

10.08.2016

THE HINDU

KVASU workshop

Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU), in association with Kerala Agricultural University, is organising a sensitisation workshop on Entrepreneurship Development under the Start-up India Campaign for University Students in South India at College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences in Thrissur at 8.30 a.m. on August 26.

For details, contact 9447689466, 9562775354 or 040-24581419. — Staff Reporter

Banana company gets two more solar dryers



BENEFICIAL facility:A view of the solar dryers sanctioned by the State government as a special incentive for producing value-added banana products at Thottiyam.— Photo: B. Velankanni Raj

The Thottiam Banana Producer Group, a private company producing value-added products in banana, has been sanctioned two more solar dryers in appreciation of its achievement in producing and marketing value-added products in banana. The company, started about three years ago with a solar dryer donated by KFW DEG and Bayer, produced banana chocolate which attracted the customers with its longer shelf-life. Impressed by the success of this company, the Agricultural Engineering Department had donated two more dryers for producing value-added products in banana.

R. Dheenadayalan, a partner of the company, said that the two dryers would be inaugurated within a month's time, when the company's monthly production capacity would go up from one tonne to four tonnes.

Manikutti Subramanian, manager of the company, said that the State Agricultural Engineering Department had set up the dryer units, each at a cost of Rs. 3.97 lakh. The Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, had ordered a special subsidy of Rs. 1.84 lakh for each unit, said Manikutti Subramanian. The 'Yummy banana' being produced by the company has gone down well with the customers. It is popularly known as banana chocolate. The company has been guiding a large number of farmers from across the country in making value-added products in banana, according to S. Ajithan, founder of the company.

New Rythu Bazaars to be opened in Krishna district

Information Technology will be used to upgrade the services of the Rythu Bazaars in the State and the gap between farmers and the consumers will be bridged further by identifying the places where there is a demand for vegetables and setting up mini Rythu Bazaars for the benefit of the general public, according to B.V. Ramana Murthy, Chief Executive Officer of the Rythu Bazaars.

Along with city MLA Vanamadi Venkateswara Rao, Mr. Murthy inaugurated a shed that was built by the agriculture market committee by spending Rs. 10 lakh at the Rythu Bazaar near the APSRTC Complex here on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Murthy said that keeping in view the gated communities to be built in the capital city Amaravati, mini Rythu Bazaars with 10-15 stalls each would be set up in the near future.

"We are going to open 20 new Rythu Bazaars in the Krishna district alone and 10 more Rythu Bazaars in East Godavari district," he said, while asking the local officials to send proposals for setting up the new outlets.

Referring to the sales, Mr. Murthy said that the credentials of the farmers setting up stalls in the Rythu Bazaars would be verified with the help of their Aadhaar number and only genuine farmers given an opportunity to open their stalls.

CEO says mini Rythu Bazaars will be opened near Amaravati in near future

Need for water conservation practices



A. Subburaj, Head of Office, Central Groundwater Board, Chennai, speaking at a programme in Thoothukudi on Tuesday.— Photo: N.Rajesh

A five-day training programme on aquifer information system and aquifer management plan by Central Groundwater Board (CGWB) under the aegis of Rajiv Gandhi National Groundwater Training and Research Institute commenced at V.O. Chidambaram College here on Tuesday to create capacity building for disseminating knowledge on aquifers and preparation of aquifer management plan for sustainability of groundwater resources.

A. Subburaj, Head of Office, CGWB, said rainfall is the main source of groundwater and Tamil Nadu receives an average rainfall on 55 days a year.

The entire demand for water for the whole year was met from recharge of these rainy days.

He stressed the need for water conservation practices such as recycling and reuse of water in domestic and industrial sector and micro irrigation practices like drip irrigation and sprinkler irrigation system.

The surface water available was fully harnessed by impounding the available water in 79 reservoirs, 39,400 medium and major tanks.

The net irrigated area was about 29,12,100 hectares by all sources while gross area irrigated is about 33,47,600 ha.

Ground water is the major source of water for irrigation.

With groundwater, 16,31,727 ha, which is about 56 per cent of the total area under irrigation in state, was irrigated.

Based on computation of groundwater resources as on March, 2011, 374 firkas with groundwater development in excess of hundred per cent had been categorised as 'over exploited' and 48 firkas with groundwater development between 90 to 100 per cent were categorized as 'critical.'

The groundwater development in 235 firkas was between 70 and 90 per cent and these were categorized as 'semi critical' and 437 firkas with less than 70 per cent were 'safe.'

But, resources had not been computed for 35 firkas in which the groundwater was totally saline, he added.

As for Thoothukudi district, five out of 41 firkas were over exploited, one firka was critical, three other firkas and 32 firkas had been categorized as 'semi critical' and 'safe' respectively.

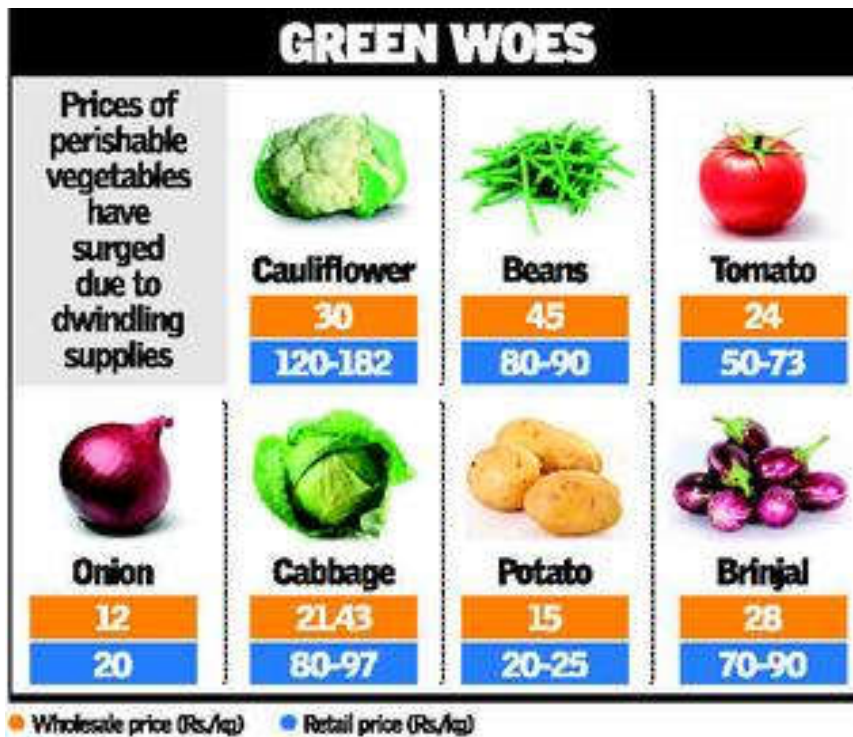
For a better management of groundwater resources, rainwater harvesting system, artificial recharge methods, check dams and percolation ponds with recharge shafts should be adopted.

Further, he said about 62 per cent of groundwater had been used in India and it was 77 per cent in Tamil Nadu. On aquifer mapping, which was taken up in the State under the 12th five year plan, 25,000 square km of total earmarked area of 95,000 square km had been completed and the rest would be completed in three years.

A.P.C.V. Chockalingam, secretary, VOC College, said water has become the most valuable commodity nowadays and it was high time for people to conserve it. A. Narendran, Executive Engineer, TWAD Board, K. Vijaya, Deputy Director, Agriculture, K. Kadirvelu, retired Professor, Department of Geology, A. V. Udayanapillai, Associate Professor and Head, attended.

Buyers feel the pinch as rain hits veggie supplies

Delhi gets most of its supply from Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand



Prices of vegetables, especially the green ones which perish faster, continue to remain high as supplies have been hit by monsoon.

According to members of Azadpur Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC), prices of vegetables such as cauliflower, cabbage, spinach, beans, capsicum, ladies finger, brinjal and broccoli have seen a steep hike.

Heavy rain

“Delhi gets a major share of perishable and green leafy vegetables from States like Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. These places are witnessing heavy rainfall and if it does not stop, the prices are going to head further north,” said Rajender Sharma, member of the APMC at Azadpur Mandi.

The traders added that at present most vegetables arriving in the Capital are produced in green houses maintained in nearby States.

While the crops at green houses receive a protected environment, reaping the produce in farms is becoming difficult as the rains have flooded the fields. They suspected the prices to normalise only by the end of this month.

However, experts and wholesale traders informed that retailers are taking advantage of the monsoon to overcharge the buyers.

Disparity

The Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) in its latest survey found that retailers were charging very high prices as compared to wholesale prices of vegetables. The disparity between wholesale price and retail prices for essential vegetables like ladies finger, cabbage, bitter gourd went up beyond 35-40 per cent between June 30 to July 30, 2016, the survey revealed.

The wholesale rate of a kilo of cauliflower was recorded at Rs.30 on Monday, but in the retail market in Delhi-NCR it was being sold anywhere between Rs.120 and Rs.182. Similarly, cabbage cost Rs.21.43 at the Azadpur Mandi, but it was being sold at Rs.80 to Rs.97 per kilo in the retail market. The same vegetable was available at Rs.35 a kilo in the first week of July.

Selective purchase

The rising prices have forced the buyers to become selective in purchasing vegetables for daily consumption. “The price of cauliflower is shocking. Other vegetables like beans, spinach, cabbage and carrots are also too expensive. I found arbi to be still cheap, so bought a lot of them,” said Jwala Dutta, a resident of Chittaranjan Park.

Cattle camp

A total of 203 free cattle camps would be held in the district this year to administer preventive medicine to cattle and check their health, said Collector T.G. Vinay.

Inaugurating a special cattle camp at Moolapadiyur in Padiyur panchayat near here on Tuesday, he said the purpose of the camp was to take animal healthcare to the doorstep of farmers. A total of 2,145 cows, 292 buffaloes, 2,342 goats, 1,765 sheep, 114 dogs and 4,712 hens at M. Pudhur, E. Pudhur, Karayampatti,

Karuveppliai Thottam, Pudhupatti, Nattamaikaranpatti, Paraipatti, Nadupatti, Velampatti, Ettikulathupatti, Koottathurpatti and nearby areas in Padiyur panchayat were screened.

‘Technologies should reach farmers’

New technologies needed for farmers in rural areas should reach them properly, said MLA Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri inaugurating a Bapuji Centre at Salkani in Sirsi taluk on Monday.

The State government was not taking effective steps to solve issues involved with the e-property scheme, he said.

Plea to increase copra procurement price

The Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam staged a novel demonstration at Vadakarai on Tuesday demanding a hike in copra procurement price and waiver of crop loans availed by farmers from nationalised banks.

The government should procure copra being produced by farmers at a remunerative price.

Coconut oil extracted from the procured copra could be sold to the public through ration shops across the State.

Attractive subsidies should be given to coconut farmers.

The procurement price of paddy should also be increased to Rs. 3,000 a quintal in view of more expenditure towards input.

Aged farmers should be given a monthly pension of Rs. 3,000.

They raised slogans to highlight their demands and broke coconuts in front of the office of the Village Administrative Officer.

Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam office-bearers S. Kasamuthu and S.T. Shaik Maideen participated in the demonstration.

RBI holds rates on inflation concerns

The central bank kept the repo rate, at which it lends money to banks, unchanged at 6.5 per cent

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|  <p>The decision to frontload liquidity provisions through an announcement of OMO is a well thought out move as capital flows have been relatively slow this year given the global uncertainties, resulting in lower net foreign exchange acquisition. We believe transmission of rates will happen gradually over the next few months as credit growth picks up pace – Arundhati Bhattacharya, Chairman, SBI</p> |  <p>As expected, the RBI kept the policy repo rate unchanged but held on to its “accommodative” stance. Rains, monetary policy committee members and the next RBI governor will determine future action. If rains are sufficient, we expect a 25 bps rate cut in Q4 – Pranjal Bhandari, Chief India Economist, HSBC</p> |
|  <p>The decision to keep the policy rate unchanged is in line with market expectations. RBI has ensured adequate liquidity and brought the liquidity balance closer to neutrality. The favourable monsoons and the momentum in policy reforms like GST augur well for the economy going forward – Chanda Kochhar, MD and CEO, ICICI Bank</p> | |

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Raghuram Rajan left the benchmark interest rate unchanged on Tuesday citing “upside” risks to its target of 5 per cent inflation by March 2017. The RBI kept the repo rate, the key rate at which the central bank lends money to commercial banks, at 6.5 per cent. Retail inflation in June was 5.77 per cent, well above the 5 per cent target set by the central bank. The central bank reiterated that it still maintains an “accommodative” stance. There are indications that prices of vegetables are edging down on the back of favourable monsoon rains, according to the central bank. The market anticipates at least one more rate reduction by March as a normal monsoon is expected to help bring down food prices, which had risen of late.

Abheek Barua, chief economist, HDFC Bank said that food prices would ease with a normal monsoon and decline in global food prices. “However, given the sticky services sector inflation and a likely boost in rural consumption, the fall in headline inflation is unlikely to be drastic enough to encourage more than one policy rate cut in FY17.”

Mr. Rajan expressed disappointment that banks had not done enough to reduce lending rates.

“Despite easy liquidity, banks have passed past rate cuts into lending rates only modestly,” he said. “Earlier, some bankers said that it was the lack of liquidity that was holding rates high, now I hear from some that it is fear of the FCNR(B) redemptions that is making them reluctant to cut rates. I have a suspicion that some new concern will crop up once the FCNR(B) redemptions are behind us,” Mr. Rajan said. Outflows of foreign currency deposits, which were raised in September 2013 to counter sharp depreciation of the rupee, were likely to be non-disruptive, Mr. Rajan added.

Credit growth

Bankers said a rate cut can happen if demand for loans picks up.

“We believe transmission of rates will happen gradually over the next few months as credit growth picks up pace,” said Arundhati Bhattacharya, Chairman, State Bank of India. RBI said it will review the present loan-pricing system and Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate (MCLR), to make monetary transmission more effective.

The central bank is also implementing a liquidity framework indicating a move toward zero liquidity deficit. Commenting on the clean up of bank balance sheets he had initiated, Mr. Rajan said, “some banks have taken more steps than what was required. So the culture of cleaning seems to be well embedded as well as the culture of recovery of some of the loans.”

Industry disappointed

Industry expressed disappointment with the RBI decision.

“The economic situation is improving and a further cut in policy rate at this juncture would have been well timed,” said Harshvardhan Neotia, President, FICCI.

Mr. Rajan's successor faces the challenges of integrating decision making with the Monetary Policy Committee, and ensuring a smooth transition process.

The 53-year-old former International Monetary Fund chief economist, who is set to step down on September 4, said there was a likelihood of the next rate decision being taken by a six-member Monetary Policy Committee "rather than an individual."

"If that is the case, then there will be six people, sitting together and deciding what the path on interest rates will be. I think we should expect them to take an independent decision. I am sure, they will." The Governor, under the new dispensation, will have a casting vote in case of a tie.

Despite easy liquidity, banks have passed past rate cuts into lending rates only modestly

Krishnagiri gets fund

Under the Integrated Horticulture Development Mission, the district has been allocated fund for the current fiscal of 2016-17.

According to the administration, for horticulture expansion, 40 per cent subsidy is envisioned for nurseries of vegetables at Rs.10 lakh. The Mission plan also envisions polyhouses for flowers at 50 per cent subsidy for small and marginal farmers.

Also, the scheme also envisions 39 cold storage facilities for vegetables and flowers post harvest at 50 per cent subsidy. Under the farm mechanisation scheme, 25 per cent subsidy is envisaged for tractors for farmers.

Five tractors are proposed to be given on subsidy.

According to the department, water harvesting structures are also proposed. Farmers are requested to contact the Assistant Horticulture officers of the respective divisions.

28,000 gram panchayats: Maharashtra sets Rs 10,000-crore target under MGNREGA



Photo taken for representational purpose

In a bid to bring in reforms in the MGNREGA from August 15, the state government has prepared a draft proposal listing 15 projects that can be taken up under the scheme, to generate more employment and create rural assets.

The annual budget under EGS for the 15 initiatives proposed is Rs 10,000 crore. It would be enforced in all 28,000 gram panchayats across the state.

The projects include farm ponds, irrigation wells, village ponds, desilting of water conservation projects, rural toilets, vermi-compost, setting up nurseries, tree plantation, construction of rural houses and cow sheds, among others.

The cabinet minister for Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS), Jaikumar Rawal said,

“Maharashtra’s performance in implementing MGNREGA has not been very satisfactory. In the past seven years, we have spent only Rs 8,000 crore. Madhya Pradesh has spent Rs 25,000 crore in the same period.”

Rawal said the government intends to link the work undertaken in MGNREGA to creating permanent assets.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, too, has emphasised on the need for greater investment in rural sectors to create new work opportunities and provide infrastructure to farmers.

Funds for the MGNREGA are shared between the Centre and states on a 60:40 basis. To utilise the scheme better, Maharashtra has now decided to relax norms and incorporate new features under the title Swabhimani Prakalp, to engage youths, senior citizens and women to take up work in their villages.

The proposal mentions that the state has been facing problems in getting people to work as labourers, as rural youth prefer to seek employment elsewhere instead of sweating on road construction.

Earlier, there were rigid norms, which also discouraged people to take up jobs under the MNREGA.

Taking a cue from other states that have amended norms to cater to their population’s requirements within the parameters specified by the Centre, Maharashtra has decided to budget rural projects in a time-bound manner.

Rawal said, “To begin with, we will launch 1.11 lakh irrigation wells and 1.11 lakh farm ponds.”

The state has decided to increase its forest area through massive tree plantation drive, and will bring work for this under EGS.

MGNREGA workers will also be involved in constructing fisheries ponds. Some of these schemes would be interlinked with the departments concerned.

Banana prices forecast to go up Coimbatore, says study

It is alleged that the surge in number of like on the Facebook Page of the Cambodia PM is because his digital adoration is purchased from so-called "click farms".



Bananas Prices are likely rise till October says Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) forecast.

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) has forecast an upward swing in banana prices till October, being the festive season.

The Price Forecasting Scheme in TNAU has analysed the 15 years' monthly prices of cultivars of 'Poovan', 'Karpooravalli' and eight years' monthly prices of 'Nendran' banana varieties of Coimbatore, to help the growers get better returns.

The analysis and traders survey indicated that during August–October, the expected average farm gate price would be Rs.23-25 per kg for Poovan, Rs.27-29 per kg for Karpooravalli and Rs.36-38 per kg for Nendran and advised the farmers to take note of the market advisory before harvesting their produce, a release said.

Area under banana in Tamil Nadu was around 1.13 lakh hectares with a production of 49 lakhs tonnes during 2015-16.

A mixed trend was witnessed in Tamil Nadu this season, as the Central districts achieved better yields because of good rainfall last year. But the production declined owing to heavy rain and winds during the last week of June in the Northern districts like Cuddalore and Villupuram, it said.

Uneven rainfall and water deficit in the Southern districts like Thoothukudi and Tirunelveli have also affected the market arrivals during the current season, it said.

The prices of banana would firm up during the season of festivities and marriages, in the coming months, it said

Lot of scope for rate cuts in coming months: India Inc

"The economic situation is improving and a further cut in policy rate at this juncture would have been well timed," Ficci President Harshvardhan Neotia said.



RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan. (Source: PTI Photo/File)

With RBI keeping key rates unchanged in its policy review, India Inc Tuesday said it sees ‘a lot of scope’ for rate cuts going forward on account of lower inflation engendered by a favourable monsoon.

PHD Chamber of Commerce President Mahesh Gupta said “there is a lot of scope to reduce the repo rate as good monsoon is visible and inflationary expectations are benign”.

At this juncture, the economy should be supported by lower interest rates to enhance the demand for durables and to boost the manufacturing sector, said Gupta, observing that the cost of credit to businesses is high as compared to many competitive economies, impacting not only the domestic but also the international markets.

“The economic situation is improving and a further cut in policy rate at this juncture would have been well timed,” Ficci President Harshvardhan Neotia said.

Citing upside risks to the Reserve Bank’s inflation target for March 2017, Governor Raghuram Rajan today maintained status quo on key rates at his last policy review meeting, as was widely expected, but underlined that the central bank continues to be accommodative.

On the growth front, the RBI maintained its projection of 7.6 per cent on a gross value addition basis, saying the favourable monsoon which is 3 per cent above the average which raises agricultural growth and rural demand and higher consumption on the back of the 7th Pay Commission implementation.

Engineering exporters’ body EEPC India Chairman T S Bhasin pointed out that world trade has remained sluggish in the first half of 2016.

“Thus, challenges are likely to stay making it imperative for the Indian exporters to become competitive, for which an accommodative interest rates are a must. The interest rates form a significant cost of the shipments for the exporters, must come down,” he said.

With the Monetary Policy Committee framework on the anvil, wherein shaping of the policy will shift to the panel, this might also be the last of the Governor-led policy announcements at Mint Street.

Industry body Assocham said it looks forward to formation of an institutional framework for deciding the policy interest rates in sync with the inflation and growth. Retail inflation inched up to a 22-month high level of 5.77 per cent in June on increase in food prices including that of key kitchen staples like vegetables and cereals.

Rajan's remarks on possibility of positive impact of monsoon on inflation and continuing accommodative stance towards interest rates augur well for achieving sustainable growth, Assocham said.

Natural fruit extract may prevent, reduce kidney stones

Calcium oxalate crystals are the most common component of kidney stones. This finding could lead to the first advance in the treatment of calcium oxalate stones in 30 years, said researchers.



kidney stones. (representational Image)

A natural fruit extract may prevent and even dissolve human kidney stones, a new study has found which could lead to the first advance in the treatment of calcium oxalate stones in 30 years.

The study by University of Houston researchers offers the first evidence that the compound hydroxycitrate (HCA) is an effective inhibitor of calcium oxalate crystal growth that, under certain conditions, is actually able to dissolve these Crystals.

Calcium oxalate crystals are the most common component of kidney stones. This finding could lead to the first advance in the treatment of calcium oxalate stones in 30 years, researchers said.

Kidney stones are small, hard mineral deposits that form inside the kidneys, affecting up to 12 per cent of men and seven per cent of women.

High blood pressure, diabetes and obesity can increase the risk, and the reported incidence is on the rise.

Preventive treatment has not changed much over the last three decades. Doctors tell patients who are at risk of developing stones to drink lots of water and avoid foods rich in oxalate, such as rhubarb, okra, spinach and almonds.

They often recommend taking citrate (CA), in the form of potassium citrate, a supplement that can slow crystal growth, but some people are unable to tolerate the side effects.

HCA is chemically similar to CA and is also available as a dietary supplement.

“HCA shows promise as a potential therapy to prevent kidney stones. HCA may be preferred as a therapy over CA (potassium citrate),” researchers said.

Studies of CA and HCA determined that while both compounds inhibit the growth of calcium oxalate crystals, HCA was more potent and displayed unique qualities that are advantageous for the development of new therapies.

Researchers then used atomic force microscopy (AFM) to study interactions between the crystals, CA and HCA under realistic growth conditions.

The technique allowed them to record crystal growth in real time with near-molecular resolution, said Jeffrey Rimer, associate professor at the University of Houston.

The AFM images recorded the crystal actually shrinking when exposed to specific concentrations of HCA, researchers said.

They applied density functional theory (DFT) – a highly accurate computational method used to study the structure and properties of materials – to address how HCA and CA bind to calcium and to calcium oxalate crystals.

They discovered HCA formed a stronger bond with crystal surfaces, inducing a strain that is seemingly relieved by the release of calcium and oxalate, leading to crystal dissolution.

HCA was also tested in human subjects, as seven people took the supplement for three days, allowing researchers to determine that HCA is excreted through urine, a requirement for the supplement to work as a treatment.



Nabard sanctions Rs 26 cr to tackle waterlogging in Muktsar, Fazilka

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) on Tuesday sanctioned Rs 26.06 crore to the Punjab government for tackling waterlogging by constructing lift schemes in low-lying areas, village ponds and other allied works. The project will reclaim 5,913 hectares of land in 87 villages of Muktsar and Fazilka districts.

Once the project is implemented, farmers will be able to cultivate crops in the previously waterlogged areas after a long gap.

With this, the total sanctions to the Punjab government under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF), since its inception, stands at Rs 7,826.17 crore, said an official release.

Exercise, eat less fat: Texting a million Indians to prevent diabetes



The effort by researchers from Northwestern University in the US and Arogya World, a global health non-profit organisation is the first to use the power and reach of mobile phones to change diabetes risk behaviours in a large number of people from different parts of a vast country like India.

One million people in India who received text messages twice a week advising them to exercise, eat less fat, and consume more fruits and vegetables increased these health behaviours which prevented diabetes, a new study has found.

The effort by researchers from Northwestern University in the US and Arogya World, a global health non-profit organisation is the first to use the power and reach of mobile phones to change diabetes risk behaviours in a large number of people from different parts of a vast country like India.

It has implications for diabetes prevention in low and middle-income countries. In India, the diabetes burden is very high. An estimated 66 million people live with the disease, and 1 million die from it each year, researchers said.

Indian Americans also are hard hit with diabetes.

The diabetes prevalence in this population is four times higher than among Caucasians in the US, they said.

Researchers compared composite scores of the experimental group's fruit, vegetable and fat intake and exercise with the control group.

While people in both the experimental and control group improved their health behaviours over six months, the experimental group improved significantly more.

Almost 40 per cent more people improved their health behaviours as a result of the texting (299 showing improvement in the experimental group versus 185 in the control group).

“Noncommunicable diseases, one of the leading health and development challenges of the century, demand simple, proven, cost-effective prevention solutions that can be easily deployed at the population level,” said Nalini Saligram, founder and CEO of Arogya World.

“Our study suggests mobile health technology is a smart solution and has broad implications for diabetes prevention at the population level in low and middle-income countries,” said Saligram.

“This shows the potential for even the most basic of mobile phones to be used as a viable tool to deliver public health messages on a large scale across a diverse population,” Angela Fidler Pfammatter, research assistant professor at Northwestern University.

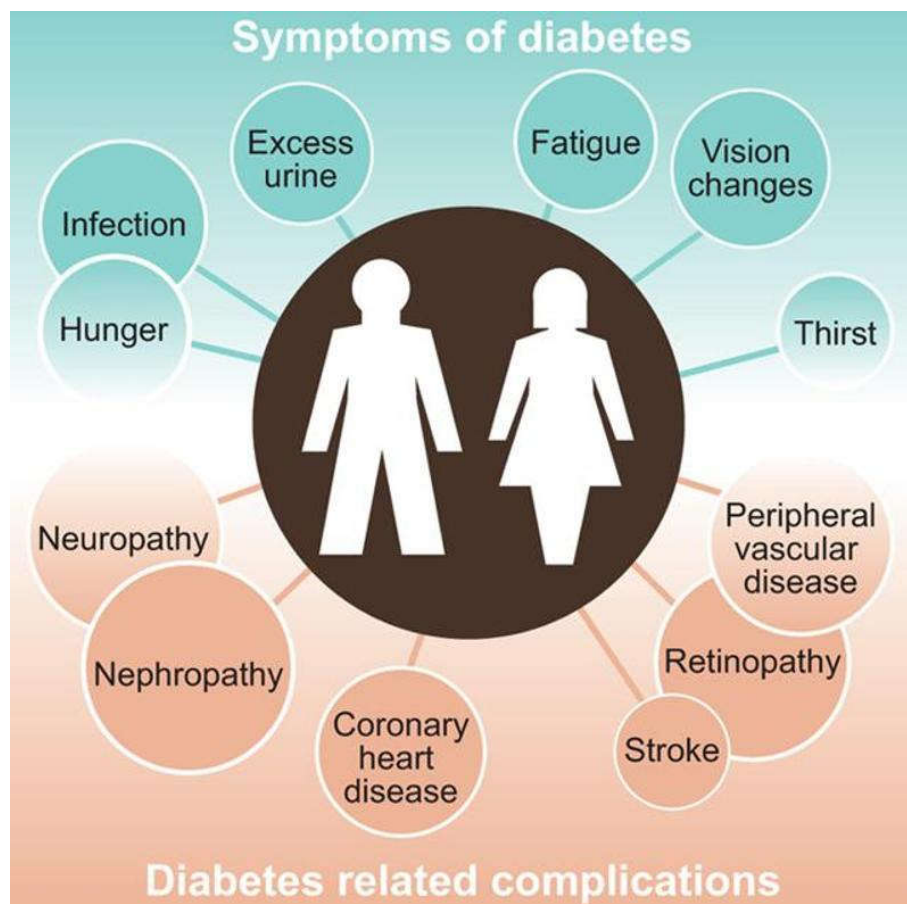
“And you just need a basic mobile phone. This can make an impact,” said Pfammatter.

The study gathered responses from nearly 1,000 people who received text messages as part of Arogya World’s mDiabetes initiative and compared them to responses from a similar number of people who did not receive the text messages.

The randomly chosen 1,000 individuals, who were surveyed by phone in the language of their choice, were considered a representative sample of the one million participants.

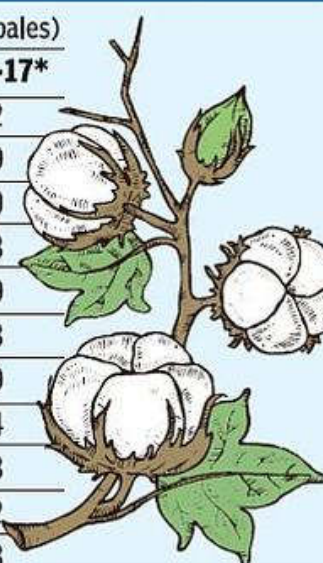
The study scored for fruit, vegetable and fat consumption as well as exercise in participants at baseline and six months. There were 943 people in the control group, 982 in the experimental one.

The findings were published in the Journal of Medical and Internet Research.



Late, but widespread rains bail out cotton crop in Gujarat

| Growing Region | Area (lakh ha) | | Production (lakh bales) | |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| | 2015-16 | 2016-17* | 2015-16 | 2016-17* |
| Punjab | 4.4 | 2.6 | 7.7 | 7.2 |
| Haryana | 5.8 | 5.0 | 12.6 | 17.9 |
| Rajasthan | 4.1 | 4.5 | 15.0 | 18.0 |
| Gujarat | 27.6 | 25.0 | 90.4 | 99.3 |
| Maharashtra | 38.4 | 37.5 | 76.7 | 73.9 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 5.5 | 5.8 | 17.8 | 18.3 |
| Andhra/Telangana | 23.6 | 21.4 | 81.7 | 75.9 |
| Karnataka | 5.8 | 6.3 | 17.9 | 22.4 |
| Tamil Nadu | 1.3 | 1.3 | 4.5 | 5.3 |
| Others | 1.6 | 1.6 | 5.6 | 5.2 |
| India total | 117.9 | 110.8 | 330.0 | 343.3 |



Source: Edelweiss Agri Research June 2016 * Estimated

Experts see acreage at around 105 lakh hectares, crop likely to be stable

Despite a delayed monsoon and the sluggish progress of sowing, cotton production in the State is not likely to wilt this Kharif season thanks to improved yields.

Driven by good rains in the growing regions, the yield is likely to be higher, resulting in a stable crop size, say experts.

All-India output

In Gujarat, India’s largest cotton producing State, acreage under the fibre crop has touched a three-year low at 23 lakh hectares — which is about 19 per cent lower than the three-year average of 28.21 lakh hectares (lh).

The State accounts for nearly a third of India's cotton production. Cotton acreage in the country, which stood at around 118 lh for 2015-16 as per the provisional figures of the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), is likely to be lower this year.

But a good rainfall in the growing regions of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana, apart from Gujarat, is likely to improve the crop situation for 2016-17.

“As the monsoon was delayed and sowing took a beating, we feared the cotton acreage will go below 100 lh this year. But now with improved rain and water situation, we can expect the acreage to be around 105 lh this year,” said Dhiren Sheth, President, Cotton Association of India (CAI), a trade body for cotton.

For Gujarat, Sheth believes that the area under cotton has gone down but not as significant as it was feared in the early part of the monsoon.

Improved water levels

“The monsoon situation has improved in the State. The area may be lower but the yield will improve compared to last year,” he said, adding that the country's overall cotton crop will be closer to last year's output.

However, the CAI is likely to officially declare initial crop estimates soon.

Arun Dalal, a cotton expert from Ahmedabad, said, “There will not be any impact of delayed rains on production. We have received good rains in the past few days and it will continue. We expect cotton acreage to touch 25 lakh hectares in Gujarat.”

Research agency Edelweiss, in its report, put India's cotton crop at 343.3 lakh bales (of 170 kg each) for 2016-17, while yield is estimated at one of the highest in three years at 518 kg/hectare.

Gujarat's production is seen at around 99.3 lakh bales.

Depression pops up in Bay; rains to scale up

A 'depression' has formed over North-West Bay of Bengal and adjoining coastal West Bengal on Tuesday in what is being described as another hyper-active phase of the monsoon.

The turnaround in the Bay was so fast-paced that it took less than 12 hours for a lingering cyclonic circulation to suddenly mass up energy and intensify thrice over.

Normally, it would take days together for a rudimentary circulation to transform itself in such a dramatic fashion.

Third in row

The circulation grew into a low-pressure area, third in the current series, only in the morning before escalating in strength one round after the other to become a depression by the evening. This is expected to further scale up the monsoon over large parts of East and North-East India, North-West India and along the West Coast (mostly Konkan-Goa).

Already, a predecessor 'low' generated in the Bay has been travelling in a westerly direction raining along the way and is currently located over East Rajasthan and adjoining West Madhya Pradesh heavily drenching the Gujarat-Rajasthan-West Madhya Pradesh belt.

According to India Met Department, the depression in the Bay is also expected to move initially in a westerly direction towards Odisha-Chhattisgarh-East Madhya Pradesh.

The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts too seems to agree with this outlook. According to the European Centre, the Bay is likely to conjure up another 'low' in a week's time (likely by August 16) tagging along with another strong typhoon (cyclone) forecast to brew in the upstream North-West Pacific/South China Sea and moving towards Hong Kong.

Typhoon influence

This westward track of a typhoon in the ocean basin that lies to the east of the Bay of Bengal has been found to be beneficial for the concurrent Indian monsoon in as much as it is likely to lob in a 'pulse' across Indochina into the Bay where it can grow afresh as a 'low.'

The existing 'low' over East Rajasthan-West Madhya Pradesh draws its parentage from typhoon '*Nida*' that hit Hong Kong last week. It has already left a flooded track across Central India that has boosted the rainfall surplus to 15 per cent regionally and three per cent for the country as a whole as on Tuesday.

But the South Peninsula is increasingly being denied its share of the bounty and has slipped into a rainfall deficit of one per cent.

This is attributed to the fact 'low's forming in the Bay have not been able to send in their rain bands down to the South due to their remotely northerly places of origin.

Systems that form along the coast to the south — ideally Coastal Andhra Pradesh and adjoining Odisha — would have been beneficial for the South Peninsula.

But such a possibility is ruled out at least for the time being.

Good demand for quality turmeric

Spot turmeric prices at Erode increased on Monday on the back of quality arrivals.

“Though there was no arrival of Salem Hybrid, the local hybrid fetched good price of 9,400-10,600 a quintal and all the 600 bags of local hybrid varieties were sold.

The buyers, despite of non-receipt of upcountry orders, are buying the spice to cater to the local masala and grinding units,” said RKV Ravishankar, President,

Erode Turmeric Merchants Association. Of the arrival of 5,500 bags, 70 per cent stocks were sold.

The price of the finger variety was up 150 a quintal and the root variety by 100.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the finger turmeric was sold at 7,556-9,466 a quintal; the root variety 7,355-8,456. Of the arrival of 1,897 bags, 1,464 were sold.

Nilgiri tea production till July down 28%

Tea companies in the Nilgiris, the largest tea growing district in the South, have reported to Tea Board that their production till July has fallen by about 28 per cent compared to the same period of last year.

In July, while the regions covered by the South-West monsoon received some rainfall, those covered by the North-East monsoon did not receive adequate rains to make good the dry conditions that prevailed in the first half of current calendar.

Consequently, tea companies have reported an output of 1.22 million kg (mkg) in July against 1.47 mkg in July 2015, marking a decline of 17 per cent. This has affected the production in the first seven months of current calendar.

Tea companies have reported to Tea Board that their production in the seven months of 2016 has fallen to 6.91 mkg from 9.53 mkg in the same months of 2015, marked 28 per cent fall. The five-year mean production for this period was also high at 8.89 mkg.

Prolonged dry weather, inadequate moisture due to low rainfall and heavy wind causing evaporation in tea leaves reduced the harvest of green leaves.

This pulled down the arrival of green leaves for processing in the factories and concomitantly brought down the production, tea companies have contended.

Business Standard

Land routes opened for basmati exports to Bangladesh, Nepal

Basmati exports dropped 20.4% in value terms to \$585 mn (Rs 3,901 cr) in April-May this year, against \$735 mn (Rs 4,651 cr) in the corresponding period last year

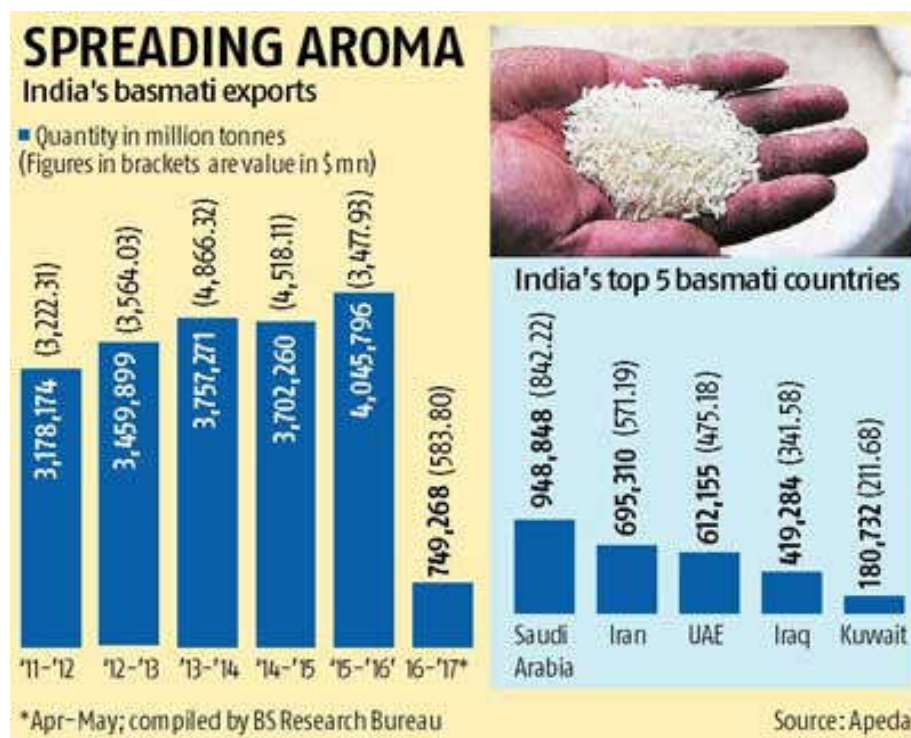


The central government has opened the eastern and north-eastern border for transport of basmati rice through land customs stations (LCS) to Bangladesh and Nepal.

Both neighbours have been consistent importers of basmati but only through sea to Bangladesh, despite the large land border. With the opening of transportation through LCS, this export would get a fillip, said A K Gupta, director, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda).

Such export through LCS to Bangladesh and Nepal would be subject to registration of the quantity with the Directorate General of Foreign Trade. The latter has said this would be allowed from October 1 but must also be covered by either a bank guarantee or by the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation.

Apeda data show basmati exports declined by 20.4 per cent in value terms to \$585 million (Rs 3,901 crore) in April-May this year, first two months of this financial year, as against \$735 million (Rs 4,651 crore) in the corresponding period last year. In volume terms the fall was four per cent, to 750,000 tonnes as compared to 780,000 tonnes.



"We were transporting basmati to Nepal through Bhairawan, a location in Nepal near Lumbini, through our distributors near the border, with realisation in rupees. Opening of the Bangladesh is also a good move. Both markets would add a good quantity of export," said Gurnam Arora, joint managing director, Kohinoor Foods.

Basmati export to Bangladesh declined by nine per cent to 745 tonnes (\$0.9 mn) in 2015-16 from 818 tonnes (\$1.01 mn) the previous year.

Govt takes food, mouth disease vaccination to 16 more states

Under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana with a budget of Rs 100 crore

Government has decided to take up foot and mouth disease vaccination in 16 states and 1 Union Territory (UT), under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) with a budget of Rs 100 crore.

To prevent economic losses due to food and mouth disease (FMD), a location specific 'FMD Control Programme' is being implemented since 2002 and been covered in 13 states and 6 UTs.

"Looking at the economic importance of the control disease, the Department (of Animal and Husbandry) has conceived 'FMD Mukh Bharat' in next few years," an official release said.

"However, 16 States and 1 UT are yet to be covered under intensive FMD vaccination at 6 monthly intervals. Therefore, it has now been decided to take up FMD vaccination in these states under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) during 2016-17," it added.

Initially Rs 100 crore has been allotted for FMD control under RKVY for 16 states and 1 UT.

The states are Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal and the UT is Chandigarh.

State-wise allocation has already been informed to respective state governments. The states have been asked to undertake FMD vaccination by availing the assistance under RKVY, the statement said.

The government has said that with robust implementation of FMD control programme, the disease occurrence has drastically been reduced. The number of FMD outbreaks have come down to 109 in 2015 from 879 in 2012, it added.

FMD is one of the most economically devastating contagious viral animal diseases affecting all susceptible cloven-footed animals.

As per the estimates by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), direct loss to milk and meat is to the tune of Rs 20,000 crore per annum.

It can be much more if indirect losses due to reduced work capacity, abortions, subsequent infertility and sterility are taken into account, it added.

NCDEX board panel on more farmer participation

NCDEX will enable some of the most marginalised farmers to access reliable markets for the first time



The National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Ltd (NCDEX) has formed a panel of four board members to advise on its ambitious plan to connect 50,000 farmers to reliable markets, which is the next step towards unlocking income opportunities for smallholder farmers, the exchange said in an announcement.

At present 16,000 farmers belonging to seven Farmer Producer Companies have hedged on the exchange and received 20 per cent higher realisations.

NCDEX has created a special committee to drive this path-breaking initiative. Members of the committee include Ashok Gulati, independent director, Rakesh Kapur, shareholder director, and Siddharth Pradhan, independent director.

With the support of partners such as IFFCO, NABARD, Tata Trust, Reliance Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, BASIX, Technoserve, Jeevika, Vrutti Livelihoods, CARE India, and Small Farmers Agri-business Consortium,

NCDEX will be able to shift more than 50,000 of India's poorest farmers from subsistence farming to market-oriented agriculture by facilitating their access to correct price signals before planting begins, managing price risk at harvest time, and receiving other forms of support including post-harvest training on quality standards, financing and warehousing.

"NCDEX will enable some of the most marginalised farmers to access reliable markets for the first time. This will have a profound impact on food security and bring us closer to our national goal of doubling farmer incomes by 2020," said NCDEX Chairman Rabi Narayan Das.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Farmers opting for pulses over cotton



With the prices of tur dal and other pulses skyrocketing, to between Rs 155 and Rs 180 a kg, farmers in the state are increasingly choosing to sowing pulses.

The area sown with tur, urad and other pulses in the state has risen by 77% from last year.

The area sown with pulses was 5.81 lakh hectares this year, while this number was 3.28 lakh ha last year.

There are several factors behind the increased cultivation of pulses.

The Union government has increased the minimum support price (MSP) of dals by Rs 200, from Rs 4,300 to Rs 4,500 per quintal.

Delayed sowing because of the late arrival of the rains has also led farmers to switch to pulses

Officials in the agriculture department said that the farmers are leaving behind cotton crop and are now moving back to their traditional groundnut farming or are turning to pulses.

In Gujarat this year, groundnut has been sown on 15.92 lakh hectares, against the 10-year average acreage of 13.93 lakh hectares.

This indicates that 114% of the usual area was sown with groundnut.

Last year groundnut was sown on only 12.84 lakh hectares.

This year, cotton has been sown on 22.81 lakh hectares against the 10-year average acreage of 28.21 lakh hectares.

This represents just 80% of the usual cotton average. Last year till August 8, the state had cotton sowing in 26.11 lakh hectare area.

Officials said that the sowing of towar dal was in an area of 3.11 lakh hectare of the 10-year average of 2.34 lakh ha area. Last year Towar sowing was in 2.34 lakh ha area.

Similarly, the sowing of Arar dal was in 1.71 lakh ha while the average was only 74,200 ha area. In all the sowing of pulses is in an area of 5.81 lakh ha against the 10 year average of 4.44 lakh ha. This was only in 3.81 lakh ha last year.

Centre tells Nafed to procure produce from farmers



In a bid to tackle the ongoing crisis over onion auction in the district, the central government is planning to commence onion procurement from farmers through the National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED).

The federation will not only procure onions, but also sell the produce in Delhi and other major cities.

The central government will conduct a meeting with NAFED on August 10 to check the possibility of onion procurement directly from farmers and sell it to big traders in Delhi as well other major cities. Union ministers Nitin Gadkari, Subhash Bhamre and Radha Mohan Singh will hold talks.

Sources in NAFED told TOI, "The Centre has called a meet with NAFED on Wednesday to discuss the issue. Onions will be procured across Nashik district, the major onion growing-pocket of the country."

The government is contemplating onion procurement through NAFED in the backdrop of the deadlock between traders and farmers over onion auction in the district. The state government has delisted vegetables and fruits from the APMC Act in a bid to help farmers sell their produce directly to retailers or consumers. Moreover, the government has also decided to recover 6% commission from the traders, instead of farmers.

Earlier, the farmers would pay 6% commission after auction to commission agents, who would facilitate payment and financial accounts between the traders and them. But as per the government's decision, the traders, and not the farmers, will now have to pay 6% commission.

As a result, onion traders in the district APMCs have opted for onion auction in gunny bags, instead of auction in loose or unpacked formats. As it costs the farmers Rs 70 per quintal, they have been opposing onion auction in gunny bags.

In April and May, NAFED had procured 5,000 metric tonnes of onions under the Price Stability Funds (PSF) for the Centre to create buffer stock in a bid to stabilize onion prices in the domestic markets in case of scarcity. NAFED had procured onions from farmers at the APMCs at Lasalgaon, Pimpalgaon and Kalwan.

NCDEX to connect 50,000 farmers to markets this year

The National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) today said it is planning to connect 50,000 farmers to reliable markets this year, for which it has created a special committee.

"Majority of the poor people in the country today are farmers. We will enable some of the most marginalised farmers to access reliable markets for the first time. This will have a profound impact on food security and bring us closer to our national goal of doubling farmer incomes by 2020," NCDEX said Chairman Rabi Narayan Das said in a release here.

NCDEX is planning to shift more than 50,000 farmers from subsistence farming to market-oriented agriculture this year by facilitating their access to correct price signals before planting begins, managing price risk at harvest time, and receiving other forms of support including post-harvest training on quality standards, financing and warehousing.

In the last eight months, 16,000 farmers belonging to seven farmer producer companies, actively hedged on NCDEX, have received up to 20 per cent higher farm-gate prices for their wheat, maize, mustard seed, and soybean in states of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan.

"Because of NCDEX, 16,000 farmers in these states are already in a better position this planting season than the last one. They can now expand production to earn a more stable income knowing they have a trusted market committed to their long-term success," Das added. SM NRB ABK

Bollworm infestation makes fibre crop less attractive



A 50-year-old farmer committed suicide in Dhoraji town of Rajkot on Sunday evening fearing crop failure because of pink bollworm.

Harsukh Patel the deceased decided to commit suicide, but several farmers in the state are destroying their cotton crop and are switching over to other crops like pulses and groundnut.

The pink bollworm is a major factor for the increased cultivation of pulses because of widespread infestation of the cotton crop due to pink bollworm. Several farmers, especially in Saurashtra, replacing their already sown cotton crop and are planting pulses instead of their usual cotton crop.

Sanjay Gadhiya, a farmer from Gadhda village in Paddhdhari taluka of Rajkot district says: "I went in for early sowing of cotton, but later realized that the crop has been infested with pink bollworm.

I decided to uproot the undeveloped cotton crop and replace it with tur and soyabean. I have removed the cotton crop from some 10 bighas, and will do so on two more bighas soon."

Gadhiya said he wanted to make good the Rs 25,000 loss he incurred from sowing cotton and hence decided to go in for pulses.

Davendra Muliya, a resident of Taragadi village, says he sowed cotton on 150 bighas, but replaced it with dal and ajwain. He further said that several farmers in his village have also started changing their crop.

Govind Nagar of Chotra village in Rajula said farmers in his village opted to sow groundnut instead of cotton from the outset, because they had suffered huge losses last year due to the pink bollworm infestation.

R K Siyani, professor of agriculture economics at Junagadh Agriculture University, said: "Farmers are opting to sow pulses because they are getting good prices for their crop, compared to the low MSP for cotton. Farmers are realizing that they were a better price and are moving to pulses. Beside this, the relatively late sowing also favours pulses."

Dharmrajsinh Jethva, associate research scientist with the department of entomology at Junagadh Agricultural University said: "We are raising awareness among farmers that they needn't destroy the crop because JAU has come out with a solution to destroy the bollworm. We have developed a light trap which catches bollworm moths that lay the eggs. An effective pesticide has

also been found, and this pesticide is distributed to some 400 farmers every day."

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Area under pulse cultivation up by 54 per cent in Maharashtra



The area under oilseeds has also increased by 15 per cent, while farmers had little interest in cotton, where the gain in acreage has been the lowest at 3 per cent.

PUNE: Farmers in Maharashtra have increased the area under urad by 75 per cent and pulses by 64 per cent as on August 2, compared with the same period last year. Due to good rainfall, the kharif acreage has increased by 21 per cent over the previous year.

Of the 34 rural districts in the state, 25 have received more than 100 per cent rainfall. The area under foodgrains, including rice, jowar, bajra and ragi, has increased by 34 per cent.

The area under pulses has increased by 54 per cent, with urad registered the highest increase followed by tur and moong at 64 per cent and 46 per cent, respectively.

Bumper sowing is expected to bring the more than two-year old boom in prices of pulses. Global and domestic prices of pulses have already corrected by about 15 per cent in the last fortnight.

The area under oilseeds has also increased by 15 per cent, while farmers had little interest in cotton, where the gain in acreage has been the lowest at 3 per cent. The area under cotton as on August 2 has increased from 36.36 lakh hectare to 37.33 lakh hectare during the comparable period last year.

Of the average kharif area of 139.64 lakh hectare in the state, sowing has been completed on 135.02 lakh hectare; which is 97 per cent of the average kharif area.