107.58 crore in the said period.

In a written reply to the Lower House, the Minister said the financial health of sugar mills has been "adversely affected" due to surplus production during last four consecutive sugar seasons.

The Centre has taken several steps to help the sugar industry resolve the liquidity problems and facilitate clearance of cane price arrears of farmers, he added.

Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) has requested the Centre to adopt a rationalised cane price policy linking cane price to sugar rate.

"The request of ISMA has been forwarded to state government for their consideration/adoption," he said.

Sugar production is estimated to be lower at 25.1 million tonnes in the 2015-16 season from 28.3 million tonnes in the previous year.

Agri production on rise despite fall in cultivable area: Government

Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh told the Lok Sabha that state governments have to take suitable measures to check diversion of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes.

NEW DELHI: The government today said agricultural production has been increasing even though cultivable area has seen a marginal decline.

Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh told the Lok Sabha that state governments have to take suitable measures to check diversion of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes while Centre is taking steps to increase the cultivable area.



"Despite marginal decline in the cultivable area, the agricultural production in the country has been increasing except in the years affected by drought, floods and other natural calamities," Singh said during Question Hour.

The average area under cultivation declined to 181.713 million hectares in 2013-14 compared to 182.209 million hectares during the period from 2007-08 to 2011-12, according to official data.

As per Agriculture Census data for 2010-11, the average size of operational holding of land has declined from 1.33 hectares in 2000-01 to 1.15 hectares in 2010-11.

According to him, various crop development schemes and programmes are being implemented to boost agricultural production and productivity of agricultural crops.

Among others, the government is implementing the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) to prevent soil erosion and land degradation.

"Under this Mission, all type of land including waste land/barren land are developed with suitable need-based soil and water conservation measures and partly such degraded lands developed are put to agriculture uses," the Minister said.

Group Personal Accident Insurance Scheme for small tea growers receives good response



The sum insured per person is Rs 2 lakh and the cover will be effective for a period of one year, from the date of receipt of premium by the insurance company selected for this purpose.

KOLKATA: The Group Personal Accident Insurance Scheme for small tea growers launched by Tea Board has received good response among the small tea growers of Assam and other northeastern states, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and many other regions of India. Tea garden workers throughout India within the age group of 18 to 70 years, and falling under the ambit of small tea growers are eligible for the Scheme.

The sum insured per person is Rs 2 lakh and the cover will be effective for a period of one year, from the date of receipt of premium by the insurance company selected for this purpose. The Oriental Insurance Company has been identified to administer the group insurance scheme.

The premium is Rs. 14/- per person per annum, out of which 75% will be borne by the Tea Board while the rest 25% i.e. Rs. 3.50/- will be the workers' contribution. The Insurance scheme provides compensation in the event of the insured sustaining bodily injuries resulting solely and directly from accident caused by external, violent and visible means resulting in death or disablement.

Tea Board has launched this insurance scheme as per the XII Plan scheme guidelines under the component Small Tea Growers Development for extending support for the welfare of the tea garden workers.