06.08.2016

THE HINDU

Suvarna Krishi Grama Yojane launched

The State government has, in collaboration with International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), launched an ambitious project, Suvarna Krishi Grama Yojane, in 105 villages in the first phase to increase the income of farmers by at least 20 per cent in one year through augmented productivity, diversification and market linkages.

According to sources in ICRISAT, based at Pattancheru on the outskirts of Hyderabad in Telangana State, the ultimate aim of the project was to cover at least 1,000 villages in the State. The new initiative by the Karnataka Government and ICRISAT would ensure a big transformation in the life of the farming community and help achieve the objective of increasing agricultural productivity.

By actively involving the community in the scheme, officials in the ICRISAT said, the objective was to transform villages by developing an impact-oriented participatory model using state-of-the-art technologies.

This model can be scaled up for more integrated and sustainable rural development in the State in phases. A comprehensive approach will be taken by promoting Inclusive Market Oriented Development (IMOD).

‘Focus on less water-intensive paddy cultivation practices’

In the wake of low water storage in Bhadra reservoir, the Bhadra Command Area Development Authority (CADA) and Department of Agriculture have planned to launch a campaign to create awareness among farmers in the command area on the judicious utilisation of water for cultivation of paddy.

K. Madhusudan, joint director, Department of Agriculture, has said that paddy was so far grown under traditional semi-aquatic and water-intensive methods in the command area of Bhadra reservoir. Under this, the water is made to flood the fields.

Drop in supply

The availability of water in Bhadra reservoir for agriculture has fallen owing to scanty rainfall in catchment areas and an increase in the number of human habitats dependent on the reservoir for drinking water. In the wake of these developments, it was necessary to re-contemplate on the existing paddy cultivation practices .

At present, 32 tmcft water is stored in Bhadra reservoir of which 13 tmcft is considered as dead storage and 7 tmcft is reserved for drinking purposes. It is possible to release water for kharif crops for nearly 35 days along the canals with the remaining 12 tmcft water.

The CADA, optimistic that the monsoon will become more active in the catchment areas of the reservoir in the coming days, has assured the farmers that they would get water for 100 days.

Other methods

Mr. Madhusudan said that it was necessary to create awareness among farmers on System of Rice Intensification (SRI) and other methods of cultivating paddy without flooding the fields.

Rather than keeping the field flooded, the farmers can provide water for the plants once a week. This will result in minimisation of anaerobic conditions and will pave the way for healthy growth of the roots. Instead of raising the nurseries of paddy seedlings on to fields that require more water, the farmers can opt for the tray method. The machines can be used for transplantation of paddy saplings to ensure proper spacing.

By adopting these practices, the water requirement for paddy cultivation can be reduced by 50 per cent compared to the traditional method, he said.

The CADA and the department will organise two seminars each in rural areas of Shivamogga and Davangere districts this month on the economic utilisation of water.

In addition to this, it has been decided to raise a demonstration plot on the cultivation of paddy under less water-intensive methods at the main campus of

UAHS, Shivamogga, and on the premises of Agricultural and Horticultural Research Station in Kattalagere in Davangere district, Honnavile in Shivamogga district and Bhavikere in Chikkamagaluru district.

The Bhadra CADA and the department will bring the farmers to these plots to sensitise them on the less water-intensive methods, he said.

PMFBY: Enrolment date extended till August 10

The Centre has decided to extend the last date to August 10 for enrolling in Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, aimed at enabling farmers to avail insurance cover against crop loss due to natural calamities.

The last date for enrolling as member of the Yojana was July 31 and it has been extended to August 10, Union Minister for Agriculture Radha Mohan Singh told reporters during a video press conference from New Delhi.

Mr. Singh wanted all states to co-operate in implementing the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), which was introduced in January last.

The government's objective is to increase the number of insured farmers from the present 20 per cent to 50 per cent in the next two to three years time, he said.

Lowest premium

Mr. Singh said the scheme would enable farmers to have a crop insurance by paying the lowest premium.

The balance premium amount would be borne by the Centre and states. Farmers would get full financial security. There would be no capping on the premium rates and no reduction in the sum, he said.

A total of 22 states have come forward to implement the scheme. An amount of Rs. 5,500 crore has been earmarked for the scheme in the 2016-17 budget for the scheme, he said.

For foodgrains, pulses and oilseeds, there will be one season and one premium rate for farmers under the scheme.

Different rates for different crops for different districts, which was prevailing earlier, have been removed, Mr. Singh said.

Coverage for natural disasters

For the first time, risk of post harvest losses upto 14 days occurring due to cyclone, non-seasonal rain and local calamities such as hailstorm and landslips have been included for coverage across the country, he said.

To a question, Mr. Singh said in Kerala, the process of implementing the scheme was on and the response of the state government was very good.

The tender process to select the insurance company to implement the scheme in Kerala was completed in June, he said.

Smartphones will be used to capture and upload data of crop cutting to reduce delays in claim payment to farmer and to check misuse of the scheme, the

Union Minister said, adding the claim amount would be transferred through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

Crop insurance deadline extended

Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh on Friday said that his Ministry has decided to extend the July 31 cut-off date for submission of proposals for the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bhima Yojana up to August 10.

Five more days

It will apply to all states except Tamil Nadu and Kerala, which will have another five more days.

Mr. Singh speaking at an interaction via video link from Delhi said, “The Agriculture Ministry considers Tamil Nadu and Kerala to be special cases because of the timing of holding Assembly elections earlier this year.”

Farmers seek Turmeric Research Station in Erode

Farmers in Erode desire rejuvenation of local economy through establishment of a Turmeric Research Centre in the district.

Turmeric is one of the major crops cultivated in over 6,000 hectares in the district, and an exclusive research centre by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) will well befit description of Erode as ‘Turmeric Capital’ of India, farmers say.

As much as 25 per cent of turmeric produced in the country is auctioned at four centres in the district: At Karumandisellipalayam run by Perundurai Regulated Market, at Semmampalayam market run by Turmeric Traders-cum-Godown Owners’ Association under supervision of Erode Regulated Market Committee, at Karunkalpalayam run by Erode Agricultural Producers Cooperative Marketing Society, and at Manikoondu run by Gobi Agricultural Producers' Cooperative Marketing Society.

Support

Both producers and traders have been emphasising on a strong support system for sorting, grading and value addition for export of turmeric. So far, progressive farmers have been taking the help of Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysuru.

The institute had, during 2014, developed a cost and time-saving technology for processing turmeric. Tamil Nadu Agricultural University's Bhavani Sagar Research Station has also been focussing on turmeric among other crops. Research on rapid multiplication technique in turmeric at Bhavani Sagar Station is one of the thrust areas.

The research station had released two varieties: Turmeric BSR 1, during 1986 with curcumin content of 4.2% and Turmeric BSR 2 during 1994 with resistance to scale insects and curcumin content of 4.6 per cent.

Nevertheless, an exclusive research station of ICAR for turmeric in Erode district is a necessity for infusion of higher technology and utilisation of better seed varieties for better productivity and quality.

The crop requires expert handling in stages after harvest: boiling, curing, drying, polishing, colouring, grading and storage.

Growers only separate fingers from the bulbs and do not grade the produce. Importing countries insist on botanical identity, appearance, maturity, hardness, weight, length and thickness, shade and intensity of internal colour, pungency and bitterness, odour and flavour and other considerations.

There are several parameters to be followed before exporting. A research station will be the solution to provide farmers with the expertise to soft and grade the products, Logusamy, organising secretary of Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam said.

The ICAR, sources said, is contemplating establishing a Turmeric Research Station at Kodumudi in a joint venture with Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

Farm university launches course for input dealers

University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur, has launched the Diploma in Agricultural Extension Services for Input Dealers (DAESI) course. The course is offered at nine colleges that fall under the university across Hyderabad Karnataka region, including two on the main campus here.

Addressing the inaugural event at the auditorium of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, P.M. Salimath, Vice-Chancellor of the university, said that the course would help create skilled manpower to fill the widening gap between agriculture extension and agriculture research. “The area of agriculture extension is suffering with lack of skilled manpower while the area of agricultural research is doing fairly well. Creation of skilled workforce in the field of extension would facilitate quick transfer of advanced technologies to the farming community,” he said.

Kurma Rao, Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Panchayat, who inaugurated the event, said, “Farming sector has seen a sea change over the last couple of decades. Traditional crops have rapidly been replaced by newer crop verities that are resilient to climatic change and resistant to pests as well as being high yielding. Even traditional farming methods are also replaced by modern methods that have incorporated advanced technologies.

“The process could be even faster provided the knowledge about newer technologies is quickly imparted to the farming community. The course would help this happen.”

S.K. Meti, Director of Extension, said that the spread of knowledge about agricultural technologies could be more effective only when dealers of farm inputs too join hands with the agricultural universities in the task of knowledge dissemination among the farming community.

Kiran Kumar, Joint Director of Agriculture, Pramod Katti, Nodal Officer for DAESI Programme, Amaresh Y.S., and Programme Coordinator, home scientist M.R. Kammar were present.

Farmers demand minimum support price for coconut

Coconut growers led by Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam staging a demonstration in Dharmapuri on Friday.-Photo: N. Bashkaran

The Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam staged a novel 'coconut breaking' protest demanding support price for coconuts here on Friday. The protest, organised as part of the State-wide demonstration, demanded that the government outline a minimum support price for coconuts and take up procurement of coconuts directly from growers.

The CPM affiliated farmers' association also called upon the government to implement M.S.Swaminathan committee recommendations while determining the minimum support price for agricultural produce.

The fall in the price of coconuts has adversely affected coconut growers in the State. According to the protesters, the price of peeled coconut was between Rs.2.75 and Rs.3.50 leaving farmers in the lurch.

According to the protesters, Kerala government procured coconuts at Rs.25 per kilogram from the farmers.

The government should provide minimum support price and procure coconuts at Rs. 25 per kilogram on the lines of Kerala, the farmers association has demanded.

To call attention to their grievance, coconut growers who had converged outside BSNL office here, broke coconuts one after the other.

Retrofitting the Reserve Bank

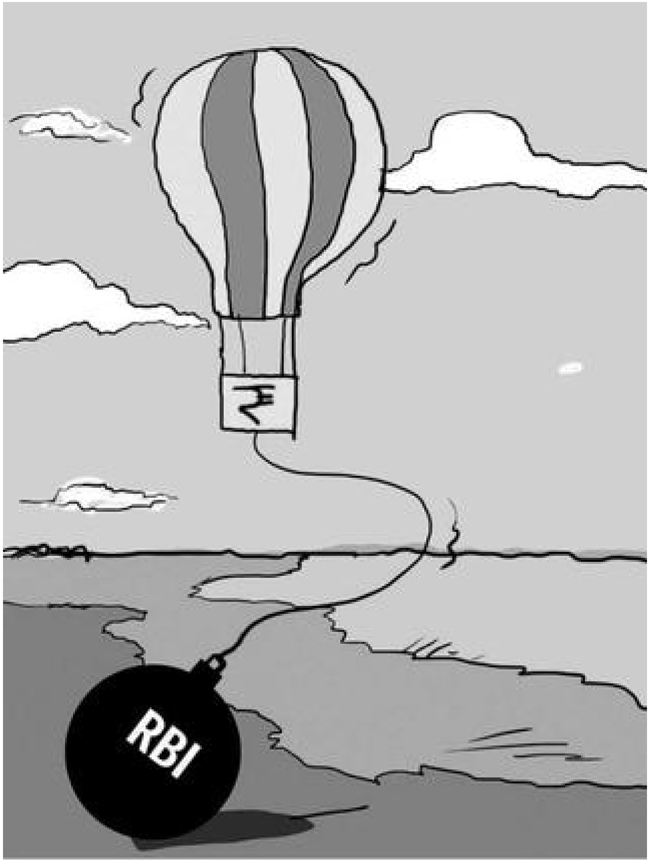


ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN

By suggesting that inflation targeting be the sole objective of monetary policy in India, the government has also shut out of the reckoning an assault on India's weak agricultural supply-side

John Maynard Keynes was surely right to remark that the world is ruled by ideas and little else. But he may have been optimistic in believing that "soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil." Actually, vested interests can ensure that ideas prevail even when they are meant to serve some sectional interests at the cost of others. To those convinced of the infallibility of the principles governing the creation of wealth, it must come as a surprise that some of what is often considered knowledge in the context may be contested on perfectly reasonable grounds or, worse still to their likely horror, merely reflects the interests of certain parties to the transaction, so to speak. This is certainly true of the reigning view of the role of the central bank. Central banks are pivotal to the economic system and all countries have them. Our own Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is widely admired as arguably the last institution standing up to the machinations of the political class. It has certainly helped that every Indian to have headed it has represented the highest traditions of public service and personal integrity. Persons apart, however, a certain degree of morphing of the RBI has occurred of late, some of it deliberately intended and some of it perhaps in the form of collateral damage.

The scope of inflation targeting

The Finance Bill, 2016 has finally succeeded in making inflation targeting the sole objective of monetary policy. As monetary policy is the central bank's prerogative, the move may be welcomed as signalling a newly minted and wholehearted commitment to inflation control which is now privileged over all other objectives. It, however, overlooks two possibilities that are surely of relevance in the context. First, whether the focus on inflation may imply a loss in certain other areas of the economy. And, second, whether inflation is fully within the its control anyway. Each of these considerations poses substantial questions.

The issue germane to the first is whether focussing on inflation can lead to preventing a rise in employment. In economies with unemployed resources, an increase in aggregate demand may be expected to lead to a rise in output and a rise in prices if there is a shortage of some inputs into production. In India the rise in prices is usually that of food, some items which have been perennially in short supply, the case of pulses and vegetables coming to mind immediately. Note that the increase in output may be expected to lead to an increase in employment as goods require labour for their production. Thus we have an increase in output, employment and prices. In a situation of ongoing inflation, we may even witness a rise in its rate. The question now is how to deal with the rise in prices. This can be done via one of two approaches.

Under so-called inflation targeting the central bank raises the rate of interest. When this is passed on by the commercial banks, it reduces the demand for credit, lowers investment and output growth. There is a concomitant reduction in the demand for labour and the offending material inputs whose price rise constituted the inflation. Inflation is now likely to reduce. But notice the accompanying reduction in output. Supporters of inflation targeting argue that the initial spurt in output would not have been sustainable anyway as in the 'long run' workers will withdraw labour when they find that inflation has eroded the real value of their wages. This claim is sustained by ruling out involuntary employment, defined as a situation where workers are ready to work at the given money wage but do not find jobs. In its essence, the policy of inflation targeting assumes that the economy is always at full employment, or the 'natural rate' in the modern economist's vocabulary. In this account fully-employed workers offer more labour as inflation rises only because they mistake an increase in their money wage for a rise in its purchasing power — that is, they are unaware of the inflation. This suggests a certain credulousness among workers who, one would imagine, visit the bazaar on their way home from work in the evenings. It is only by insisting that inflation always and everywhere reflects employment having overshot its natural rate that the claim of no loss in welfare due to tight monetary policy can be sustained.

Importance of supply position

It should be clear by now that inflation targeting by the central bank can stem inflation due to supply shortages only by restricting demand. This entails welfare loss as employment is thereby reduced. So, how are we to deal with the inflation of the type described above, which I suggest is typical of India today? It can only be tackled via an expansion of the supply shortfall through either imports or increased production. We would then have tackled inflation at source — that is, directly, not indirectly, by restricting aggregate demand, as under a policy of inflation targeting. As a defence of the latter is offered the idea that the central bank can influence inflation expectations by signalling its intent to lower inflation in the future. But why should agents buy this when they know that the bank cannot influence the food supply, which is the source of inflation? Their expectation of inflation is likely to remain high if they do not perceive in the offing a radical change in the supply position.

By suggesting via the Finance Bill now that inflation targeting becomes the sole objective of monetary policy in India, the Government of India has not just oversimplified the problem of inflation control, it has also shut out of the reckoning an assault on India's weak agricultural supply-side. The importance of a strong supply position in combatting inflation can be seen from the history of the U.S. and the U.K. in the last four decades. Following the oil price hikes of the 1970s, these economies went into overdrive in reducing their dependence on imported oil, the price of which could be manipulated by a cartel such as OPEC. This was achieved through a combination of supply and demand-side measures. The U.K. was lucky in striking oil in the North Sea while the U.S. developed an alternative to crude oil from shale. What is less well known is that there has also been a concerted conservation drive, something that we have not seriously attempted as India's politicians are reluctant to propose any form of belt-tightening.

Far from being an open-and-shut case then, the adoption of inflation targeting as the sole objective of the RBI is contestable in ways that have been indicated here. It also ignores a serious lesson from the recent global financial crisis, which is that an inflation-targeting central bank can lose control of the financial system. This, after all, was what had happened in the U.S. that had enjoyed a "great moderation" of inflation even as banks were generating toxic assets with the capacity of dragging the system down. It is not sufficiently recognised that at least some part of the present problem of non-performing assets in India is related to poor lending by the nationalised banking sector at a time when inflation was considered to be under control. If a central bank is to have responsibility for financial stability, and this was the original task assigned to it, its focus cannot be exclusively on inflation. In India the Financial Stability and Development Council has taken the task of financial regulation outside the RBI. This is unwise, as the interest rate mechanism can prove to be a double-edged sword. While it may curb inflation when raised, it may at the same time threaten financial stability by tipping indebted entities into insolvency. There is no case for monetary policy and financial regulation to be under the same authority.

Factor in the vested interests

But what about the vested interests that I started out talking about? They are present as follows. Inflation lowers the real value of fixed-income securities referred to as 'bonds'. Bond holders thus face 'inflation risk'. As the total value of these securities rises in an economy, a vested interest in keeping inflation low emerges. Wall Street in the U.S. is the archetype here. Its interests are not that of the American worker — that is, it only cares about the real value of the financial wealth it manages. It is also powerful, reflected by the revolving door between Wall Street and the U.S. Treasury, the equivalent of our Ministry of Finance. However, not even this has succeeded in turning the Federal Reserve into an inflation-targeting central bank. Its mandate includes "promoting maximum employment". The Indian establishment, on the other hand, has shown itself to be amenable to cognitive capture.

Pulapre Balakrishnan teaches economics at Ashoka University, Sonipat, Haryana. The views expressed are personal.

It also ignores a serious lesson from the recent global financial crisis, which is that an inflation- targeting central bank can lose control of the financial system

Plea to link NREGA works with agriculture

High-level delegation from New Delhi visits Srikakulam

Union Rural Ministry Director Suparna Pachauri on a field visit at Yagatipalem in Srikakulam district on Friday. —Photo: Basheer

Union Ministry of Rural Development Director Suparna S Pachouri on Friday lauded the Andhra Pradesh government for successfully implementing the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme in the North Andhra districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam.

She led a high-level delegation of the Union government to have firsthand information about the implementation of the scheme at the grass-root level. She visited Yagatipalem village of Ranasthalam mandal and planted saplings as part of the NREGP works. The team held an interactive session in Kamma Sigadam village of Ranasthaalm. Many workers supported the scheme but complained that they could not get works for sufficient number of days. They sought linkage of NREGA works with agriculture and work for 50 more days. Currently, the workers are able to get work for around 100 days in a year.

Plea to hike wages

Villagers Y. Chinna Rao and M. Narasimha Murthy urged the delegation to enhance the wages since they were unable to make both ends meet with the meagre amount. They need not migrate to other places if works were allocated locally on full time basis, they said.

Ms. Suparna told the villagers that they would sympathetically look into the issue and convey their feelings to the Union government. She asked Srikakulam Collector P. Lakshmi Narasimham about the implementation of other welfare programmes of the Union government. He said that the administration was keen on sanitation drive and construction of individual lavatories under the Swachh Bharat programme.

He explained about the coconut processing units and the special training programmes for self-help groups to ensure economic independence for women. Mr.Lakshmi Narasimham also told the delegation about taking up NREGA works in fishermen-dominated villages.

He said that Union government's special grant of Rs.50 crore for the district helped a lot to take up more works every year.

New buildings for co-operative societies

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa on Friday announced construction of new buildings for primary agriculture cooperative societies, central cooperative banks and modernisation of cooperative societies. She told the Assembly that the objective of the government was to ensure own buildings for cooperative societies and banks. "Already buildings are being constructed for 100 primary co-operative societies. This year, 90 more buildings at a cost of Rs.18 crore will be constructed. The money will be given as interest free loans from the Cooperative Research and Development Fund (CRDF)," she said.

Nine branches of Central Cooperative banks and two branches of Urban Cooperative Banks will get new buildings at a cost of Rs 9.40 crore. These buildings will have safety lockers, power generators, air-conditioners and solar panels. Ms. Jayalalithaa said in the current year 79 cooperative societies including 10 branches of central cooperative banks, two branches of urban cooperative banks, 65 primary agriculture cooperative credit societies would be modernised.

Farmers get a taste of latest trends

The agriculturists were exposed to the latest technologies available in the country

Tech farming:Demonstration of a paddy mini-transplanter at Ambasamudram during the training programme for farmers.

The Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA), with the technical support of Department of Agricultural Engineering, conducted a farmers' meet at Ambasamudram recently to expose the agriculturists to the latest technologies available in the country.

Since agriculturists are facing acute shortage of farmhands and wages are on the rise, the programme was organised under the 'Prime Minister Krishi Synchayee Yojana (Prime Minister's Agricultural Irrigation Scheme) that ensures the transfer of the latest technologies to the field to minimise the farmers' burdens.

Deputy Director of Agriculture, L. Perumal, who inaugurated the training programme, appealed to the farming community to utilise the latest agro machineries and implements to assuage labour scarcity and increase in wages.

He also insisted on judicious use of water while ensuring better yield. Deputy Director of Agriculture (Farmers Training Centre) P. Mary Amirthabai explained the role of ATMA in multi-departmental extension activities.

Assistant Executive Engineer (Agricultural Engineering), Cheranmahadevi, E. Gandhimathinathan explained the use of various machineries and implements from sowing the seed to harvesting the crop. Officials imparted hands-on training on handling a range of equipment to the participant farmers in the fields.

Soil Scientist of Rice Research Station (RRS), Ambasamudram, S. Jothimani explained the water saving methods by understanding the quality of the soil and the chemical components present in it. Agronomist, RRS, S.R. Srirengasamy explained the methods of getting higher yield through proper water management.

Assistant Engineer (Agro Engineering), Ambasamudram, R. Ponnudurai explained the methods of handling the latest the machineries such as Paddy Transplanter, Paddy Field Weeder, Shrub Cutter and a different types of sprayers and farm implements.

Krishna gets Rs. 13 cr. to encourage mechanised farming

The State government has sanctioned Rs. 13.58 crore to encourage mechanisation in agriculture operations in the Krishna district, said Agriculture Department Joint Director U. Narasimha Rao. Mr. Rao has added that the farmers would be encouraged to use modern equipment in order to reduce input costs.

Meet on dairy sector

A seminar on Productivity Enhancement in Dairy Sector that concluded at Mullamkolly in the district on Wednesday stressed the need for using cost-effective technologies to increase production and productivity in the sector. The programme was organised by Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU) as a part of its entrepreneurship fortnight programme. Delivering the keynote address, P.P. Sethumadhavan, Director of Entrepreneurship, KVASU, said in the changing scenario, where cost of production in dairying was increasing day by day, farmers should depend on cost-effective technologies.

To make dairying sustainable, farmers should reduce input costs, through appropriate technologies. Fodder production, precision feeding and value-addition would facilitate profitable dairying, he said. The university had developed Ksheeraprabha, a software for feed computation based on locally available raw materials, he said.

Nendran price soars ahead of Onam

Touches Rs.70 a kgin retail market

The price of 'Nendran' banana usually witnesses an increasing trend during Onam season. Faced with a low production in the traditionally cultivated areas in the district, the price has now reached Rs.70 a kg in the retail market.

Nendran is in high demand for making banana chips during Onam. The farmers have suffered losses for the past three seasons owing to low prices and crop loss in lush winds and rains. Banana is cultivated in low-lying areas where water is available.

The retail price had fallen to Rs.14 a kg in the retail market at one point of time. Farmers in the banana cultivating areas of Adimaly, Nedumkandam, and Erattayar have either left the land fallow or shifted to other crops. According to Thomas George, a farmer at Valiyakandam in Kattappana, high labour cost is one of the reasons for suffering the loss when the prices fall. Valiyakandam was once the largest paddy field in Kattappana which later turned to tapioca, banana and other crops.

The increased production of Nendran in Tamil Nadu, where the cost of production is less, is one of the reasons that led to the prices reaching the bottom level, he said.

Neighbourhood groups of the Kudumbasree Mission, which cultivated banana on leased land, have withdrawn from it leading to a poor arrival of the produce in the main market. The Nendran from Mettupalayam and Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu arrives in the main markets of central Travancore in addition to those from Wayanad and Idukki.

This time, the arrival of banana from Tamil Nadu too is poor, according to market sources at Kattappana. The price of Njalipoovan variety has reached Rs.70 a kg. The price of Palayamkodan, which is of poor demand, has increased in accordance with the general price rise of banana, sources said.

Inland fish farming scheme

M.M. Mani, MLA, will inaugurate the district-level Matsyasamrudhi scheme, being implemented by the Fisheries Department in association with local bodies to promote inland fish farming, at Rajakkad on Saturday. Fish seeds will be distributed to farmers of Rajakkad, Rajakumari, Senapathy and Bisonvalley grama panchayats, said a release here on Friday.

— A Correspondent

Potato crop escapes late blight infection this year

GOOD TIMES:The climate this year has been helpful in Hassan as there has been no incessant downpour.— PHOTO: PRAKASH HASSAN

Potato growers have a reason to cheer this year. It has been 60 to 70 days since sowing of seed potatoes began and so far, there have been no reports of late blight, a fungal infection that affects potato crops, anywhere in the district. Also, chances of the potato attracting late blight at this stage are rare.

This year, potato has been cultivated on around 10,000 hectares of land in the district. The crop has been in a good state all over the district, prompting farmers to hope for good returns. “As the crop has survived for 60 days, there are no chances of late blight again this year,” A.B. Sanjay, Deputy Director of Horticulture Department, told*The Hindu* recently.

The climate, this year, has been helpful. As there was no incessant downpour for days, the late blight could not spread. “Growers have to be thankful for the climate. If there was a continuous downpour in July, there were chances of the occurrence of late blight this year too,” the officer said.

The Horticulture Department had procured 2,035 tonnes of certified seeds from Jalandhar and sold them to the farmers at a subsidised price. About the yield in the farms where certified seeds were sown, the tubers are uniform. On the other hand, over 9,000 tonnes of non-certified seeds were also sold in the district. “Going by the yield this year, a good number of farmers may shift to potato next year,” the officer said.

Farmers of Hassan have been growing potato for years. In the recent years, the area covered by potato declined owing to late blight disease.

This year, potato

has been cultivated on around 10,000 hectares in

Hassan district

Pulses acreage rises amid rain cheer

Farmers across the country have planted summer (kharif) crops on 885.29 lakh hectares as against 841.65 lakh hectares a year earlier, according to government data released on Friday.

As per the data, area under pulses has gone up to 121.10 lakh hectares till now as against 89.72 lakh hectares of the corresponding period of last year. Higher acreage for pulses have been reported from Rajasthan, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Haryana, Gujrat among other states.

Planting of rice (paddy) has also picked up in various states including West Bengal, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Haryana and Maharashtra and it has been sown in 281.95 lakh hectares across the country in the current season against 276.10 lakh hectare of the 2015-16 season.

Sowing has picked up well after monsoon rains covered the entire country on July 13.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicts rainfall in the June-September monsoon season this year will be above average.

Inter-State team visits coffee plantations

Coffee plantations have changed the life of Girijans for better, Sarpanch of Sunkarametta village in Araku mandal in Visakha Agency Gowramma told officials of 10 States who are visiting north coastal Andhra districts to understand the successful implementation of NREGS in the State.

The inter-State team went round the coffee plantations in the area and interacted with the Girijan farmers. Pepper being raised as inter crop is fetching them very good returns, the farmers told the team members. Commissioner of Rural Development B. Ramanjaneyulu informed that 45,000 families are raising coffee on 65,000 acres in the ITDA area. Under the NREGS, Rs. 46,000 per acre is being extended for three years.

The team also visited the community pond built under Panta Sanjeevini programme at Kotha Billuguda with Rs. 2.49 lakh; the youth training centre at Araku Valley and farm ponds. Project Director of District Water Management Agency Kalyana Chakravarthi and others officials were present.

PMFBY: Enrolment date extended till August 10

The Centre has decided to extend the last date to August 10 for enrolling in Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, aimed at enabling farmers to avail insurance cover against crop loss due to natural calamities.

The last date for enrolling as member of the Yojana was July 31 and it has been extended to August 10, Union Minister for Agriculture Radha Mohan Singh told reporters during a video press conference from New Delhi.

Mr. Singh wanted all states to co-operate in implementing the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), which was introduced in January last.

The government's objective is to increase the number of insured farmers from the present 20 per cent to 50 per cent in the next two to three years time, he said.

Lowest premium

Mr. Singh said the scheme would enable farmers to have a crop insurance by paying the lowest premium.

The balance premium amount would be borne by the Centre and states. Farmers would get full financial security. There would be no capping on the premium rates and no reduction in the sum, he said.

A total of 22 states have come forward to implement the scheme. An amount of Rs. 5,500 crore has been earmarked for the scheme in the 2016-17 budget for the scheme, he said.

For foodgrains, pulses and oilseeds, there will be one season and one premium rate for farmers under the scheme.

Different rates for different crops for different districts, which was prevailing earlier, have been removed, Mr. Singh said.

Coverage for natural disasters

For the first time, risk of post harvest losses upto 14 days occurring due to cyclone, non-seasonal rain and local calamities such as hailstorm and landslips have been included for coverage across the country, he said.

To a question, Mr. Singh said in Kerala, the process of implementing the scheme was on and the response of the state government was very good.

The tender process to select the insurance company to implement the scheme in Kerala was completed in June, he said.

Smartphones will be used to capture and upload data of crop cutting to reduce delays in claim payment to farmer and to check misuse of the scheme, the Union Minister said, adding the claim amount would be transferred through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

Retail inflation target for next five years set at 4±2 per cent, notifies Finance Ministry

Proposed Monetary Policy Committee will have to achieve the target through its rate-setting policies.

Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitely in Bengaluru on Saturday. PTI Photo

The government on Friday notified an inflation target of 4 per cent for the next five years, which the proposed Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India will have to achieve through its interest-rate setting policies.

The government has provided a margin of plus or minus 2 per cent in the retail inflation target, fixing the upper tolerance level at 6 per cent till 2021, the finance ministry said in a statement, after the government tabled a notification in this regard in the Lok Sabha.

This is a departure from the existing practice wherein the RBI Governor decides the monetary policy rates. Changes in policy rates will be done by the proposed MPC going forward, with a view to maintaining the inflation target provided by the government.

“The key advantage of a range around a target is that it allows MPC to recognise the short run trade-offs between inflation and growth but enables it to pursue the inflation target in long run over the course of business cycle,” the finance ministry said.

If the average inflation is more than the upper tolerance level of 4 per cent + 2 per cent, that is, 6 per cent, or less than the lower tolerance level of 4 per cent – 2 per cent, that is 2 per cent, for any three consecutive quarters, it would mean a failure to achieve the inflation target.

“Where RBI fails to meet the inflation target, in terms of the provisions of RBI Act, it shall set out a report to the Central government stating the reasons for failure to achieve the inflation target; remedial actions proposed to be taken by RBI; and an estimate of the time-period within which the inflation target shall be achieved pursuant to timely implementation of proposed remedial actions,”

the ministry said. The Centre had signed a monetary policy framework agreement with the RBI in February last year, wherein the MPC was supposed to maintain the consumer price index-based inflation in the target range that was to be notified.

“In view of the powers conferred by Section 45ZA of the RBI Act 1934, the central government, in consultation with the Bank, hereby notifies the inflation target beginning from the date of publication of this notification and ending on the March 31, 2021,” as per the government notification tabled in the Lok Sabha on Friday.

Consumer price index or CPI rose by 5.77 per cent in June, the fastest pace in 22 months. Meanwhile, the government is in the process of setting up the six-member MPC that will implement the inflation target.

The upcoming policy of the RBI on August 9 will be the last monetary review by Governor Raghuram Rajan, who will step down on September 4 after completing a three-year term.

The MPC will set interest rates by majority, with a casting vote for the RBI governor in the event of a tie. Out of six members of MPC, three will be from RBI — the Governor, who will be the ex-officio Chairperson, a deputy governor and an executive director. The other three members will be appointed by the central government, on the recommendations of a search-cum-selection committee, which will be headed by the Cabinet Secretary.

The government had earlier amended the RBI Act through Finance Act 2016 to provide for a Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) with a specific inflation range as its goal. The finance ministry said inflation range will help the MPC accommodate unexpected short-term shocks. Besides data limitations, projection errors, short-run supply gaps and instability in the agriculture production, the range allows to accommodate unanticipated short-term shocks even while nudging public inflation expectations on the centre of the range, the ministry said.

Upper tolerance level fixed at 6% till 2021

Changes in policy rates will be done by the proposed MPC going forward, with a view to maintaining the inflation target provided by the government

If the average inflation is more than the upper tolerance level of 4% + 2%, that is, 6%, or less than the lower tolerance level of 4% – 2%, that is 2%, for any three consecutive quarters, it would mean a failure to achieve the inflation target

Whitefly attack under control: Punjab Agricultural University

The Whitefly pest attack on cotton crops in Punjab has drastically reduced the area under cotton from 3.7 lakh hectare in 2015 to 2.6 lakh hectare.

A cotton crop affected by whitefly in a field in Muktsar. (Source: Express Photo by Gurmeet Singh)

Scientists at the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) are confident that the whitefly attack on cotton crops has been controlled this year. Earlier, reports of a whitefly attack came from Abohar, Fazilka, Mansa and Muktsar districts.

After the 2015 infestation, which saw cotton productivity drop to just six quintals per hectare, the university had taken several measures to avoid a repeat. "This year, we expect cotton crop yield to bounce back to 16 quintals per hectare as the whitefly pest attack has been controlled," said Dr BS Dhillon, vice-chancellor, PAU.

Recently, a central team had visited fields in Abohar and reported that the pest attack is within the economic threshold limit(ETL). Dr Dhillon observed that Khuai Sarwar area of Fazilka is still critical and special attention is being given to it.

However, farmers are taking the relatively safe option of paddy cultivation. The area under cotton has reduced drastically from 3.7 lakh hectare from last year to 2.6 lakh hectare.

Dr Dhillon told that a special sprayer developed by PAU helped farmers in reaching both sides of the plant rather than only top side. This year, Punjab government allocated Rs 64 crore for an awareness programme, which included recruiting 500 scouts and 50 field supervisors for over 3,000 cotton farms.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Moong slips below MSP as new crop hits market

Karnataka farmers demand Govt intervention

As market arrivals of the new moong (greengram) crop begins in Karnataka, prices of the pulses variety have slipped below the minimum support price (MSP) levels in several markets triggering a demand from distressed growers for market intervention.

Also, in markets across Madhya Pradesh, moong has been ruling below the support price levels at between 4,000 and 5,000 a quintal for few days now as traders have been liquidating the old stocks ahead of the market arrivals of the new crop that's set to begin over the next fortnight.

For moong, the Centre has announced an MSP of 5,225/quintal, including a bonus of 425 for the kharif season this year. In markets such as Kalaburgi (Gulbarga) and Raichur in north-east Karnataka, moong has been ruling below MSP levels, while the modal prices are hovering marginally above the support price levels in Gadag and Rona.

Turning red

Market	Arrivals (Quintals)	Min price (₹)	Max price (₹)	Modal price (₹)
Kalaburgi (Gulbarga)	288	3,844	4,855	4,252
Mysuru	246	3,207	5,669	4,843
Raichur	88	3,609	5,249	4,866
Rona	327	5,040	6,351	5,855
Gadag	283	4,769	6,269	5,871

(Market arrivals and price trend of moong (greengram) in select mandis of Karnataka on August 5)
Source: Karnataka State Agri Marketing Board

Further dip seen

Trade sources attribute the lack of adequate demand and the high moisture content in the harvested crop as the main reason for the low prices, and expect the prices to come under pressure further as arrivals would pick up in the weeks ahead.

"As moong prices have crashed below the MSP levels, the government should immediately intervene and start the procurement operations," said Basavaraj Ingin, President of Karnataka Tur Growers Association, in Gulbarga.

Since it is early harvest days, buyers are seen adopting a wait-and-watch stance on expectations of a bigger crop this year, trade sources said. Also, the cloudy weather and intermittent rains across North Karnataka are seen hampering the moong harvesting and the drying process.

“Buyers are not interested in the new crop with high moisture content. It would be difficult to store moong with a moisture content of 17 per cent and above,” said Sujay Hubli of Suvijay Agri Venture, a Gadag-based processor and importer of pulses. Bulk of the produce coming into markets in Gadag has high moisture content, he said. Also, the lack of infrastructure such as drying yards is adding to the growers woes in the region.

Like their counter parts in other States, farmers in Karnataka — lured by the high market prices — have planted pulses like moong and tur in more area this year. Acreage in the State under moong, a 60-day crop and the first to be harvested among the pulses complex, stood at 3.74 lakh hectares this year, about 35 per cent higher over last year.

Procurement process

“We are studying the market situation and are advising the government to start procurement operations quickly,” said TN Prakash Kammaradi, Chairman of the Karnataka Agricultural Prices Commission. Also, for those farmers who plan to hold back their produce, the KAPC has suggested that the government extend the pledged loans based on the warehousing receipts, Prakash added.

According to Sanjay Agrawal, a pulses trader in Indore, the declining trend in moong prices has been attributed to large carryover stocks of the last year, high crop output in summer moong. Besides, arrival of imported crop has also added to the bearish trend. With new crop of moong just 15 days away, rally appears unlikely, he said. In markets such as Guna, Khargone, Gadarwada and Sheopur in Madhya Pradesh, the modal prices of moong stood at 4,200-4,690 on Friday.

Higher output seen

Production of pulses, according to the Centre is expected to rise to around 20 million tonnes this year on the back of sharp increase in acreages as farmers across the country have brought in more area under the legume crops.

According to the Fourth Advanced Estimates, the pulses output during 2015-16 stood at 16.47 million tonnes (mt). India is the largest producer, consumer and importer as pulses are the major source of protein for a majority of the population.

India has been a net importer of pulses and despite expectations of higher domestic production on good rains, the imports are expected to remain high to meet the shortfall in demand. Domestic consumption is estimated at between 23 and 24 mt and is growing annually between 2 and 3 per cent.

"The trade has already contracted about three million tonnes for imports, which will arrive between September and December," said Pravin Dongre, Chairman of Indian Pulses and Grains Association.

Bearish prices

Dongre further said that the global production is set to rise on higher acreages in Australia, Canada and Africa which would result in higher availability. "Already the markets have gone inverted as the forward prices are $100/tonne below the spot prices. This has stated putting pressure on spot markets," he said.

India imported a record 5.7 mt during 2015-16 and during the current year, the imports are expected to stay high.

The government made pulses imports duty free last December after a surge in prices had fuelled food inflation.

Sowing of kharif crops up at 885 lakh hectares

Sowing of kharif crops in the first week of August remained on track as rains continued to be plentiful and acreage under most major crops such as rice, pulses, coarse cereals and oilseeds posted a rise compared to the previous year.

Total acreage under kharif crops till August 5 this year at 885.29 lakh hectares (lh) compared to 841.65 lh sowed in the same period last year.

Cotton was the only crop where acreage declined considerably to 96.48 lh till August 5 this year compared to 105.68 lh in the same period last year. Many farmers sowing cotton switched to other crops because of last year’s damage to the Bt cotton crop by whiteflies in Punjab and Haryana.

Pulse acreage continued to be high with total acreage in the period rising to 121.10 lh (89.72 lh).

Rice acreage increased to 281.95 lh (276.10 lh).

Sowing of coarse cereals till August 5 rose to 163.77 lh compared to 158.66 lh in the same period of the previous year. Oilseeds acreage too gained at 167.58 lh (157.65 lh).

While sugarcane sowing increased marginally from 46.87 lh to 46.11 lh in the same period last year, jute sowing edged down to 7.55 lh to 7.73 lh.

Pepper holds steady

Spot pepper prices continued to stay steady on limited activities as direct despatches from the primary markets by rail were covering the good internal demand, market sources told *BusinessLine.*Consequently, the arrivals at the terminal market was only three tonnes from the High Ranges and that were traded at 700 a kg.

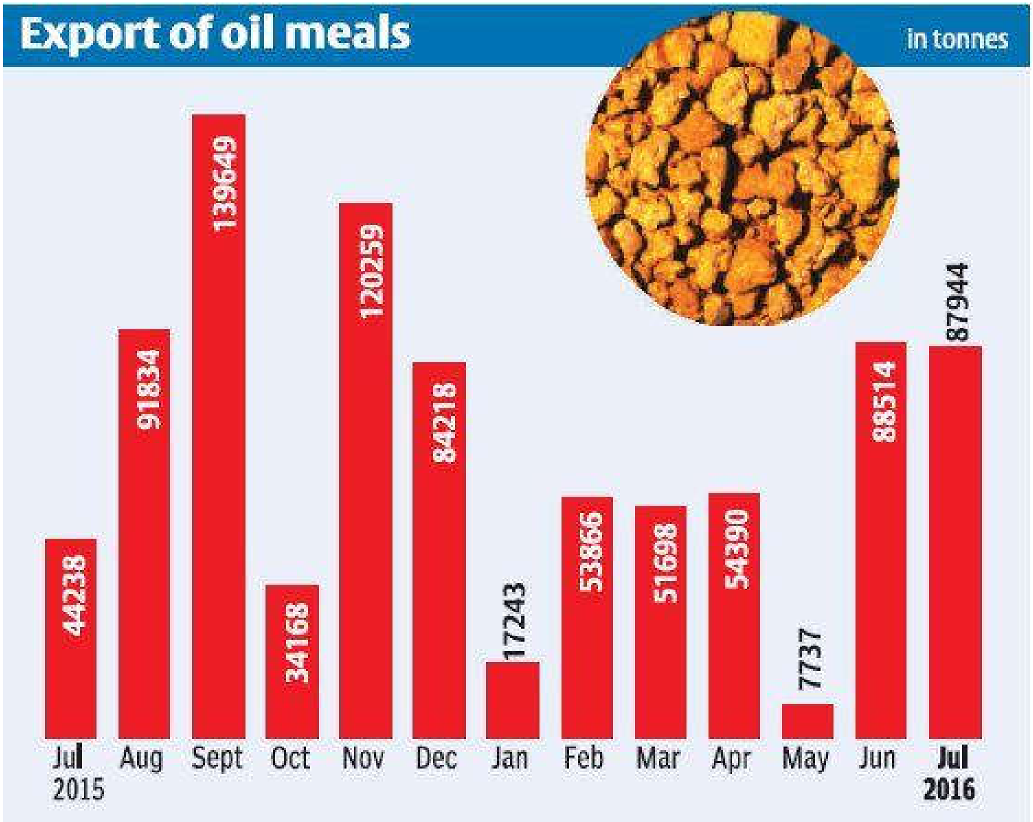
Spot prices remained unchanged at 69,000 (ungarbled) and 72,000 (garbled) a quintal. August, September and October contracts on the IPSTA also remained steady at 72,000, 71,000 and 70,000 a quintal respectively.

Export prices were at $10,950 a tonne c&f for Europe and $11,200 for the US.

Oilmeal exports dip 47% in April-July

Redduced availability of oilseeds pushes up domestic prices, causing disparity

India’s oilmeal exports reported a decline of 47 per cent for a period between April 2016 and July 2016 at 274,237 tonnes compared to 517,914 tonnes reported during the same period last year, thereby showing a decline of 47 per cent.



Source: The Solvent Extractors' Association of India

The decline in exports is attributed to the lesser availability of oilseeds for crushing and continuous disparity in export price in the international market.

Higher prices

The meal prices at Indian ports were quoted relatively higher as compared to international prices.

Soyabean meal prices at Indian FOB at Kandla was quoted at $495 per tonne, while international price was at $405 CIF Rotterdam.

The data compiled by the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) revealed that even as the oilmeal exports showed a decline during the four-month period, the exports during the month of July showed a sharp increase of 99 per cent at 87,944 tonnes (44,238 tonnes).

Shipments break-up

During the period, oilmeal exports to countries such as South Korea, Vietnam, Myanmar and Taiwan reported a dip resulting in an overall drop in the shipments.

However, oilmeal exports to Indonesia showed an increase of 12.16 per cent to 5,027 tonnes as for the period against 4,482 tonnes in the same period last year.

Soya, castor meals gain

Exports of soyabean meal and castorseed meal increased during July.

As per SEA data, soyabean meal exports increased from 2,672 tonnes last month to 3,290 tonnes in July, while castorseed meal exports increased from 40,591 tonnes last month to 78,759 tonnes in July.

Tea prices dip at Kochi sale on subdued buying

Lower participation of blenders and subdued demand from exporters lowered the prices of several tea varieties at Kochi auctions.

In sale no 31, the quantity on offer in CTC dust was 7,60,500 kg.

The market opened on a steady note, but it witnessed an irregular and lowering trend following quality as the sale progressed.

Plainer varieties was generally lower and noticed some withdrawals, the auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said.

The quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 18,000 kg. The market for primary teas was lower, while others were firm to dearer.

Exporters and upcountry buyers absorbed a small quantity.

In Cochin CTC dust quotation, good varieties fetched 108-157, mediums quoted 91-125 and plain grades stood at 80-95.

In leaf category, the demand was less with only 48 per cent getting sold. Of the 133,000 kg on offer in orthodox grades, the market for high-grown medium brokens and whole leaf was lower with longer margins of 5-10 a kg and sometimes more following quality.

Fannings was generally lower by 5-7.

In CTC leaf, the market for brokens was firm to dearer. The quantity on offer was 46,000 kg,

In dust grades, Monica SFD quoted the best prices of 157 followed by Waterfall SFD at 150.

In leaf varieties, Chamraj FOP-S (green tea) came to the top quoting 368 followed by Chamraj OP at 266.

Govt sets inflation target at 4%

The inflation target is a part of the Monetary Policy Framework agreement between the Finance Ministry and the RBI signed in January last year

New monetary policy framework abides by 'Rajan rekha'

Just days ahead of the Reserve Bank of India's bi-monthly monetary policy review, which will be Raghuram Rajan's last as Governor, the Finance Ministry has notified an inflation target of 4 per cent with a range of 2 per cent for the next five years.

Rajan has all along been a strident advocate of inflation targeting. With this notification, the Centre has also moved ahead with its plans for the new Monetary Policy Framework.

"In view of the powers conferred by Section 45ZA of the RBI Act 1934, the Central government, in consultation with the bank, hereby notifies the inflation target beginning from the date of publication of this notification and ending on the March 31, 2021," said the government notification tabled in the Lok Sabha.

The inflation target is a part of the Monetary Policy Framework agreement between the Finance Ministry and the Reserve Bank of India signed in January last year.

This will mean that the RBI will work to contain consumer price index-based inflation at an average 4 per cent, with an upper limit of 6 per cent and lower limit of 2 per cent.

"Fixation of an inflation target while giving due emphasis to the objective of growth and challenges of an increasingly complex economy, is an important monetary policy reform with necessary statutory back-up," said a Finance Ministry statement.

Under the agreement, the six-member committee will set interest rates to lower consumer price inflation to 4 per cent from 2016-17. Each member of the committee will have one vote and the Reserve Bank of India Governor will have a second or casting vote, in case of a tie.

In June, the government had also notified the amended RBI Act and the rules for the procedure for selection of members of the MPC and terms and conditions of their appointment and factors constituting failure to meet inflation target under the MPC Framework.

The MPC members are likely to be selected by the end of the month.

Business Standard

Pulses sowing highest in five years

In pulses, arhar has been the top gainer with area under the crop around 55 per cent more than the year-ago period

The sowing of kharif crops maintained its impressive pace during the week that ended on Friday, led by pulses.

The total area under pulses was recorded at 12.11 million hectares, the highest in the corresponding period of the previous five years and almost 35 per cent more than the area covered during the corresponding period last year.

In pulses, arhar has been the top gainer with area under the crop around 55 per cent more than the year-ago period.

Arhar prices had touched around Rs 200 a kg last year and farmers seem to have been responding to this.

Officials said some area under guar in Rajasthan, soybean in Madhya Pradesh, cotton and castor in Gujarat and additional area in Karnataka and Telangana seem to have shifted towards pulses this year. Data released by the Department of Agriculture showed that till this week all kharif crops have been sown on around 88.52 million hectares, which is 5.19 per cent more than the year-ago period. In the past five years, kharif crops were sown on 106.25 million hectares.

With sowing complete in almost 83 per cent of the normal area and no sign of any big let up in southwest monsoon, there is a big possibility that overall acreage this year might reach new highs.

Rice, the biggest foodgrain grown during the kharif season, has been so far planted on around 28.19 million hectares, around 2.12 per cent more than the year-ago period last year.

Coarse cereals have been sown on around 16.37 million hectares, 3.22 per cent more than the year-ago period last year. Cotton has been sown on around 9.64 million hectares, which is around 8 per cent less than the same corresponding period last year.

With the southwest monsoon showing some signs of revival in the past few days over India's biggest cotton growing region of Gujarat, there is possibility that the gap might be bridged in the coming weeks.

Latest weekly update from the IMD released on Thursday showed that southwest monsoon in Gujarat since the start of this season in June 1 has been 32-46 per cent below normal, while in Kerala and Punjab it was around 27 per cent and 22 per cent deficient.

Surge in apple prices & imports, after huge crop loss

Unrest in J&K intensifies shortage; food-processing units not to be badly hit, as they rely more on crop residue

Companies engaged in apple trading and marketing of branded apples are preparing for harder times, due to tepid arrivals in this season, after a record crop a year ago.

While harvesting has just commenced and will close only in October or November, output this year is estimated to fall significantly. The reasons are public disorder in Jammu & Kashmir, the largest producing state, and crop damage in Himachal Pradesh.

The agricultural division of Mahindra & Mahindra, which sells branded apples, plans to import more. "We have many sourcing locations overseas," said Ashok Sharma, chief executive officer of the division.

Apple is the major horticultural crop of both Himachal and J&K.

Adani Agrifresh, which has an 80 per cent share in Himachal's organised apple market, has been pulling all resources to procure the targeted 25,000 tonnes. Sources in the company say damage to the crop in the state has been colossal in the lower and middle elevations; they are concentrating on higher elevations. Prices have shot up due to supply constraints.

Appy Fizz, a Parle-promoted drink, made from apple extract, might not find it as hard -- they need culled apples, which were available in the aftermath of hailstorms. Thefood processing sector thrives on crop residue and might not be so affected, said a government official.

Prakash Thakur, vice-chairman of Himachal Pradesh Horticulture Produce, Marketing and Procurement Corporation, said: "A higher average mean temperature this season has affected yield and hailstorms in April and May aggravated the crop loss. The annual production can touch up to five crore (50 million) boxes (20 kg each) or 100,000 tonnes in a good year. It would remain in the range of 15 mn boxes this year."

The crop in J&K is half the expected size, says officials in the horticulture department there.

As a result, a 20-kg box trading at Rs 1,200-Rs 1,400 at the farm gate last year at this time is now available at Rs 1,800-2,000. "Prices might ascend in the coming weeks," said Thakur.

Imports might, hence, rise significantly. It is normally about 20 mn boxes with a good domestic crop. We import mainly from America and China.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

WEATHER FARMER

Pune, AUG. 05() Farmer weather bulletin for

Pune, AUG. 05() Farmer weather bulletin for Maharashtra and Goa state.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 10th August 2016:

For 5 Aug.:Rain/thundershowers are very likely at most places over Konkan and Goa and Vidarbha and at many places over Madhya Maharashtra and Marathwada.

For 6 Aug.: Rain/thundershowers are very likely at most places over Konkan and Goa and Vidarbha, at many places over Madhya Maharashtra and at a few places over Marathwada.

For 7 Aug.: Rain/thundershowers are very likely at many places over Konkan and Goa and Vidarbha, at a few places over Madhya Maharashtra and at isolated places over Marathwada.

For 8-9 Aug.: Rain/thundershowers are very likely at many places over Konkan and Goa, at a few places over Madhya Maharashtra and Vidarbha and at isolated places over Mrathwada.

HEAVY RAINFALL WARNING :

5 Aug.: Heavy to very heavy rain at isolated places is very likely over north Konkan, Madhya Maharashtra and Vidarbha and heavy rain at isolated places is very likely over south Konkan and Goa.

6 Aug.: Heavy rain at isolated places is very likely over south Konkan and Goa, Madhya Maharashtra and Vidarbha.

7 Aug.: Heavy rain at isolated places is very likely over Konkan and Goa.
OUTLOOK:No large change. Kolhapur

23.9
21.1 Panjim

28.3
25.6 Ratnagiri

28.6
24.2 Sholapur

30.9
22.0 Satara

26.1
21.5 Sangli

25.7

20.8 BAS NSK

Farmers coverage under PMFBY to increase by 30% this kharif

Stating that farmers are taking up crop insurance in a big way after two drought years, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh today said 30 per cent more farmers are expected to register under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana(PMFBY) in the ongoing kharif season.

Some states, especially Karnataka and Gujarat have made good progress so far in implementing the scheme, but there was a delay in rolling out the scheme in Tamil Nadu and Kerala due to elections but the work now has been fastened, he said.

He, however, blamed the Bihar government for playing "politics in the name of farmers" and stopping mid-way through the implementation of the crop insurance scheme, especially after collecting the premium from farmers for this kharif season.

"Except for Bihar, there has been a good progress in implementation of PMFBY across the country. Last year, 3.07 crore had taken up crop insurance under earlier schemes. In this kharif season, we are expecting 4 crore farmers to enroll under the scheme," Singh told reporters here.

As many as 22 states, barring Bihar and Punjab, have introduced the new crop insurance scheme. The remaining states are in the process of implementing the scheme.

This being the first year of the implementation of PMFBY, there has been some delay in notifying the scheme in some states. So, the deadline for submitting the proposal has been extended till August 10 from July 31, he said.

Singh was speaking to reporters from 11 states including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Tamil Nadu via video conference.

Stating that there has been good response from farmers to the PMFBY across the country, the minister said, "The coverage in some states is increasing. The exact data of coverage would be known after August 10."

However as per the latest available data, as many as 10.12 lakh farmers have taken up crop insurance for the Kharif 2016 crop in Karnataka under the PMFBY, which is higher than 8.72 lakh farmers in the year-ago period, he said.

"Farmers in Karnataka and some other states had faced severe drought last year and hence there has been good response to crop insurance this year," he said, while denying any special relief package to the state or any reduction in the premium rate of the crop insurance.

Under PMFBY, farmers premium has been kept lower between 1.5-2 per cent for foodgrains and oilseed crops and up to 5 per cent for horticultural and cotton crops. There is no cap on the premium, he said.

In Gujarat, 13.5 lakh farmers have registered under the crop insurance scheme for the 2016 kharif season, which is a sharp jump from 5 lakh farmers in the year-ago period. Similarly, the number of coverage has risen in Jharkhand.

On status of the crop insurance scheme in Bihar, the minister said the state has reservation in implementing the scheme despite been approved by the state cabinet and even collecting premium from farmers.

The Bihar government is asking for change in the name of the scheme and demanding the centre to bear the entire expenditure, thereby "playing politics in the name of farmers", he said. LUX ABK

22 states have introduced new crop insurance scheme

As many as 22 states, barring Bihar and Punjab, have introduced the new crop insurance scheme and the Centre has extended the last date to August 10 to enable more farmers avail its benefits, Rajya Sabha was informed today.

"As many as 22 states have started the new Prime Minister's crop insurance scheme for this kharif season. The last date under the scheme has been extended from July 31 to August 10 by the government.

"I am confident that by August 10, the crop insurance would be much more than done last year," Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said during Question Hour.

He said Bihar has been left out of the scheme as the Chief Minister had some reservations and the state has not issued the necessary notification.

The Minister also said that the scheme is not applicable in Punjab as the state government has not introduced it.

Singh said the premium under the crop insurance scheme this time is the lowest ever with 1.5 per cent for the rabi crops and 5 per cent for kharif crops. "This is the lowest premium ever in the history."

He said the number of farmers availing the benefit of the crop insurance scheme was much more than earlier. While in Karnataka alone, from 8.72 lakh farmers taking the insurance scheme last year, this year there are over 12 lakh farmers availing the benefit.

In Jharkhand, 7.5 lakh farmers have registered under the scheme as against 5.36 lakh last year and in Gujarat too the number has doubled.

When senior Congress member Digvijay Singh said the government has not implemented the Swaminathan Committee recommendations though promised,

Singh said "the Committee's recommendations were rejected by the previous Congress government. We are, however, working to help increase the farmers' income to double."

The Agriculture Minister also said that a high level committee after giving due consideration to the report of Inter Ministerial Central Team, has decided to approve

Rs 79.18 crore by way of assistance on account of hailstorm to Rajasthan. SKC ARC

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Farmers coverage under PMFBY to increase by 30 per cent this kharif

Some states, especially Karnataka and Gujarat have made good progress so far in implementing the scheme, but there was a delay in rolling out the scheme in some states.

NEW DELHI: Stating that farmers are taking up crop insurance in a big way after two drought years, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh today said 30 per cent more farmers are expected to register under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) in the ongoing kharif season.

Some states, especially Karnataka and Gujarat have made good progress so far in implementing the scheme, but there was a delay in rolling out the scheme in Tamil Nadu and Kerala due to elections but the work now has been fastened, he said.

He, however, blamed the Bihar government for playing "politics in the name of farmers" and stopping mid-way through the implementation of the crop insurance scheme, especially after collecting the premium from farmers for this kharif season.

"Except for Bihar, there has been a good progress in implementation of PMFBY across the country. Last year, 3.07 crore had taken up crop insurance under earlier schemes. In this kharif season, we are expecting 4 crore farmers to enroll under the scheme," Singh told reporters here.

As many as 22 states, barring Bihar and Punjab, have introduced the new crop insurance scheme. The remaining states are in the process of implementing the scheme.

This being the first year of the implementation of PMFBY, there has been some delay in notifying the scheme in some states. So, the deadline for submitting the proposal has been extended till August 10 from July 31, he said.

Singh was speaking to reporters from 11 states including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Tamil Nadu via video conference.

Stating that there has been good response from farmers to the PMFBY across the country, the minister said, "The coverage in some states is increasing. The exact data of coverage would be known after August 10."

However as per the latest available data, as many as 10.12 lakh farmers have taken up crop insurance for the Kharif 2016 crop in Karnataka under the PMFBY, which is higher than 8.72 lakh farmers in the year-ago period, he said.

"Farmers in Karnataka and some other states had faced severe drought last year and hence there has been good response to crop insurance this year," he said, while denying any special relief package to the state or any reduction in the premium rate of the crop insurance.

Under PMFBY, farmers premium has been kept lower between 1.5-2 per cent for foodgrains and oilseed crops and up to 5 per cent for horticultural and cotton crops. There is no cap on the premium, he said.

In Gujarat, 13.5 lakh farmers have registered under the crop insurance scheme for the 2016 kharif season, which is a sharp jump from 5 lakh farmers in the year-ago period. Similarly, the number of coverage has risen in Jharkhand.

On status of the crop insurance scheme in Bihar, the minister said the state has reservation in implementing the scheme despite been approved by the state cabinet and even collecting premium from farmers.

The Bihar government is asking for change in the name of the scheme and demanding the centre to bear the entire expenditure, thereby "playing politics in the name of farmers", he said.

India's pulse import worth over Rs 25,500 cr in FY16: Government

Pulse production declined to 17.06 MT in 2015-16 crop year (July-June) from 17.15 MT in the previous year.

NEW DELHI: India's pulse imports rose by 50 per cent in value terms to Rs

25,691 crore in 2015-16, with in-bound shipments totaling 5.8 million tonnes, Parliament was informed today.

The country imported 4.58 MT of the key kitchen staple worth Rs 17,063 crore, Minister of State for Agriculture S S Ahluwalia said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

"At the end of July 2016, the buffer stock of pulses was 69,000 tonnes," he added.

Pulse production declined to 17.06 MT in 2015-16 crop year (July-June) from 17.15 MT in the previous year due to two consecutive years of drought while demand for it stands at 23.5 MT. In 2013-14, the output was over 19 MT. In a separate query, the minister told the House that government has inked an MoU with Mozambique on pulses.

"This MoU fixes targets of minimum quantities of export of tur and other pulses from Mozambique to India over the next five years whether through private channels or government to government sales...," he added.

The target for import is 1 lakh tonnes (LT) this fiscal, 1.25 LT in 2017-18, 1.20 LT in 2018-19, 1.75 LT in 2019-20 and 2 LT in 2020-21.

To encourage farmers to grow more pulses, Ahluwalia said the government has increased the minimum support prices (MSPs) for pulses and cereals for 2016-17 season.

"Further, to incentivise cultivation of pulses in the country, the government has announced a bonus of Rs 425 per quintal for kharif pulses, namely arhar (tur), urad and moong over and above the MSPs for 2016-17," he said.

The objective of the government's price policy is to ensure remunerative price to farmers by offering to procure their produce at the MSP. However, farmers are free to sell their produce to government procurement agencies at MSP or in the open market, whichever is advantageous to them, the minister clarified.

In another query on pulses sown area, Ahluwalia said depending on yearly variations in weather, rainfall situation, irrigation facilities, shift in area to other competing crops and the like, total area under pulses in the country in the past 5-6 years has been fluctuating in the range of around 23-26 million hectares.

Crop planting jumps nearly 11% on good rains

Rice planting has covered an area of 281.95 lakh hectares, up 2.12 per cent from last year.

NEW DELHI: Crop planting has jumped 10.73 per cent in the past one week, helped by heavy rains, official data showed.

Overall planting is now 5.19 per cent higher than last year at 885.29 lakh hectare. The increase was largely seen in acreage of pulses followed by oilseeds, coarse cereals, pulses and sugarcane. The total area to be planted this kharif season is 1062.50 lakh hectare.

Water levels in India's 91 major reservoirs rose 21 per cent in the last one week, as heavy rains lashed the catchment areas, but remained lower compared with those at this time last year and the 10-year average.

On Thursday, these dams together held 71.556 billion cubic metres (bcm) of water, compared with 74.285 bcm a year ago and the 10-year average of 74.920 bcm, according to data from the Central Water Commission (CWC). Last week, the capacity was 59.366 bcm.

The area under pulses has seen the maximum increase in planting. It has risen 34.98 per cent from the previous year to 121.1 lakh hectares. Planting of arhar has increased more than 54.68 per cent from last year and is expected to further increase in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh.

Meanwhile, rice planting has covered an area of 281.95 lakh hectares, up 2.12 per cent from last year. The acreage has largely seen an increase in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Punjab and West Bengal. This kharif season rice will be planted on 392.81 lakh hectares.

Area under coarse cereals, which includes maize, bajra, ragi, small millets and maize, has posted an increase of 3.22 per cent over the previous year to cover 163.77 lakh hectares.

Oilseeds planting has also seen a jump. It has risen 6.3 per cent from the previous year and now covers 167.58 lakh hectares. Area under groundnut has seen a significant increase from the previous year and has till date been planted on 40.92 lakh hectares. Planting of soyabean, an important commodity in the edible oil basket, has also increased and was planted on 11.83 lakh hectares.

Sugarcane planting has increased 1.65 per cent, covering 46.87 lakh hectares.

The agriculture ministry has set a target of producing 270.1 million tonnes of foodgrain in 2016-17 beginning June, which is 7 per cent higher than the previous year's output.

As per the fourth advance estimate released earlier this month, foodgrain production was estimated at 252.22 million tonnes for 2015-16.

Sugar mills owe Rs 6,598 cr to cane farmers

Payment of cane price to farmers is a continuous and ongoing process, said Food and Consumer Affairs C R Chaudhary.

NEW DELHI: Sugar mills owed Rs 6,598 crore to cane farmers at the end of last month, Parliament was informed today.

Out of total outstanding, Rs 5,368 crore pertains to the ongoing 2015-16 marketing year (October-September), while Rs 577 crore relates to 2014-15 and Rs 653 crore for the 2013-14 marketing year and earlier.

In a written reply to Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Food and Consumer Affairs C R Chaudhary provided state-wide details of cane price arrears for the current sugar season 2015-16, 2014-15, 2013-14 and earlier seasons.

"Payment of cane price to farmers is a continuous and ongoing process. Thus the number of farmers affected by such overdue payments changes from time to time. Further, the government does not maintain data relating to number of farmers affected by such overdue," he said.

In 2015-16, Uttar Pradesh millers have maximum outstanding at Rs 2,877 crore till July 31, followed by Tamil Nadu at Rs 1,030 crore.

In Maharashtra, the major producing state, the cane arrears stood at Rs 411 crore, Punjab Rs 226 crore, Uttarakhand Rs 209 crore, Gujarat Rs 203 crore, Haryana Rs 126 crore and Karnataka Rs 108 crore, the data showed.

22 states have introduced new crop insurance scheme

Radha Mohan Singh also said that the scheme is not applicable in Punjab as the state government has not introduced it.

NEW DELHI: As many as 22 states, barring Bihar and Punjab, have introduced the new crop insurance scheme and the Centre has extended the last date to August 10 to enable more farmers avail its benefits, Rajya Sabha was informed today.

"As many as 22 states have started the new Prime Minister's crop insurance scheme for this kharif season. The last date under the scheme has been extended from July 31 to August 10 by the government.

"I am confident that by August 10, the crop insurance would be much more than done last year," Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said during Question Hour.

He said Bihar has been left out of the scheme as the Chief Minister had some reservations and the state has not issued the necessary notification.

The Minister also said that the scheme is not applicable in Punjab as the state government has not introduced it.

Singh said the premium under the crop insurance scheme this time is the lowest ever with 1.5 per cent for the rabi crops and 5 per cent for kharif crops. "This is the lowest premium ever in the history."

He said the number of farmers availing the benefit of the crop insurance scheme was much more than earlier. While in Karnataka alone, from 8.72 lakh farmers taking the insurance scheme last year, this year there are over 12 lakh farmers availing the benefit.

In Jharkhand, 7.5 lakh farmers have registered under the scheme as against 5.36 lakh last year and in Gujarat too the number has doubled.

When senior Congress member Digvijay Singh said the government has not implemented the Swaminathan Committee recommendations though promised, Singh said "the Committee's recommendations were rejected by the previous Congress government. We are, however, working to help increase the farmers' income to double."

The Agriculture Minister also said that a high level committee after giving due consideration to the report of Inter Ministerial Central Team, has decided to approve Rs 79.18 crore by way of assistance on account of hailstorm to Rajasthan.