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Business Standard

Odisha's Plan expenditure up 21% to Rs 24,408 cr till November

The uptrend in Plan expenditure is mainly on the back of enhanced spending in agriculture and infrastructure sectors



Odisha's Plan expenditure has moved up 21% in the April-November period, increasing from Rs 20,228 crore to Rs 24,408.50 crore.

The uptrend in Plan expenditure is mainly on the back of enhanced spending in agriculture and infrastructure sectors. Expenditure in the agricultural sector stood at Rs 6,227 crore which is 56% of the total budget

estimate. Infrastructure spending in the period under review crossed Rs 6,706 crore, marking an achievement of 59% of the Budget projections.

Social sector spending too has looked up. Expenditure in this key area is Rs 10,227 crore, meaning an achievement of 55% of the overall Budget estimates.

Chief secretary Aditya Padhi on Tuesday reviewed the position in expenditure and revenue collection of the state till November. He stressed on expediting implementation of development projects. The administrative departments were also asked to oversee implementation of flagship programmes and ensure their timely completion.

At the end of November, the state's revenue collection remained flat. Own tax revenue logged a marginal increase from Rs 13,519 crore to Rs 13,597 crore. Likewise, non-tax revenue stagnated at Rs 4,300 crore. Total revenue collection decelerated slightly from Rs 17,967 crore to Rs 17,896 crore in the period.

Import duty waiver may hurt wheat farmers

India's wheat imports are estimated at 2.5 million tonnes this year, of which 1.5 million tonnes have already landed

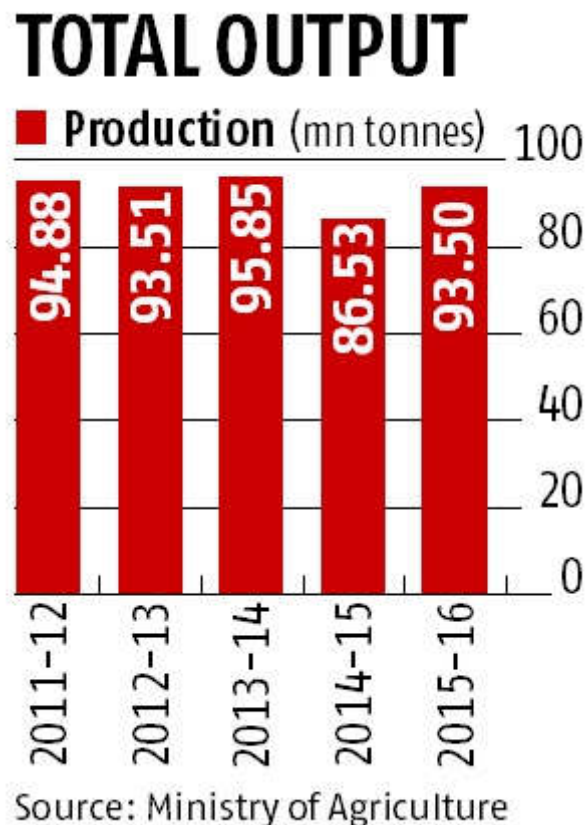


Waiving the wheat import duty is likely to affect farmers during the rabi sowing season.

Since speculation surfaced about the duty waiver two weeks ago, the price of wheat in international markets has jumped by more than 13% to \$210 a tonne. Despite this, the cost of imported wheat in ports in south India is Rs 200-250 a tonne less than prevailing local prices.

From Rs 1,600 a quintal at the beginning of the previous rabi season, wheat prices have risen to Rs 2,100-2,150 now in the northern states. The government lowered the wheat import duty from 25% to 10% in September and waived it earlier this week.

“Farmers will be discouraged from bringing additional area under wheat this year due to the possibility of a price fall. Bulk consumers in south India will prefer importing wheat,” said Veena Sharma, secretary of the Roller Flour Millers’ Federation of India.



India’s wheat imports are estimated at 2.5 million tonnes this year, of which 1.5 million tonnes have already landed. The area under wheat has increased by over 14% in this rabi season. The agriculture ministry estimates the wheat acreage on December 2 at 17.39 million hectares, up from 15.25 million hectares a year ago.

“With imported wheat being cheaper, traders will bring in huge quantities. Some farmers might shift to oilseeds and cash crops,” said a wheat trader in Amritsar. Experts said France was the only source for import of quality wheat

because Ukrainian wheat did not meet India's standards for direct consumption. The wheat harvest in Australia is scheduled in mid-January, slightly before the Indian harvest.

“India needs wheat till its harvest begins in mid-February. So, the government's decision is welcome,” said Rajiv Tevtiya, managing director and chief executive officer, RML AgTech.

Commodity picks: December 12, 2016

Wheat was trading at Rs 2,124 per quintal in the Delhi market

Wheat

Wheat was trading at Rs 2,124 per quintal in the Delhi market. Prices are expected to fall to Rs 2,050 in a couple of weeks, following the removal of import duty and expected aggressive import influx. However, a warmer winter across major wheat-growing belts poses a threat to the size of the new crop, limiting the price fall.

Cotton cake

Cotton cake prices in the Akola market are Rs 1,944 per quintal. Arrivals of Kapas is expected to improve, with the situation normalising after demonetisation. Demand for cotton cake is down from the feed industry. Prices are expected to trade weaker, towards Rs 1,900.

Prerana Desai,

V-P (research), Edelweiss Agri Services and Credit, Edelweiss Agri Value Chain

Global cues boost rubber

Spot rubber regained strength catalysed by the sharp gains in the global trendsetters on Tuesday. RSS 4 improved to 131 (129) a kg as reported by the traders. The grade firmed up to 131 (129.50) and 128 (126.50) respectively, according to the Rubber Board and dealers. December futures improved to 133.50 (128.39), January to 137.88 (132.58), February to 140.50 (135.20) and March to 143.95 (138.46) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) flared up to 151.66 (142.94) at Bangkok. December futures improved to ¥267.3 (156.38) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber (/kg): RSS-4: 131 (129); RSS-5: 126 (125); Ungraded: 120 (115); ISNR 20: 120 (117.50) and Latex (60% drc): 82.50 (82).

Uptrend continues in chana

Uptrend continued in chana with demand outstripping arrivals. Chana (kanta) ruled at 10,000-10,100 a quintal, while chana (desi) traded at 9,800. Chana dal (average) was being quoted at 12,800-900, chana dal (medium) at 13,000-13,200, while chana dal (bold) was at 13,300-600 respectively. Dollar chana also traded higher on improved buying at 12,000-13,000 a quintal. In container, dollar chana (42/44 count) went for 14,200; 44/46 count at 14,000, 58/60 count was at 12,600, while dollar chana (60/62 count) ruled at 11,600 a quintal respectively.

Spices Board, Mpeda pitch for boosting exports to Germany

Aiming to broaden the trade links with Germany, the Spices Board, in association with the Marine Products and Exports Development Authority (MPEDA), hosted an interactive session with German Consul General Margit Hellwig- Boette here.

The Consul General pointed to the strong ties between the two countries and indicated that trade relations would continue to grow in her address to a gathering of marine exports representatives from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Boette said that Germany is a frontrunner in consuming organic products. “Indian Ocean is a strategic economic zone as the Indo-German ties have strengthened. Germans are happy with the products from India especially because they meet the international standards,” she added.

MPEDA Chairman A Jayathilak advocated for boosting the spice and marine products exports and pressed for a transparent quality check procedures during the exports.

“India has been striving hard to meet the prescribed quality standards by European Union and I am happy that we are exporting our products with very less rejection of consignments. ‘Going organic’ is the buzzword of the town and we are now exporting pesticide-free products,” he said during the interactive session.

He also added that there is an increase demand for value added products in Germany, which accounts for 25 per cent of the total EU imports from India. Pepper, mint products, oil and oleoresins form a good share of the imports.

Marine exports to Germany were to the tune of 5,211 metric tonnes worth \$ 39.69 million during 2015-16. Frozen shrimp was the major item of export (80 per cent by quantity and value) followed by frozen cephalopod and fish.

Syed Ibrahim, Honorary Consul, German Consulate, pointed that the German food industry relied heavily on spices, especially from quality conscious Kerala.

“Germans use large amounts of cinnamon and ginger in their Christmas cake. I have seen that they very much appreciate products from India,” said Syed.

Ernakulam District Collector K Mohammed Y Saffirulla said that Kerala is known for its environmental policies. The food security and safety drives and awareness campaigns have tremendously enhanced the quality of the products. “We can say with assurance that we have adopted international standards,” he added.

For these workers, bank transfer of wages is the perfect cup of tea



Some 100-odd men and women are at the premises of Negheriting Tea Estate in Golaghat district on a Thursday afternoon. They are waiting to open bank accounts.

A team of four, led by Rahul Das, who runs a United Bank kiosk or Customer Service Point (CSP), from nearby Dergaon arrives with laptops and machines to take biometric details.

Taking advantage of the currency withdrawal restrictions that came with demonetisation, the Sarbananda Sonowal-led BJP government in Assam ordered that wages should not be paid in cash from January but instead transferred to bank accounts.

Some tea workers have accounts. But most don't. The State divided the task of opening zero-balance financial inclusion accounts for all tea workers among the banks.

Negheriting is a small garden with only 350 permanent and 200 casual workers. Das says 200 accounts are already opened. He and his team are opening about 100 a day. The entire process will be over within a week.

Though the largest union Assam Cha Mazdoor Sangh (ACMS), affiliated to Congress, is not keen and is citing provisions in Payment of Wages Act, 1936 to insist on cash payment, workers are excited.

“Bank transaction would help us save some money,” says Bhutka Hazam, a fourth generation worker.

Assam contributes more than half of India's total tea production of over 1,200 million kgs. The entire workforce is made up almost entirely of the tea tribe or “adivasis from Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh”.

Brought mostly during the colonial rule, they form nearly one-sixth of Assam's three crore population. A majority of them are still dependent on tea estates and the labour quarters they provide.

Additionally, the bank accounts should eliminate the practice of inflating wage bills — ‘ghost hazira’ — a source of easy money to management and unions and should enforce better monitoring on payment of workers’ dues.

According to a State disclosure, as on March 2014, nearly 30 per cent of the 792 estates in Assam defaulted provident fund contributions to the tune of 91 crore.

“The industry is decades behind time. Financial inclusion is the first step in improving the life of tea workers. We are geared to do more,” says Das.

Banking, telecom infra

However, financial inclusion of nearly 12 lakh people spread over the length and breadth of the State, including some remote areas, is easy.

The poor tele-connectivity in the State adds to the problem as is evident in the slow progress of account opening.

As per latest records, only 50 per cent accounts could be opened in the last one month.

Though banks are already serving an estimated one crore accounts through the CSP network, the model is not adequate to pay wages to 10-12 lakh people every Friday and Saturday

The State government is aware of the hurdles. Its primary goal is to push the industry to open accounts for all workers, following which it will give the employers time for salary transfer.

But for the moment, it is insisting on a timetable to ensure that all stakeholders put in place the requisite infrastructure.

“We have given them a deadline, to maintain pressure. Else everyone will take it easy,” a source told *BusinessLine*.

Sowing discontent

The government’s decision to scrap import duty on wheat could not have come at a worse time. Farmers are struggling to deal with demonetisation, with prices crashing due to sudden demand compression. Allowing private traders—including multinationals such as Cargill, Bunge, Lois Dreyfus — to bring in cheap wheat from the world market duty-free will compound their woes.



Following demonetisation, there have been reports of cash-starved wheat farmers resorting to distress sale to buy seeds and fertilisers for the ongoing rabi season. Farmers have been forced to sell paddy at prices as low as 700-800 per quintal, against the MSP of 1,540, according to CPI (M) leader Sitaram Yechury. In Punjab, farmers are depending on *arhtiyas* or grain commission agents to supply them with fertiliser and seeds on credit. This could include finance, which has to be paid back with their earnings from the rabi crop. Allowing wheat from countries like Australia to come into the domestic market duty-free could lead to a considerable drop in wheat prices in the open market. This was pointed out by agriculture ministry officials in an inter-ministerial

group meeting in October, when the consumer affairs Ministry had proposed scrapping import duty on wheat.

The decision to lower duties to zero has been taken despite the fact that there has been no downward revision in the government's estimates of a bumper crop in the 2015-16 — pegged at 93.5 million tonnes, compared to 86 million tonnes the previous year. Nor is the government expecting a shortfall in production in 2016-17. It claims rabi sowing is proceeding well. The reason cited by the government — price rise — is not convincing, as prices have not risen dramatically in the domestic market.

The government could have carried out a realistic assessment of wheat availability before allowing duty-free imports. Better inter-ministerial consultations should precede such moves. Astute, rather than knee-jerk, decisions are called for.

Nutrition crisis, a failure of farm policies



Agriculture is basically cereals-driven. Pulses and edible oils should be included in the national food security programme

India is not only among the world's fastest growing significant economies but also world's third largest producer of food with abundant natural endowments.

Yet, agriculture growth rate has been rather low over last 15 years or so, falling well below the annual target of 4 per cent. In the country's growth story, agriculture is a laggard.

The contribution of agriculture and allied sector to national GDP is a mere 14-15 per cent; but over 50 per cent of the country's workforce is dependent on farms for livelihood.

Fix structural issues

Structural issues in agriculture — fragmented landholding, monsoon dependence, inadequate irrigation, lack of technology inputs, poor state of rural infrastructure and so on — have not been sorted out.

Far from strengthening the production base, our farm policies have resulted in unsteady output, low yield, non-uniform quality and volatile prices.

Besides, there are the upcoming challenges — land constraints, looming water shortage and climate change. India may not be food insecure today, but the signs are ominous.

Continued grain mono-cropping (rice-wheat-rice cycle) in certain regions has resulted serious deterioration of soil health and alarming decline in the water table. In other words, an environmental disaster is waiting to happen.

Again, our policies may have ensured overall 'economic growth'; but there is no real 'social development'. No wonder, India ranks rather low in Human Development Index and high on the Global Hunger Index.

What we have is ‘growth without equity’ and little distributive justice, an important cause of our poor nutrition status.

Agriculture and nutrition

There is empirical evidence to show that a sixth of the population is undernourished; a fourth of the children are malnourished; 190 million go hungry daily; 3,000 children die daily due to poor diet-related illness; a third of the children below the age of five are underweight; a quarter of global death of kids below five happens in India; and a third of global neonatal deaths occur in India.

There is pervasive under-nutrition especially in rural areas with PEM (protein and energy malnutrition). Government policies support subsidised delivery of calories but not proteins. Despite growing production, India’s protein use has gradually declined in the last 20 years.

The country faces the risk of moving towards nutrition insecurity. Inter-State variations in the nutrition status are stark. The long-term implications of under-nutrition are serious given the age profile of the population. The ‘poor’ are worst affected.

Malnutrition, as is well known, exerts long-term adverse effects on human health, labour productivity and general well-being. Perpetual under-nutrition results in low resistance to infections and increased morbidity.

There are multiple — about half a dozen — schemes to address malnutrition. These include Public Distribution System, Midday Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Programme and so on.

These are implemented by as many ministries as there are schemes but there is little coordination. Programme implementation is tardy and not uniform across the country.

Indeed, access to ‘nutritious food’ and affordability ought to be a guiding factor for policymakers.

What’s the way forward? First, we need to recognise the close relationship between agriculture, nutrition and health. Agriculture is a source of food, and thereby nutrition. It is also a source of income that helps buy nutritious food. Agriculture policies impact food output, availability and prices. We have the resources to fight malnutrition, but there is little coordinated effort among various departments.

Although the government claims to accord high priority to malnutrition, implementation of programmes and schemes is decentralised. Progress in promoting nutrition is not uniform across the country. The case for dovetailing the various schemes is strong.

Beyond cereals

Our agriculture and food policies (covering production, processing and consumption) in recent years have focused on two fine cereals, rice and wheat; and have paid considerably less attention to nutritious coarse cereals (nutri-cereals), pulses and oilseeds. The per capita availability of these food commodities here is rather low by world standards. Policy support, research support and investment support for the latter will help advance food and nutrition security.

India has a large and growing production base of major protein sources (animal and vegetable); yet, an alarming decline in per capita protein availability is seen. Also, there is a skew in food consumption pattern.

This skew can be easily addressed by appropriate agriculture and food distribution policies. But there is policy inertia.

For ensuring sustainable food and nutrition security of the nation, here are some practical policy recommendations:

Turn policy focus slightly away from fine cereals to nutri-cereals, pulses, oilseeds, milk, poultry and fish;

Include pulses and edible oil under the public distribution system and National Food Security Act;

Encourage food fortification; and

Raise protein and micro-nutrient content in MDM and ICDS foods.

If this involves some subsidy, so be it. The long-term economic and social benefits will far outweigh costs.

In sum, I would argue that the hope of ‘demographic dividend’ will remain a chimera unless our policies recognise the relationship between agriculture, nutrition and health, and are designed to address the issue of pervasive under-nutrition.

Puducherry, Cuddalore on alert, heavy rain expected



“The rainfall intensity will increase gradually becoming heavy to very heavy rainfall (7-19 cm) at a few places and isolated extremely heavy rainfall (greater than 20 cm) over Chennai, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram districts of Tamil Nadu, and Nellore and Prakasam districts of Andhra Pradesh on December 12,” the official noted.

Wind speed to increase

Squally wind speed reaching 40-50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph would prevail along and off Andhra Pradesh and adjoining north Tamil Nadu coasts. It will gradually increase becoming 80-90 kmph gusting to 100 kmph during the time of landfall along and off Chennai, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram districts of Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Nellore and Prakasam districts of Andhra Pradesh.

The official added that they anticipate damage to thatched huts, minor damage to power and communication lines due to breaking of branches, and damage of crops and trees in Puducherry as well.

Cyclone 'Vardah': Dos and don'ts during a cyclone



2. Stock adequate food, medicines and drinking water at home and use them judiciously. Keep overhead tanks, particularly in multistoried buildings, filled up, so as to plan for the contingency of power disruption due to rain.
3. Keep emergency lights and mobile phones charged. Stock adequate quantities of candles and matches.
4. Go to relief centres as and when advised to do so by officials.
5. Avoid using personal vehicles like two wheelers and cars.

Weekly cattle markets in NK hit by demonetisation

The weekly market normally records a business of around Rs. 10 lakh with the arrival of over 2,000 head of cattle.

“ The business has come to almost a grinding halt after demonetisation. With the buyers facing acute financial crunch, farmers are unable to sell cattle for a good price. The business in Amingad market has now reduced to only around Rs. 3 lakh,” Shivappa Kaligouda, a cattle agent who is into this business for nearly two decades, said.

He said that the farmers were forced to either sell the cattle for half the price or take them back which would cost them a bomb.



Not just farmers, even mutton sellers say that their business has been hit by demonetisation.

Moulali Kolhar, a mutton seller, said that before demonetisation, he used to buy around a dozen goats a week, but now he could buy only around five to six.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Sayed Istiyak Hamid, an expert in agriculture marketing, said that cattle trade was an intrinsic part of rural economy which was facing a major blow after demonetisation.

“ For farmers, the livestock acts as additional source of revenue while for shepherds it is the only source of earning. The rural economy predominantly deals in cash and with no cash, the economy has literally crippled,” he added.

AIR Kalaburagi celebrates 50 years

Minister for Information and Broadcasting M. Venkaiah Naidu has decried the tendency of giving prominence to sensationalisation of news by the electronic and print media and said that news should be treated objectively.

He was here on Sunday to inaugurate the golden jubilee celebrations of All India Radio Kalaburagi.

Mr. Naidu did not mince words while expressing his views about sensationalisation of news and said that anchors should avoid expressing their views as news and provide viewers the actual news.

Referring to the constructive role played by All India Radio and Doordarshan in retaining standards in the media, he said that though hundreds of new television channels had been launched in English and Indian languages, none could maintain the standards and impartiality of AIR and Doordarshan. He said that AIR and Doordarshan were the only ones which gave importance to agriculture, education and development sectors.

The programmes aired by AIR Kalaburagi including 'phone-in', talks on agriculture, health, and education, and interactions with agriculture scientists and progressive farmers had educated people belonging to different walks of life. Many programmes started by AIR Kalaburagi were copied by other stations. "It shows that radio still plays an important role in the lives of the people," he added. Hailing the contribution of the region, Mr. Naidu said that the region was also home to the author of the first classical Kannada text 'Kavirajamarga', King Amoghavarsha Nrupatunga .12th century philosopher and social reformer Basaveshwara, Allamaprabhu, Akkamahadevi and 14th century Sufi saint Hazrat Khaja Banda Nawaz fought for social justice and struggled against patriarchy to extend equal rights for women, Mr. Naidu added.

He said that Hyderabad Karnataka region was known for its rich historical heritage with dynasties such as Rashtrakutas, Kalachris, Chalukyas, Vijayanagara, Bahamani, and Adil Shahi and the Hyderabad Nizams ruling it.

Mr. Naidu released a souvenir to mark 50 years of AIR Kalaburagi and a CD of Pandit Siddaram Jambaldini. Congress leader M. Mallikarjun Kharge urged Mr. Naidu to include Kalaburagi in the list of smart cities. Director-General of AIR F. Sheheryar and Basavaraj Patil Sedam, MP, were present.

Centre's market intervention scheme for areca evokes mixed response

The announcement by the Union Government to procure arecanut at minimum support price (MSP) under market intervention scheme (MIS) in the State has evoked mixed response in the district. The Union government on December 7 had issued a notification to purchase 40,000 tonne of arecanut (28,000 tonne of chali variety and 12,000 tonne of red variety) under MIS. The Union

government has fixed Rs. 25,100 per quintal as MSP for chali and Rs. 27,000 for the red variety. MIS will be implemented by five cooperative organisations involved in marketing of arecanut, including The Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Ltd. and the Malnad Arecanut Marketing Cooperative Society. The scheme will conclude on December 31.

The former MLA, Araga Jnanendra, who is also the president of the Arecanut Growers' Cell of the BJP State unit has said that the announcement on procurement at MSP will have a positive impact on the arecanut market. Earlier, the announcement by the Union government to enhance the minimum import price of arecanut from Rs. 75 to Rs. 110 per kg in May 2013 and from Rs. 110 per kg to Rs. 162 in June 2015 had triggered an upward movement in arecanut prices. The announcement to procure arecanut under MIS will have a similar positive impact on the arecanut market from which the farmers will be benefited, he said.

B.A. Ramesh Hegde, president of the Shivamogga Adike Belegarara Sangha, an organisation of arecanut growers, said that the decision by the Union government will not have much impact on the price of the produce. If the MSP is higher than the prevailing market price, it will have a positive impact on the market and farmers will be benefited from it. However, there is no much difference between the prevailing market price of arecanut and the MSP fixed by the Centre, he said. Mr. Hegde has expressed displeasure against the ceiling of 40,000 tonne fixed for procurement. In Karnataka, the annual production of arecanut is around 2.30 lakh tonne. The quantum of arecanut fixed for procurement is too less compared to the actual production. The Centre has fixed December 31 as the last date for procurement under MSP. The harvesting and processing of arecanut in Karnataka has commenced now and will continue till the end of February. The period of procurement should also be extended, he said.

Whiteflies plaguing coconut plantations in south India



Farmers reported the insect first in July in Palakkad and Pollachi. In November, after morphological and molecular identification by researchers from NBAIR and the Institute of Wood Science and Technology, it was proved that it was a previously unseen insect, Rugose Whitefly.

The Whitefly, which has a lifespan of barely 40 days, was discovered in 2004 in Latin America. Since then, it has rapidly spread to Florida, where researchers have found that over 100 species of plants — ornamental and edible — can host the insect.

NBAIR director Chandish R. Ballal believes the fly may have entered the country through the seedling of ornamental plants, and judging by the severity of damage, it perhaps experienced its first outbreak in Palakkad. Around the region, it is found to have damaged more than 25 hectares of plantations.

Containment measures

Biopesticides and natural weather changes may be the best chance now to contain the spread of the destructive insects.

Initial observations show that the insect spreads rapidly when the weather is warm and humid — aggravated this year owing to failed monsoons. The

northeast rain bringing down temperatures and the imminent arrival of winter may help contain the insect.

Moreover, researchers say there has been marked improvement in the fight against the pest in plantations that have not been sprayed with chemicals. “When they spray pesticides, it kills the Green lacewing (*Chrysoperla zastrowi sillemi*), which is a natural predator of the whitefly. We have told farmers to use only biological agents such as starch powder or neem spray instead of chemicals,” said Dr. Ballal.

DECCAN Chronicle

Kerala: Hopes wilt away in farming sector

Farmers worried about the outcome of the upcoming coffee, pepper harvest season.



Representational image

Kozhikode: The demonetisation has left the ginger and areca farmers high and dry with the prices of both crashing and leaving many jobless. The farmers’ societies collecting milk, tea leaves and wild produce also are in dire straits due to currency shortage. The societies are planning an agitation in front of banks which are not supplying enough currency. All-India Kissan Sabha national treasurer P. Krishnaprasad told DC that the agriculture sector has been affected badly by demonetisation. “The prices of ginger and areca have touched the nadir during the harvesting season,” he said and added that the price of one kg

of processed arecanut, which was around `90 last year, had been reduced to Rs 60.

“Adding to the woes, there are no takers for the produce in the market,” he said. Even if somebody buys it, it is not certain when one will get the money. Market players pointed out that 90 percent of the traders were unregistered and received the money as currency. Now all these traders have to go for proper registration, licences and billing procedures. The farmers’ societies are struggling to disburse money to those who supply milk, forest produce and green tea leaves. Baby Varghese of ‘Wayanad Milk’ told DC that with the Rs 24,000 allotted every week and Rs 50,000 for a current account, they were unable to distribute the milk prices to dairy farmers.

“We used to disburse Rs 1.5 crore to the farmers in a month,” he added. “Though we credit the amount to the account of the farmers they are unable to withdraw it for their needs,” he said. “Most of our farmers live in remote villages who have no easy access to banks,” he said. The farming community is worried about the upcoming mega harvest season of pepper and coffee as the majority employ daily labourers from Karnataka. “If the crisis continues in the coming months the farm sector would be destroyed,” he said.

Rajahmundry: Farmers stage stir over withdrawal of Rs 24,000 per week

Farmers who were fed up with the bank authorities as they were not allowed to withdraw even the permitted weekly quota of Rs 24,000.



Several farmers staged stir and demanded the Indian Bank authorities to allow them withdraw Rs 24,000 per week. (Representational image)

Rajahmundry: Several farmers staged stir and demanded the Indian Bank authorities to allow them withdraw Rs 24,000 per week as per RBI norms and set up a separate counter for the farmers at Poduru in West Godavari on Tuesday.

Farmers who were fed up with the bank authorities as they were not allowed to withdraw even the permitted weekly quota of Rs 24,000 staged stir holding the green colour flags bearing the symbol of a farmer holding a plough on his shoulder and found fault with the bank authorities for imposing restrictions on withdrawal of amount stating that non-availability of cash was causing hardships to them to take up farm works.

Enzyme deficiency in brain causes extreme hunger, drives obesity

The syndrome is caused by abnormalities in a small region of chromosome 15, which leads to dysfunction in the hypothalamus.



There doesn't seem to be anything wrong with the gene that makes PC1-- it's just not getting activated properly (Photo: AFP)

Washington: U.S. researchers have found that the deficiency of an enzyme-prohormone convertase (PC1) - in the brain is linked to neuro-hormonal abnormalities, a genetic condition that causes extreme hunger and severe obesity beginning in childhood.

According to a study, one in 15,000 people have Prader-Willi syndrome (PWS). The syndrome is caused by abnormalities in a small region of chromosome 15, which leads to dysfunction in the hypothalamus - which contains cells that regulate hunger and satiety - and other regions of the brain.

The findings, published in the journal of Clinical Investigation, provide insight into the molecular mechanisms underlying the syndrome and highlight a novel target for drug therapy.

"While we've known for some time, which genes are implicated in Prader-Willi syndrome, it has not been clear how those mutations actually trigger the disease," said lead author Lisa C. Burnett from Columbia University's Medical Center.

"Now that we have found a key link between these mutations and the syndrome's major hormonal features, we can begin to search for new, more precisely targeted therapies," Burnett added.

The team used stem cell techniques to convert skin cells from PWS patients and unaffected controls into brain cells. The study revealed significantly reduced levels of PC1 in the patients' cells, compared to the controls.

The cells from PWS patients also had abnormally low levels of a protein, NHLH2, which is made by NHLH2, a gene that also helps to produce PC1.

To confirm whether PC1 deficiency plays a role in PWS, the researchers examined transgenic mice that do not express Snord116, a gene that is deleted in the region of chromosome 15, that is associated with PWS.

They found that the mice were deficient in NHLH2 and PC1 and displayed most of the hormone-related abnormalities seen in PWS, according to study leader Rudolph L. Leibel. "The findings strongly suggest that PC1 is a good therapeutic target for PWS," Dr. Burnett stated.

"There doesn't seem to be anything wrong with the gene that makes PC1-- it's just not getting activated properly. If we could elevate levels of PC1 using drugs, we might be able to alleviate some of the symptoms of the syndrome," Burnett explained.

Israel technology for AP horticulture farmers

The Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture has been launched two months ago.



The concept was to form the horticulture farmers into groups to provide them with the necessary financial aid through Nabard and also have direct trading for horticulture produces via tie-up with national and international companies. (Representational image)

Israel, despite it being a semiarid country with limited water resources and rain-deficit conditions, is a leading producer of agricultural commodities and can provide a model for regions like Anantapur which have better climatic conditions, in matters of technology adaptations.

While Israel has an average of 435mm annual rainfall, Anantapur district has more than 500mm rainfall, and it has emerged as the horticulture hub of the state. The government plans to adopt the advanced technology of Israel along with improved market facilities at global level for the produces from this district. The Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture has been launched two months ago. The concept was to form the horticulture farmers into groups to provide them with the necessary financial aid through Nabard and also have direct trading for horticulture produces via tie-up with national and international companies.

Further, the district administration wanted to have MoUs with more number of Israel companies to provide technical assistance because of their successive rigorous research in developing different varieties of hybrid seeds with salient features of immunity and heavy production.

Hindupur horticulture official Sudarshan said an Israel-based research institute came forward to set up a training centre in the district to assist pomegranate producers.

Southern and eastern parts of the district are known for tasty fruits, but the orchards incur losses due to unfavourable conditions including poor technology and less susceptibility.

Collector Kona Sasidhar had agreed to establish the centre on pomegranate crop. As part of the mission, the farmers of crops like sweet orange, mango, grape and vegetables will also get necessary technological support as also direct marketing facilities at their door steps. Groundnut farmers are being encouraged towards taking up dry land horticulture, District Water Management Agency (DWMA) project director Nagabhushanam said.