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THE HINDU

Agriculture Minister calls for better developed futures markets for farmers

Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh on Wednesday said that better developed ‘futures markets’ for agricultural commodities will be significant for farmers as it could help them secure fair price for their products.

Mr. Singh, addressing on the eve of inauguration of 14th Commodity Futures Summit organised by Assocham here, said with a better developed futures market, farmers will face lower price risks. “This is good indication for the agriculture arena of the country that Assocham is taking interest to revitalise agricultural sector by adopting sophisticated techniques so as to improve production in agricultural sector,” said Mr. Singh.

He said the conference was a platform to exchange views on the topic of how commodity futures market can be conducive for price-related balance and risks.

Mr. Singh said most of Indian farmers are small and marginal and they do not enjoy specific capacity to transact the deals concerned, which is a serious problem.

“They deal with their business in low-benefiting markets and are victimized to exploitation owing to limited awareness about marketing. A better-developed futures markets for farmer meant for agricultural commodities attribute to great importance,” he added. He said the government was working towards developing National Agriculture Market (NAM) — a pan India electronic trade portal.

The government is working towards developing National Agriculture Market (NAM)

Earth Trust opens organic outlet



The Earth Trust has opened a new organic shop on Thalayatund Road in Udhagamandalam on Wednesday.- Photo:M.Sathyamoorthy

A U.K. born health professional Vanya Orr came to India on a mission to find her Colonial roots in The Nilgiris. But she ended up finding a local population that had lost its indigenous ways of cultivation and traditional healing techniques, which was once in sync with nature. This made her start The Earth Trust (ET), an NGO, to restore the land to its God-given fertility.

ET, which has created awareness in over 100 villages and trained over 5,000 farmers in various parts of The Nilgiris, opened a new shop off the Ooty – Coonoor Road near Crescent Castle School on Thalayatund Road on Wednesday.

According to a release, besides hill vegetables, fruits and herbs, the new shop also offers wheat, rice, millets pulses, oils, spices and condiments. It will also make produce from warmer climes available to locals.

The aim is to make it a one stop shop that links the small farmer and tribal to the consumers who wish to avoid the slow poisoning of their families and environs.

They have also formed Bio-gain, a co-operative of 30 odd small farmers, where the prices are decided every three months, by the farmers themselves.

In a bid to convert larger acreage to organic cultivation, Earth Trust now undertakes year-long training and hand holding of medium and large farmers with a ‘buy back’ agreement for their produce. It achieves this through its

farming team of experts by providing seeds, seedlings and natural manure from the ET Resource and Biodynamic farms.

All Nilgiri farmers can avail of this service. The ET teams visit every supplying farmer three times a month to ensure credibility/ authenticity of produce.

M.Veeramani, Deputy Director Agricultural Business, Tamil Nadu Horticultural Research Station (HRS), Ooty and N. Selveraj, Professor of Horticulture, both ardent advocates of organic agriculture, inaugurated the new outlet. The Earth Trust can be contacted at atearthtrust@gmail.com, 97877-49840.

Karnataka has potential to surge ahead of country's growth: Jaitley



Competitive federalism is a positive signal for the country's future'

Karnataka has the potential to outdo the country's GDP growth rate by 2 to 3 per cent, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said on Wednesday.

Inaugurating the three-day 'Invest Karnataka 2016' at the Palace Grounds here, Mr. Jaitley said Karnataka had vast potential in terms of human resource, the presence of a number of prestigious institutions, and large manufacturing industries. "Karnataka has the capacity to grow 2 to 3 per cent ahead of India," he said, and added, "We need to exploit the opportunities available and contribute to the growth of the country as a whole."

Commending Karnataka for its various initiatives, he observed that India completely stood out despite global crisis that other countries faced and

maintained its resilience. “Unpredictability and volatility have become the new global norm. In these circumstances, it is extremely important for India to emerge and emerge out of the crisis even stronger,” he said.

The Finance Minister said India was “relatively un-impacted” by some of the factors that had caused the global crisis. “Lower prices of oil and metal commodities substantially suit us. It indirectly impacts us because it shrinks our exports; it makes our markets more volatile, currency more volatile. But compared to the rest of the world, we are still on a much higher and stabler footing,” he said.

However, India still had challenges in areas such as improving on private sector investments and investments in rural areas and agriculture, Mr. Jaitley said.

The Minister said, “While looking down the tunnel over the next two to three years, it is still not clear which way the global situation will be moving.” While looking back at 2001, 2008 and 2015 global crises, India could take some satisfaction in the fact that the country displayed a considerable amount of resilience during those times. Since the 2008 crisis, the global economy had not been able to pick up momentum, with some country or the other facing problems, he said.

Noting that States were competing with each other to woo investors, he said competitive federalism would lead to realisation of vision and it was a positive signal for the country’s future. It would allow investors to analyse advantages in their favour and decide about their investments. The States that have good governance, clean administration, and stable politics would ultimately become primary destination for investors, he said.

Major investments announced at the inaugural function Infrastructure:

Union Ministry of Highways to add 4,000 km of national highway in the State

Investment of Rs. 60,000 crore for road development in Karnataka before December 2016

In 2017, an additional Rs. 40,000 crore investment for national highways

Rs. 200 crore for port development

Agriculture:

A 1.3-million tonne capacity urea plant planned in north Karnataka
Subsidy of Rs. 1,500 per tonne of compost produced by organic farmers

Research and Development:

Rs. 87-crore R&D centre of the Central Institute of Plastics Engineering & Technology in Bengaluru

Proposed centre of the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research

Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group to set up Dhirubhai Ambani Centre for Technology and Innovation in Aerospace by employing 1,500 engineers in Bengaluru

Information technology:

Fourth Infosys development centre, at Hubli
Wipro IT Business plans campus with 25,000 employees in the State

Corporate investments:

Aditya Birla Group to invest additional Rs. 2,000 crore in the near future in telecom, apparel and retail businesses

JSW commits Rs. 35,000 crore within five years in Karnataka
Robert Bosch plans investment of Rs. 1,000 crore in 2016

Adani Group plans Rs. 11,500 crore investment in Udupi Power Corporation Ltd.

Arun Jaitley, Union Finance Minister: One of the best things that happened to Karnataka over the last two to three decades was that even at the age of regulated economy, some wisdom dawned and we decided to leave the IT sector alone. Since we left the IT sector alone, free from any government interference, it prospered. It became, in fact, a face of India's growth potential.

Ratan Tata, chairman emeritus of Tata Sons: Karnataka has always been and will remain at the centre of IT, biotechnology, and electronics, aircraft and aerospace industrial sectors.

Anil Ambani, chairman, Reliance Group: Bengaluru is the spiritual city of innovations.

Sajjan Jindal, chairman of JSW Group: I am speaking from my personal experience. There is no better place to invest other than Karnataka.

Azim Premji, Chairman, Wipro: Karnataka is a very hospitable and progressive State. A major expansion in Wipro will provide additional employment to 25,000 people.

Carbon producing unit trial run successful



A municipal employee operating the organic shredder in Pudukottai for producing organic carbon on Wednesday.

The municipality has set up an organic carbon producing unit at Sandaipettai to produce carbon for supply to farmers to be applied as a bio-manure in agricultural fields, particularly where the carbon content was low.

The unit, set up with a consultancy service at an expenditure of Rs. 6 lakh, comprises an organic shredder, compacter and sleeve machine.

First, the waste organic matter, particularly branches of banana and coconut shells are dropped in to the shredder to be crushed to pieces which is dried.

“We supply limited oxygen to the waste material,” says Jeeva Subramanian, Municipal Commissioner.

The powdering machine reduces it into carbon powder. The efficacy of the carbon produced here had been tested and it has been ascertained that the powder contained 42 per cent carbon.

“The minimum requirement of carbon in fields short of carbon is just 25 per cent,” says R. Rajasekar, Municipal Chairman.

The Director of Municipal Administration, G. Prakash, on Wednesday, visited the unit located in Sandaipettai and ascertained its viability.

Pudukottai is the first municipality to set up this unit. It would be packed and marketed to the needy agriculturists, says Mr. Rajasekar.

At present, the unit is being maintained by the women members of a self-help group, say the sources.

Cooperative bank extends Rs. 300-crore farm loans

SHORT TERM LOANS SANCTIONED BY SALEM DISTRICT CENTRAL COOPERATIVE BANK

Crops	Amount (Rs. in crores)	Farmers covered
Paddy	4.34	880
Sugarcane	49.99	8,405
Tapioca	59.43	12,456
Plantain	78.10	14,125
Turmeric and vegetables	90.62	16,376
Groundnut	45.96 lakhs	130

The Salem District Central Cooperative Bank has extended farm loans to the tune of Rs. 300.49 crore, both short term loans and medium term investment credit, so far during the current financial year 2015-16 to the farming community in the district.

The loans have been extended to a total of 55,107 farmers through the primary agricultural cooperative banks.

The bank had set a loans disbursement target of Rs. 342.40 crore for the current fiscal.

The Central Cooperative Bank has extended short term loans to the tune of Rs. 282.95 crore (target Rs. 322.40 crores); and medium term loans of Rs. 17.54 crore (target Rs. 20 crore) till January 25.

According to official sources, the primary agricultural cooperative banks have extended short term loans of Rs. 4.34 crore to 880 paddy farmers; Rs. 49.99 crore to 8,405 sugarcane farmers; Rs. 59.43 crore to 12,456 tapioca farmers; Rs. 78.10 crore to 14,125 plantain farmers, Rs. 90.62 crore to 16,376 turmeric and vegetable farmers and Rs. 45.96 lakh to 130 groundnut farmers from April 1 2015 to January 25, 2016.

The primary agricultural cooperative banks have sanctioned medium term loans of Rs. 17.54 crore to 2,735 farmers of different categories.

While Rs. 4.98 crore was sanctioned to 891 farmers for rearing goats; Rs. 4.05 crore to 689 farmers for rearing cattle; Rs. 2.65 crore to 388 farmers for the purchase of farm animals; Rs. 54.30 lakh to 41 farmers for setting up milk dairies; Rs. 23.4 lakh to three farmers for the purchase of tractors; Rs. 30.22 lakh to 45 farmers for setting up drip irrigation etc.

Compensation

Only recently the cooperative societies in the district had disbursed a compensation of Rs. 4.29 crore to 12,466 farmers whose crops suffered damages during the recent heavy downpour experienced by the district.

Industrial corridor project runs into rough weather

Setback to land acquisition process as farmers not ready to part with land

The ambitious project of establishing an industrial corridor by the previous BJP State government and pursued by the present Congress government has run into rough weather. Reason: A majority of the farmers have expressed their unwillingness to part with their precious land.

The proposed industrial corridor was expected come up in 2,229.27 acres of land on the outskirts of Kalaburagi city by creating a land bank in Pallapur, Sheikhoza, Sindagi, Tajsultanpur and Kerebhosga villages. The previous BJP State government had decided to acquire the land through the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB) and issued a preliminary notification in 2010.

Preliminary notification

As per the preliminary notification, the government had identified 260.27 acres in Pallapur, 695.17 acres in Sheikhroza, 772.26 acres in Sindagi, 410.25 acres in Tajsultanpur, and 90.12 acres in Kerebhosga villages. According to an official source, Deputy Commissioner Vipul Bansal had conducted village-wise meetings with residents, who would be losing their land, to know their views. The outcome of the meeting was that farmers owning 471.37 acres of the total 2,229.27 acres to be acquired for the project conditionally agreed to part with their land and the owners of the remaining portion of the land flatly refused the State government's offer, the source added.

Official sources said that none of the farmers in Shiekhroza were ready to part with their land.

They informed the DC that they wanted to get 'Non Agricultural Status' to their land located along the ring road and the State highway. Similarly, villagers of Kerebhosga and Pallapur too refused to give their land to the government citing the same reason.

Limited success

The government achieved limited success only in Sindagi and Tajsultanpur villages. The owners of 241.21 acres of the 772.26 acres identified for acquisition in Sindagi agreed to sell their land on the condition that 70 to 80 per cent of the land would be given to the government if competitive prices were offered. In Tajsultanpur, farmers owning 230.16 acres of the total 410.25 acres intended to be acquired, also put forth certain conditions to the government.

Sources said that the DC has written a letter to the Additional Chief Secretary to the Commerce and Industries Department about the lukewarm response and has sought directions to decide the next course of action.

The government had identified 2,229.27 acres on the outskirts of Kalaburagi city

Setback to acquisition process as farmers are not ready to part with their land

The project was supposed to come up on over 2,200 acres of land on the outskirts of Kalaburagi city

AP to expand energy-efficient pump set scheme

The Andhra Pradesh Government has decided to expand the energy efficient pump set scheme, aimed at replacing the conventional pumpsets with energy efficient ones, all over the State.

Accordingly, the Government will take up replacement of over 15 lakh conventional pumpsets with energy efficient ones estimated to cost Rs. 50,000 each, in a phased manner. The replacement is aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity and increasing the pumping capacity which in turn would help in significant energy savings. The costs of the replacement would be borne by the energy utilities and the State Government without burdening the farmers. The decision comes after the successful implementation of the EEPS scheme in Rajanagaram mandal of East Godavari district. A monitoring of the verification audit conducted on 142 pumpsets that were replaced on a pilot basis at Rajanagaram revealed that energy savings to the tune of 20.38 million units was achieved.

Finer details

The finer details of the scheme would be announced at the national-level stakeholders meet on agriculture DSM (demand side management) to be held in Vijayawada on Thursday. The meeting being organised by the Central Government includes discussions with the manufacturers of agricultural pump sets, evolving an effective structure for the agriculture DSM scheme and it would explore the potential to scale up the project. The Government had firmed up its resolve to launch the scheme across the State after the Central Government had assured to provide Rs. 5,000 crore through the Energy Efficiency Services Limited. EESL managing director Saurabh Kumar appreciated the energy conservation methods adopted by the State power utilities and assured that they would be showcased at the national level for replication by other States.

To replace 15 lakh conventional pumpsets with energy efficient ones estimated to cost Rs. 50,000 each, in a phased manner.

Biological pest control in banana plantation

The Krishi Bhavan under the Agriculture Department at Vadakarapathy near here is promoting elma pathogenic nematodes, known in Malayalam as Nima Vira, to fight pests attacking banana leaves and fruits.

The nematodes are harmless to human beings and they can ensure cent per cent organic cultivation, says Gavas Ragesh, agriculture scientist at the Banana Research Centre of Kerala Agricultural University at Kannara, who developed the nematodes.

Mr. Gavas and his team started applying elma pathogenic nematodes in the banana plantation of farmer Shanmughan at Vadakarapathy on Wednesday. Panchayat president Kuzhanthair Teresa inaugurated the initiative.

Agriculture Department Assistant Director Gireesh Kumar, who was present on the occasion, said the bio-alternative would be promoted widely among farmers in the State on an urgent basis.

Mr. Gavas said the nematodes were developed through intense research. They can be released to five months old banana plants. They will fight and kill pests. The nematodes also can be applied on sugarcanes, coconut trees, cardamom fields and cashew plantations.

Rs.99.21-crore NABARD loan for Wayanad district

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has sanctioned a loan of Rs.99.21 crore to Wayanad district for the comprehensive development of the backward district during the current fiscal.

The NABARD had allotted the loan under its Rural Infrastructure Development Fund, in which Rs.75.22 crore was allotted for the health sector, N.S. Sajikumar, District Development Manager, NBARD, said on Wednesday.

These included Rs.38.25 crore for the construction of a multipurpose complex for the district hospital, Mananthavady; Rs. 34.85 crore for developing basic infrastructure facilities for the proposed A.K. Jinachandran Memorial Government Medical College here; and Rs.2.12 crore for the infrastructure development of the proposed health care complex of the Sree ChitraTirunal Institute of Medical Science and Technology at Periya in the district.

The NABARD has also allotted a loan of Rs.2.25 crore to Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) to set up a floating solar plant on the

Banasurasagar dam at Padinharethara. The total cost for the project is Rs.9.24 crore and the remaining amount will be met by KSEB.

Apart from this, Rs.1.56 crore has been allotted for four agriculture-related projects and Rs.5.12 crore for three watershed projects in the district.

A sum of Rs.14.4 crore has been sanctioned for constructing a bridge across the Panamaram river at Thalipparakkadavu, Mr. Sajikumar said.

Consultations on marine policy today

Consultations on the proposed national marine fisheries policy, under the aegis of the committee appointed by the Union Ministry of Agriculture, will be held here on Thursday. The consultations are scheduled at the auditorium of the Central Institute of Fisheries Nautical and Engineering Training (CIFNET) between 2.30 p.m. and 4.30 p.m., said an official of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute here.

The Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries under the Ministry of Agriculture had constituted a committee headed by director general of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research S. Ayappan to prepare a revised national marine fisheries policy.

Stress on innovative use of coir in various sectors

Innovative applications of coir in manufacturing and construction industry offer a new world of opportunity to the natural fibre industry across the world. Seminars conducted as part of the ongoing international coir fair here have given a broad view of the emerging possibilities in the sector.

Raul Fanguero, professor at the Fibrous Materials Research Group at Portugal's School of Engineering, said research was initiated more than two decades ago in composite reinforcements with natural fibre, with a view to creating low-density, less-hazardous, sustainable, green and economically viable material. The research had led to a variety of applications, including those in car manufacturing and construction industry.

The global natural fibre composites market is set to touch \$5.83 billion in 2019, according to Mr. Fanguero, who has a research team, including three Indians. The exhibition on 'composites' conducted in Paris had an entire

pavilion showcasing musical instruments, crash helmets, car body parts and sports goods, he said.

A new composite application made in combination with concrete had been found to increase elasticity of the construction material. It also prevented cracks. The biodegradable material also posed certain challenges, he said. Biodegradability did not work in certain instances. Variability in properties and lack of interfacial adhesion were among them.

Acoustic panels

The ‘Accoir’ sound panelling system, developed by the National Coir Research and Management Institute (NCRMI) in partnership with the Institute of Indian Interior Designers (IIID), came in for special mention at the meet.

Accoir was a superior, sustainable, low-cost and organic alternative to synthetic acoustic design products that were presently being used in construction, architecture and engineering, Minister for Coir Adoor Prakash said. Acoustic panels used for interior decoration and as sound barriers had a very niche market. The government was keen on developing the full potential of the product through public private partnership, he said.

Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan called for a change in mindset to appreciate indigenous material. National Coir Research and Management Institute (NCRMI) Director K.R. Anil said that Accoir was a long-cherished dream of the coir sector to develop innovative, commercially viable and sustainable products.

Inefficient pump sets to be replaced soon

The Government of India is organising a national-level Stakeholders’ Meet on Agriculture Demand Side Management (replacement of inefficient agricultural pump-sets with star rated pump-sets) in Vijayawada on February 4.

It is in tune with the Government of Andhra Pradesh’s decision to expand the Energy Efficient Pump-set Scheme (EEPS) to the entire State for enhancing agricultural productivity and water pumping capacity apart from saving energy on a large-scale.

State Energy Conservation Mission Chief Executive Officer A. Chandra Sekhar Reddy stated in a press release that the Energy Department was directed by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu to implement the EEPS scheme in a phased manner by focusing on segregation of agricultural feeders to pave the way for saving up to 30 per cent energy. The EEPS will have pump sets worth Rs. 50,000 each installed free of cost.

Energy Secretary Ajay Jain will inaugurate Thursday's meeting along with AP-Transco CMD K. Vijayanand and others.

The not-so-bullish tale of native breeds

Two native bulls classified as endangered; one nearly extinct

Cattle breeds unique to Tamil Nadu are facing a threat due to a slew of factors including mechanisation of agriculture, introduction of exotic germplasm through cross breeding programmes, conversion of farm lands into housing plots, shrinkage of grazing grounds and lack of manpower for maintenance.

Three of the five cattle breeds — Pulikulam, Bargur and Alambadi — have already joined the list of endangered species. “As per the guidelines of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, if the numbers of a particular species are less than 5,000, it will be a potential candidate for being considered an endangered species.

The Alambadi breed is already facing the threat of extinction as its population is extremely small,” said a scientist of the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS).

The other two breeds, Kangayam and Umblachery, are able to raise their head above water due to local patronage and government intervention.

DWINDLING NUMBERS While jallikattu enthusiasts claim that a ban on the sport could spell doom for the native breeds, scientists aver that the numbers are already too low for comfort

BARGUR
Small built and suitable for semi-mountainous terrain of Bargur hills.

UMLACHERY
Medium-sized and suitable for marshy lands of Thanjavur, Nagapattinam and Tiruvarur districts.

PULIKULAM
Named after Pulikulam in Sivaganga district, the breed is swift and vigorous and used for jallikattu.

KANGAYAM
Medium-sized breed suitable for drought conditions.

ALAMBADI
Home tract is Alambadi in Dharmapuri district submerged by the Mettur Dam.

TWO TYPES OF CATTLE — Jersey and Friesian — were introduced for cross breeding to increase milk production

Even though their numbers have come down drastically over the years, Kangayam bulls are widely present in the western region of Tamil Nadu because of local patronage and breeding tracks.

The Umblachery breed, a native of Cauvery delta districts including Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts, has also escaped the threat of being wiped out because of the District Livestock Farm in Korgai in Thanjavur established by the Animal Husbandry Department of the State government.

“They are basically draught animals and never used for the dual purpose. We primarily used these breeds for agriculture and not for dairy management. The introduction of a cross breeding programme to increase milk production and a fall in agriculture have brought down the importance of the indigenous breeds,” said a senior scientist of TANUVAS.

Today, the numbers of Pulikulam, Bargur and Alambadi breeds are dwindling and TANUVAS has set up a Cattle Research Station in Bargur to conserve the species. The conservation efforts focus on preventing cross breeding and preserving the sperm in a frozen form for future breeding, among others.

“The Pulikulam bulls are used in jallikattu. A ban on the sport has posed a threat to the breed, but organic farming and vineyards in the Theni district have offered it a new lease of life,” said another scientist who has done research on the breed.

The native breeds have adapted to local climatic conditions, developed resistance to diseases and possess the ability to survive under severe nutritional stress.

An atlas on native breeds compiled by TANUVAS warned that if the trend continued, the invaluable native germplasm would be depleted and even be lost forever. “There is a need to create awareness among the people to protect the species. The government should also consider giving incentives to those who are ready to keep these breeds as maintaining them are not easy,” said a senior scientist.

M. Murugesan, Milk man



M. Murugesan, Milk man. Photo: A.Shrikumar

If I am able to ride a cycle and climb trees at 95, it is only because of the cow's milk I grew up drinking. Milk is a rich source of all nutrients, my father used to say. I vaguely remember my childhood days at Keezhakuyilkudi village. My parents were poor farm workers and brought home a few kilos of paddy as their take-home pay everyday, which we used to cook and share. Once agriculture was taken over by land sharks, we moved to the city in search of better life. I and my 10 siblings grew in a hut we built on the Vaigai bank. Later, I moved to P & T Nagar and currently I rear six cows and 20 goats. Everyday, I start my day on the cycle, distributing milk to a dozen households in the area. I go on a similar round in the evenings. I sell close to 10 litres of milk a day for Rs.300. I earn nearly Rs.10,000 per month, a large part of which I spend on buying fodder and medicines for the cattle. I don't mix water in the milk and people appreciate the quality. The milk that goes unsold is given to other milk men for a slender profit.

I have six daughters and a son who are married and have families. I am blessed with a dozen grandchildren, some of whom help us in the milk business. However, the animals are our companions. I and my 85-year-old wife spend much of our day taking care of the goats and cows and that keep us going.

(A fortnightly column on men and women who make Madurai what it is)

Prevailing temperature to affect poultry

With night temperature to be low due to fog, egg production and egg weight are expected to decline slightly.

A weather advisory from Agromet Field Unit of Veterinary College and Research Institute and Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai, said that the maximum and minimum temperature was expected to be 34 degree Celsius and 20 degree Celsius respectively.

The day-time temperature would remain at high level while night temperature would be low due to foggy. The high diurnal temperature would not be favourable for poultry as it would reduce the feed intake.

Egg production and egg weight would also decline slightly as farmers had been asked to reduce energy content of feed by 50 kcal per kg to 2,500 kcal per kg feed.

Stress

The release said that rising day-time temperature may induce mild stress in poultry and hence farmers were asked to use stress alleviating medicines.

A press release from Agro Unit of Krishi Vigyan Kendra here said that soil health was likely to be affected by poor irrigation adoption methods which would affect plant growth drastically.

Hence, farmers were asked to test the water quality in bore wells. If problems identified after the quality analysis, suitable management practices and crops would be suggested by the Kendra, the release said.

Ex-serviceman leads the way in coloured capsicum cultivation



Malagonda Biradar, who owns land in Kanamadi village of Vijayapura taluk, has been cultivating red and yellow varieties of capsicum since 2013.—PHOTO: by Special Arrangement

Malagonda Biradar, an ex-service, man who for several years served the nation, is now a successful farmer and has set an example for others in the district by becoming the first farmer to cultivate coloured capsicums.

Mr. Biradar, who owns land in Kanamadi village of the taluk, has been cultivating red and yellow varieties of capsicum since 2013. With an initial investment of around Rs. 15 lakh, Mr. Biradar is now earning Rs. 4 lakh every month.

“I guess my earning is more than the salary of any big corporate executive,” he says with pride and a chuckle. He began cultivating these coloured capsicums under poly-house on 10 guntas of land and now grows these varieties on one acre of land.

Though Mr. Biradar’s initial investment was Rs. 15 lakh, he got a subsidy of Rs. 4.5 lakh from the Horticulture Department. He said that the climatic condition prevailing in Vijayapura and other dry districts of the State are suitable to grow this crop. “In my view, growing coloured capsicum is more profitable and less risky compared to other commercial crop such as grapes and pomegranates. These two crop demand greater care and heavy investment for maintenance. They are prone to diseases,” Mr. Biradar said and added that even a small farmer could cultivate capsicum.

He said that the same poly-house could also be used to collect rainwater, which could be used to water the plants, by storing it in a small pond. About marketing, he said that the crop is purchased directly by agents from Maharashtra and Goa. He said that there is a huge demand for the crop from star hotels and elite restaurants. He suggested the farmers to cultivate coloured capsicums in at least 20 guntas for better earning.

“For 20 guntas, the investment would be around 20 lakh, of which Rs. 8.5 lakh would be the subsidy amount. The monthly expenditure would be around Rs. 50,000 and the profit about Rs. 2 lakh a month,” he said.

One can get in touch with Mr. Biradar on 7204030207.

Agriculture Minister calls for better developed futures markets for farmers

Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh on Wednesday said that better developed ‘futures markets’ for agricultural commodities will be significant for farmers as it could help them secure fair price for their products.

Mr. Singh, addressing on the eve of inauguration of 14th Commodity Futures Summit organised by Assocham here, said with a better developed futures market, farmers will face lower price risks. “This is good indication for the agriculture arena of the country that Assocham is taking interest to revitalise agricultural sector by adopting sophisticated techniques so as to improve production in agricultural sector,” said Mr. Singh.

He said the conference was a platform to exchange views on the topic of how commodity futures market can be conducive for price-related balance and risks.

Mr. Singh said most of Indian farmers are small and marginal and they do not enjoy specific capacity to transact the deals concerned, which is a serious problem.

“They deal with their business in low-benefiting markets and are victimized to exploitation owing to limited awareness about marketing. A better-developed futures markets for farmer meant for agricultural commodities attribute to great importance,” he added. He said the government was working towards developing National Agriculture Market (NAM) — a pan India electronic trade portal.

Bengaluru helps love blossom



Expected to be exported over five million stems of roses in the run-up to Valentine's Day

It is that time of the year again... a day when love is celebrated across the world in the form of Valentine's Day (February 14). And Bengaluru has a small part to play in love blossoming across borders and seas.

The city, known for its superior quality of roses, is a major exporter of red roses.

This time around, over five million stems of roses are expected to be exported to Europe, the Gulf, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and other countries, apart from meeting the demand in major cities within the country.

According to Anne Ramesh, president of the South India Floriculture Association (SIFA), the city produces the finest quality of red rose varieties — Taj Mahal and First Red. A small percentage of farmers also cultivate Grand Gala, which is now said to be outdated.

“The export of roses begins usually in the end of January and continues till a few days before February 14. This year too, like last year, the export will be around five million stems. However, we expect the sale to come down by 10 per cent, as Valentine’s Day is on a Sunday,” he said.

Superior quality

The flowers the city produces are said to be superior compared to those grown in Pune, which is another major exporter. This, Mr. Ramesh says, is because climatic conditions here are more conducive to rose cultivation. The roses are grown in a 50-km radius around the city, especially in the Hosur and Doddaballapur belt. “There are a number of growers in the city as well. There are around 15 exporters, over 50 growers with mid-sized farms and nearly 75 small and marginal farmers. In Pune, there may be around 30 growers,” he added.

New varieties

V. Jhansi Lakshmi, vice-president of SIFA, said that while the city is known for Taj Mahal, First Red and Grand Gala, little is being done to explore and cultivate other varieties. “Taj Mahal is the most sought after, as it is not just commercially viable, but also known for its bud size, colour and stem length. This variety has seen a spike in exports over the past five years,” she said.

Since commercial viability is the most important factor for growers, not many explore cultivation of other varieties.

‘IFAB needs govt support’

“Flower auctions could well be an all-year affair and Bengaluru a major flower exporter if the International Flower Auction Bangalore (IFAB) Ltd. gets the much needed government support,” says V. Jhansi Lakshmi, vice-president of South India Floriculture Association. She told *The Hindu* that

IFAB, run by the Karnataka government with support from growers, could function better if it had a full-time managing director or chief executive officer. “We are almost there. IFAB is the first in the country to have an electronic auction clock that is modelled on the Dutch flower auction clock at Alasmeer in The Netherlands.” At present, 90 per cent of the exports comprise roses. “If IFAB gets government support and an online auctioning facility is set up, the city could emerge as a major exporter of anthuriums, gerberas, carnations, gladiolas and even green fillers for bouquets,” she added.



GM mustard study to be out soon

The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), which examines the scientific merits of releasing genetically modified seeds into the environment, will consider making public, immediately, the results of tests and studies so far conducted to test the safety of transgenic (or GM) mustard.

Multiple sources told *The Hindu* that a decision to commercially release the seed was still some time away. Several members of the GEAC whom *The Hindu* contacted refused comment saying that they had signed an “oath of confidentiality.”

This comes even as several farmers' groups and environmental activist organisations have alleged that the GEAC plans to allow GM mustard on farmer fields. "There is a scientific panel of experts that's considering this there is a lot of data but there are still some outstanding questions. We will take our time on this," said a top official in the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change, requesting anonymity citing the sensitivity of the issue. The GEAC is constituted by the Environment Ministry.

Another official, who also didn't want to be identified, said a risk assessment body — affiliated to the Ministry — had analysed the results of toxicity studies; the odds of gene flow into the environment, and the results of studies on animals.

"The data is voluminous and there have been meetings earlier this month discussing this ," he added.

Training in azolla cultivation

With the cattle feeding cost escalating every year to reduce the income of dairy farmers, the Veterinary College and Research Institute here organised a hands-on training for dairy farmers on azolla cultivation as it drastically reduces the feeding cost.

A total of 375 farmers (25 farmers from 15 villages) were trained on azolla cultivation.

Dairy farming plays a vital role in generating sustainable income for farmers when compared to other livestock enterprises in the district. The 'constraints analysis on dairy farming,' which was recently conducted among the dairy farmers of the district, revealed that minimal production of green fodder and high cost of concentrate cattle feed were the major constraints.

In order to reduce the concentrate feed cost, several research trials have been conducted by scholars of VC and RI with azolla to find an alternate supplement source of cattle feed. Since azolla is considered as the most economic and efficient feed substitute and a sustainable feed for dairy cattle, the VC and RI organised the training programme on azolla cultivation.

The prevailing micro-environment of the district is quite conducive for cultivation of azolla and hence the scheme on 'Popularisation of azolla as

low cost supplemental cattle feed among the dairy farmers of Tirunelveli District' is being implemented by the Department of Veterinary and Animal husbandry Extension Education, Veterinary College and Research Institute, Tirunelveli with financial assistance from NABARD, Chennai since January 2015.

Under this scheme, progressive dairy farmers of NABARD Farmers Club in Manur, Radhapuram, Alangulam, Tenkasi, Nanguneri, Palayamkottai, Cheranmahadevi, Melaneelithanallur and Keezhapaavor blocks were selected for the study.

A training programme on 'azolla cultivation through method demonstration' was conducted.

As a part of the scheme, for popularising azolla amidst farming community, training programmes were conducted in 15 villages including Malayadipudur, Nanguneri, Kalakkudi, Thenpaththu, Ayansingampatti, Cheranmahadevi, Surandai, Ayankurumpalaperi, Kuththukkalvalasai, Old Courtallam, Ponnaakudi, Pillaikulam, Moovirunthaali, Panneerooththu and Karaichuttrupudhur.

The last phase of the training was conducted at Karaichuttrupudhur village of Radhapuram block recently, in which K. Ramalingam, Assistant General Manager, NABARD, Tirunelveli delivered a special address.

S. Senthilkumar, Principal Investigator and Assistant Professor, Department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Extension Education, Veterinary College and Research Institute, Tirunelveli was the resource person.

He explained in detail the technicalities involved in cultivation of azolla in plots with an area 6 feet X 3 feet and its harvest for feeding the cattle.

Preventive medicine to control white diarrhoea

Massive efforts are on to administer preventive medicine to chickens in order to control white diarrhoea.

V. Rajendran, Joint Director of Animal Husbandry, said that besides regular monitoring, two special camps would be held in the district on February 9 and 22 to cover all birds. Talking to media persons here on Wednesday, he

said that veterinary doctors would visit villages on the two days to administer medicine to the chickens. About 1.40 lakh vaccines were brought from Chennai for this purpose, he added.

White diarrhoea would cause much damage to chicken, thereby leading to huge loss to farmers. The disease might wipe out 50 per cent of the bird population in any centre instantly. Survival of the affected chickens was very remote, he noted.

To protect the birds from the disease, preventive medicines were being administered to them on Saturdays too.

With growing demand for country chickens and prospects of better returns, several farmers shifted to country chicken breeding from broiler chicken breeding. Moreover, investment for country chicken breeding was less, he added.

Training in honeybee rearing techniques

A free one-day training programme on 'Honey bee rearing techniques' will be held at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra on Veterinary College and Research Institute premises on Mohanur Road on February 8.

A release from N. Akila, Senior Scientist and Head, said that the programme would deal with types of honeybee, their life cycle, selection of appropriate place for rearing and essential gadgets for forming cage, diseases that affect honeybee, maintenance during summer and winter season and identification of pure honey. Also, technology involved in the process and identification of market opportunities would be dealt during the training programme.

Farmers, members of self-help groups, youth and interested persons can participate in the training programme. For registration, one can visit the KVK in person or register through phone: 04286-266345 and 266650. Last date for registration is February 7.

Cotton production estimate revised



The Cotton Advisory Board, which met in Mumbai on Tuesday, had revised the cotton production estimate for this season (October 2015 to September 2016) to 352 lakh bales.

Textile Commissioner Kavita Gupta told *The Hindu* over phone that the production estimates were revised mainly due to white fly problem in Punjab, pink bollworm in Gujarat and drought in Karnataka. At its previous meeting in November last year, the board expected the production would be 365 lakh bales.

Procurement at MSP

Prices of cotton are high now and hence, Cotton Corporation of India had procured only eight lakh bales so far at MSP (Minimum Support Price). Exports this year are expected to be 70 lakh bales.

The actual exports from October to December last year were 35.2 lakh bales mainly because of demand in Pakistan.

The textile mill consumption was expected to be 275 lakh bales and SSI consumption 26 lakh bales.

Area under cotton had dropped by 7.3 per cent and was now 118.81 lakh hectares.

Trade sources here said arrivals in the market were 1.50 lakh bales a day. However, buying by textile mills is also slow.

Prices of Shankar 6 variety of cotton was from Rs. 32,500 to Rs. 34,000 a candy depending on quality.

‘Time to review GDP numbers’

It is time the GDP numbers are comprehensively reviewed since suspect data does not auger well, the Commerce Minister said on Wednesday. “Well, the calculation (of GDP) is something on which there have been established practices and these methodologies are time-tested but today there are definitely a lot of questions being raised about them. The Chief Economic Advisor has come out openly speaking about it. It’s time we looked comprehensively into it because after all if government data is suspect, even in the minds of a few, it doesn’t augur well,” Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in an interview with a private television network. “It might be useful for just once to do a comprehensive review. If you are convinced that the methodology adopted now is fine, go ahead with it but the review is harmless,” she added. Last year, Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian had said that the new GDP numbers are “puzzling.”

TS to release 4 tmcft water from Srisailam



Excise and BC Welfare Minister K. Ravindra inspecting the arrangements being made to draw water from Bandar Canal at Machilipatnam on Tuesday. —Photo: By Arrangement

Excise and BC Welfare Minister K. Ravindra on Tuesday said that the Telangana Government accepted to release 4 tmcft water from the Srisailam project to meet the drinking water needs of Krishna district.

The Minister said that there was no availability of sufficient water in the Krishna at the Prakasam Barrage and Pulichintala at present.

“The water to be released from Srisaillam will reach Bandar Canal in five days. Later, it can be drawn for storage in tanks in Machilipatnam,” Mr. Ravindra said. Special teams of the Machilipatnam Municipal Corporation (MMC) have already arranged 150 motors to draw water from the Bandar Canal.

“There will be no problem of power supply as four additional transformers have been set up at strategic places to avoid any interruption. People of Machilipatnam should cooperate with the authorities in meeting the water needs,” said Mr. Ravindra.

The MMC officials have aimed at filling the two summer storage tanks at Tarakaturu and Pampulacheruvu in order to avoid scarcity until May-end. Mayor M. Baba Prasad appealed to use water judiciously.

The MMC has been supplying potable water twice in a week since mid January, leaving people of Machilipatnam to adjust with below 50 litres of water per person.

Water to be released from Srisaillam will reach Bandar Canal in five days, says Minister



Agriculture in Vidarbha, Marathwada at high risk to climate change: Report

State working with Centre for bringing changes in crop patterns, modifying investments.

The districts of Marathwada and Vidarbha witnessing maximum farmer suicides in Maharashtra face higher risk to climate change. A report by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) recommends the state government to initiate policies and measures to adapt to climate changes that would be detrimental to the agro-sector in 14 districts affected by severe drought across Vidarbha and Marathwada.

According to the Central Research Institute for Dryland Farming, “The districts in Marathwada and Vidarbha face very high risk to climate change. Studies warn that if no action is taken, financial implications on account of damages due to climate change would be massive. Mumbai alone can incur financial damages of as much as Rs 2 trillion due to climate change-related damages.”

CRIDA has also mapped the vulnerability atlas of India, a collection of maps showing parts of India vulnerable to natural disasters.

At least 80 per cent of the total area under agriculture cultivation is rainfed in Maharashtra. “Climate change was never factored in our policy-making or annual state budget. Now, for the first time in 2014-15, unseasonal hailstorm and changing rain patterns extending to longer dry spells have come as an eye opener to policymakers in the state,” said sources in the agriculture and irrigation ministry.

Out of the total 355 talukas in the state, 226 talukas received deficient rain. While 112 talukas received normal rainfall, only 17 talukas received excess rainfall.

According to officials, a study done by TERI has identified Maharashtra as one of the most vulnerable states in India. Based on biophysical, social and technological indicators, the state has low “adaptive capacity” to climate change, meaning that it has little potential to respond successfully to climate variability and change, including adjustments in resources and technologies.

The state falls in the zone of high to very high climate sensitivity, with a widespread dependence on agriculture.

The region is also interpreted as an area of “double exposure” where globalisation and climate change pose simultaneous challenges to the agriculture sector.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, along with the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), has sought funds to undertake adaption and mitigation measures to tackle climate change.

The ministry has approved a proposal submitted by the state government related to challenges in agriculture growth due to climate change. Apart from

the “Jalyukt Shivar” water conservation project, the government has emphasised on crop pattern changes and promoting horticulture.

Water management has been accorded the highest priority and the government is pushing for the adoption of new technologies to cope with the shortage in rainfall.

The policy also includes agriculture practices to improve soil fertility. Higher yield and lower input cost is being modelled to help farmers.

Why milk prices have fallen by Rs 10/litre for farmers

Cooperatives saddled with excess stocks as private dairies slash procurement.



Most private dairies with a predominantly commodity (powder and ghee) portfolio have responded to the global crash either by sharply slashing their milk purchase price or even discontinuing operations in the last one year.

Since April-May 2014, milk realisations for farmers have collapsed by around Rs 10 per litre.

Maharashtra farmers are currently selling cow milk, with 3.5 per cent fat and 8.5 per cent SNF (solids-not-fat) content, to private dairies at roughly Rs 16 per litre, compared to Rs 26 one-and-a-half years ago. During the same period, farm-gate prices in northern India for buffalo milk, containing 6.5 per cent fat and 8.5 per cent SNF, have dropped from Rs 39-40 to Rs 29-30 a litre.

The blame for this can be laid primarily on “global” factors. Prices of skimmed milk powder (SMP) at GlobalDairyTrade — the fortnightly online auction platform of New Zealand’s Fonterra Cooperative, the world’s No. 1 exporter — averaged \$ 1,792 per tonne on Tuesday. The corresponding rate

on April 1, 2014 ruled at \$ 4,126 per tonne, which itself was below the record \$ 5,142 for the same period the previous year.

The above unprecedented global crash has done three things to India's dairy industry.



- Liquid milk business thrives amidst global price slump
- Crashing milk prices worldwide is latest farmer worry at home
- Milk dearer by Re 1 in Punjab, Haryana, HP
- Amul milk to be dearer by up to Rs 2 per litre in Delhi & NCR
- Milk purchases up in flush season, but no price cut yet
- Milk price rose by up to Rs 7 a litre in metros: Govt

First, it has brought exports to a standstill, with SMP shipments from the country plunging from a peak of 1.3 lakh tonnes in 2013-14 (valued at Rs 2,717.56 crore) to 34,490 tonnes (Rs 681.69 crore) in 2014-15 and a paltry 8,130 tonnes (Rs 155.73 crore) during April-November 2015.

Second, low export demand has impacted domestic SMP prices too. These have declined from an average ex-factory level of Rs 240-250 per kg in April-May 2014 to Rs 140-150 now, even as fat (ghee) prices have remained stable at Rs 300-310 per kg. Lower powder realisations have affected the operations of private dairies — especially those in the North and Maharashtra whose revenues are mainly from commodities, as opposed to branded liquid milk sales.

When SMP and ghee were selling at Rs 250 and Rs 300 per kg respectively, a dairy would have grossed Rs 3,270 or so from processing 100 litres (103

kg) of cow milk with 3.5 per cent fat and 8.5 per cent SNF. After deducting Rs 300-350 of processing and packaging costs, they could pay up to Rs 2,950 for milk delivered at the plant. This price, at the farm-gate, would have worked out to about Rs 2,600 or Rs 26 a litre.

But at Rs 140/kg for SMP and Rs 300/kg for ghee, the gross revenue from the same 100 litres of milk would be just over Rs 2,300. Netting out Rs 350 of processing-cum-packaging costs and an equal expense for transport of milk from the farm, thus, effectively leaves Rs 16 per litre — which is what Maharashtra’s farmers are receiving today.

Simply put, most private dairies with a predominantly commodity (powder and ghee) portfolio have responded to the global crash either by sharply slashing their milk purchase price or even discontinuing operations in the last one year.

But the sharp cut-back in procurement by private dairies has resulted in a third outcome — diversion of the surplus milk to cooperatives, particularly in the western and southern states where they have a reasonable presence.

AVERAGE MILK PROCUREMENT BY COOPERATIVE DAIRIES

	2014-15	Apr-Dec 2015	Apr-Dec 2014	%increase
Gujarat	151.82	163.79	140.15	16.87
Karnataka	58.61	66.20	58.80	12.58
Maharashtra	32.41	34.76	30.79	12.89
TamilNadu	24.35	30.18	23.17	30.25
Rajasthan	25.35	23.51	23.08	1.86
Bihar	16.76	17.00	15.69	8.35
Andhra Pradesh	12.22	12.64	11.73	7.76
Punjab	12.79	12.00	11.27	6.48
Kerala	10.18	11.04	10.16	8.66
Madhya Pradesh	11.03	9.39	10.58	-11.25
Odisha	4.40	5.24	4.30	21.86
Telangana	4.23	5.09	4.11	23.84
All-India	378.33	405.42	355.29	14.11

Note: Only states procuring above 5 lakh kg per day. Source: National Dairy Development Board

During April-December, cooperatives put together have procured 14.1 per cent more milk over the average for same period of 2014-15. This growth is higher than the 10.7 per cent recorded for the whole of 2014-15 and the less

than 2 per cent increase in 2013-14, when private dairies were aggressively chasing milk on the back of the SMP export boom.

The additional milk flowing into cooperatives has led to their accumulating excess powder stocks of over one lakh tonnes, which ordinarily would have been produced for exports. These are, instead, putting further downward pressure on prices. While cooperatives are saddled with too much powder, the only thing that has still kept them going is liquid milk sales, which make up anywhere from two-thirds to three-fourths of their total procurement. Unlike SMP, retail prices of pouch milk haven't fallen. If anything, they have risen marginally in the last one-and-a-half years. This has also enabled cooperatives to pay farmers more than what commodity-focused private dairies are giving.

Farmers supplying milk to the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) unions are, for instance, now getting around Rs 21 per litre for cow milk. The cooperative is selling the same milk to consumers under its Nandini brand at Rs 33 per litre. KMF's farmers are, in addition, receiving a state government subsidy of Rs 4 per litre, which, on an average daily procurement of 65 lakh litres, comes to nearly Rs 950 crore a year.

But it's not only cooperatives. Some private dairies in the South like Hatsun Agro Product and Heritage Foods also have a significantly large liquid milk marketing business, insuring them against the commodity price crash that has hit their northern and western counterparts hard.

"My procurement has gone up 25 per cent this fiscal, as against the normal yearly increase of 12-13 per cent. All the surplus milk in Tamil Nadu, has been absorbed by me or Aavin (the state cooperative federation), while others (including private commodity players) are finding the going tough", says R.G. Chandramogan, chairman of the Chennai-based Hatsun Agro, which owns the Arokya brand of liquid milk.

Liquid milk apart, the other consolation for the industry is ghee prices holding up, partly due to the government clamping down on butter oil imports after a couple of traders brought in an estimated 4,000 tonnes ahead of Diwali at landed prices of Rs 200 per kg. But the benefits of it would accrue more to buffalo milk, whose prices are, moreover, expected to firm up once the "lean" summer months set in. No such luck is foreseen for cow milk, which has lower fat and is also less prone to production fluctuations round the year.

“It is the buffalo that is probably going to save the dairy farmer”, sums up RS Sodhi, managing director of the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (Amul).

hindustantimes

World Cancer Day: Air pollution, tobacco top cancer causes in India

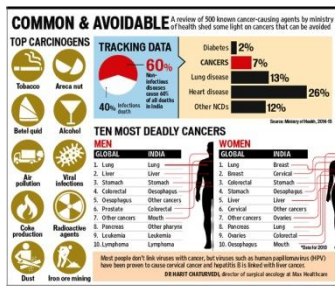


File photo of cyclists riding amidst morning smog in New Delhi. Air pollution has been listed as the top five avoidable causes of cancer in India by the government. (AP)

Air pollution, certain viral infections, along with tobacco in its many forms, are among the top five avoidable causes of cancer in India, concluded an extensive review of close to 500 known carcinogens by the ministry of health and family welfare.

The top three carcinogens are smoking and chewing tobacco, areca nut (supari) and betel quid (paan, paan masala), which together have made oral cancer the most common cancer in India. Of them, tobacco in its three forms — chewing, smoking and second-hand smoke — accounts for 30% of all cancers in India.

“Most people don’t link viruses with cancer, but viruses such as human papillomavirus (HPV) have been proven to cause cervical cancer and Hepatitis B is linked with liver cancer,” said Dr Harit Chaturvedi, director of surgical oncology at Max Healthcare.



Getting vaccinated against both these viruses – Hepatitis B vaccine is a part of routine immunization in India – can protect against cervical cancer in women and liver cancers in both genders, Dr Chaturvedi suggested.

Annually, an estimated 30 lakh people in India suffer from cancer; of these 11 lakh are new cases and the disease claims 5 lakh lives each year. The cancers that claim most lives in India are also the most common, including oral, breast, cervical and lung cancers.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer Monographs lists 481 agents and environmental factors that are carcinogenic, probably carcinogenic, or possibly carcinogenic to humans.

“The international list is massive and some causative agents are not relevant in the Indian context. For India’s monograph, 500 known carcinogens were reviewed and recommendations were given on what is being done and what needs to be done to prevent these cancers,” says a health ministry official who did not want to be named.

India’s National Health Profile 2015 estimates that cancer in men will rise by 19% by 2020, with mouth cancer registering the highest spike. In women, cancer cases will go up by 23%.

Over 50 farmers' unions oppose GM mustard



Javadekar urged to cancel GEAC meet slated for Feb 5, make bio safety data public

NEW DELHI, FEB. 3:

A day after the Apex Court sought an explanation from the Centre on its proposed move to introduce genetically-modified (GM) crops in violation of a court-imposed ban, over 50 farmer organisations across the country slammed Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar for allowing the regulatory body to meet on February 5 to decide the fate of GM mustard.

In a joint statement, the farmer organisations, urged the Minister to immediately call off the slated “secret” meeting of the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), warning him that, if forced, “the fate of GM mustard will be that of an unwanted Land Ordinance that the government pressed for again and again”.

Bio-safety data

“All major mustard growing States in India, including BJP-ruled States, heeding to citizens’ voices and scientific advice, have come out against GM mustard. They have also expressed concern about the secretive processes adopted by the regulators and for not putting out bio safety data in the public domain,” said the statement signed by All India Kisan Sabha, Bhartiya Kisan Sangh, Jai Kissan Andolan, Bharatiya Kisan Union, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, Tamil Nadu Farmers Association, Khedut Samaj, Gujarat, Telangana Rythu Sangham, Shetkari Sangathana, Maharashtra, Kerala Jaiva Karshaka Samithi, among others.

Safe alternatives

The statement, while wondering where “the need and pressure was emerging from”, said they were objecting to “the secretive manner in which the government was proceeding on this matter, without public scrutiny of data or any public consultations including with farmers’ unions, despite the GMO being created ostensibly for farmers’ benefit.”

Instead, they pitched for promotion of already available “feasible alternatives that are safe, affordable and farmer-controlled”.

“In the case of mustard, for instance, there are non-transgenic hybrids already available in the market, in addition to high-yielding mustard varieties. Further, new agro-ecological approaches like System of Mustard Intensification are out-yielding these unsafe solutions significantly, ensuring vastly-increased profitability for farmers, if yield is a concern,” the statement said.

Alleging that the government was not investing in these alternatives “probably because of collusion with the seed and chemical industry”, the statement cited the experience with Bt cotton,” which has not addressed the issue of farm crisis or reduced the number farm suicides”, and had led to higher agro-chemical use.

Centre tests high density cotton cropping in Telangana

Yield seen rising to 800 kg/hectare from 540 kg/ha

MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 3:

The Textile Ministry has initiated a programme to increase cotton yield and has tested out high density cotton cropping on 1,000 acres in Telangana this season.

Speaking to media Kavita Gupta, Textile Commissioner, said the initial feedback has been very encouraging and all indications are that the yield would increase to 800 kg/hectare from the average current level of 540 kg/ha.



“We would be gradually increasing the high density cropping coverage to 5,000 acres next year. Similarly, in Nagpur we are going to replicate Israel model of drought resistance cotton crop which will consume less water compared to the normal variety,” she said.

Gupta said a five-member committee headed by KR Kranthi, Director, Central Institute for Cotton Research, was formed on Tuesday to conduct a study on latest developments in the cotton farming across the world and submit a report in six months suggesting best practice for adoption in India.

Expressing concern over the recent bollworm attack on Bt cotton which supposed to be pest resistance, she said any technology has a shelf life of five years as pests also develops resistance power against the technology. Meanwhile, the Cotton Advisory Board has forecast output to fall seven per cent to 352 lakh bales (of 170 kg each) in crop season started in October 2015 due pest attack in Gujarat and Punjab and severe drought in Karnataka.

With China cutting down on its import, India has found a new market for its cotton in neighbouring Pakistan.

In the December quarter, the country has exported 16.6 lakh bales of cotton to Pakistan against 3.8 lakh bales in the same period last year, according to the data compiled by Textiles Commissioner’s office under Ministry of Textiles.

The sudden jump in export to Pakistan was due to whitefly pest attack damaging about 40 per cent of crop in that country, said Gupta.

The prevailing trend in cotton exports is likely to continue for the rest of the year as other countries such as Bangladesh, China and Indonesia are also ramping up their cotton procurement from India, she added.

Tea Board fixes green leaf price at ₹15/kg

COONOOR, FEBRUARY 3:

Close to the average price of black tea at January's last auction of Coonoor Tea Trade Association rising to three-year high of ₹102.88 a kg, Tea Board has announced the average price for green leaf in the Nilgiris district as ₹15 for February.

“According to Section 30 of Tea Marketing Control Order 2003, the district average price for green leaf from February 1-29, 2016, has been fixed as ₹15/kg. All Bought leaf factories in the Nilgiris district are instructed to adhere to this average green leaf price while buying green leaf from the farmers. All field officials of Tea Board shall ensure that no bought leaf factory in their jurisdiction pays lower than this price in February. New green leaf price for March will be announced at the end of February,” Tea Board's Deputy Director of Tea Development CS Hariprakash said.

“On representations of small growers, Tea Board announced the average price for their green leaf for the first time in December 2015. However, the price announced was only ₹12.50 in December and ₹13 in January. We have been asking for at least ₹15 to tide over our production cost as also the economic distress we had been suffering for long. To that extent, we welcome Tea Board's fixing ₹15 for this month,” H Thiagarajan, President, Nilgiris Small Tea Growers' Association, told *BusinessLine*.

“However, because of winter conditions, harvest has drastically reduced. The price for green leaf has increased because of low supplies now. So, despite rising the average price to ₹15/kg, our take home money has fallen. We have appealed to Tea Board to fix the average price not less than ₹15 every month, even when our harvest increases in coming months, to stabilise our economic conditions,” he said.

MSP for milling copra raised by ₹400/quintal

NEW DELHI/KOCHI, FEBRUARY 3:

The Centre has increased the minimum support price (MSP) for fair average quality (FAQ) of “milling copra” by ₹400 to ₹5,950/quintal for the 2016 season against ₹5,550/quintal in 2015.

The MSP for FAQ of “ball copra” has also been increased to ₹6,240/quintal for 2016 season from ₹5,830/quintal in 2015, an official release said after a meeting of the Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs here on Wednesday.

The decision is based on the recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). CACP, which is an expert body, takes into account the cost of production, overall demand-supply, domestic and international prices, cost of conversion of copra into coconut oil, the likely effect of the price policy on the rest of economy, besides ensuring rational utilisation of production resources like land and water, while recommending MSPs.

The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (Nafed) and National Cooperative Consumer Federation of India Limited would continue to act as central nodal agencies to undertake price support operations at the minimum support prices in the coconut growing States.

Welcoming the decision, Thalath Mahmood, Director, Cochin Oil Merchants Association, said that at a time when copra prices started dwindling, a full fledged procurement by recognised government agencies would revive the coconut oil market.

Down trend continues in tur

INDORE, FEBRUARY 3:

Down trend continued in tur on sluggish demand from millers and rise in arrival of new crop. In the past one week tur prices in local mandis have declined by ₹800-₹900 a quintal with tur (Maharashtra) being quoted at ₹7,900-8,000 a quintal, while tur (Madhya Pradesh) declined to ₹7,000-7,100 .

Tur dal traded low on decline in spot tur with tur dal (sawa no.) being quoted at ₹10,600-11,000 , tur dal (full) declined to ₹11,100-11,400), while tur marka ruled at ₹11,500-12,600. Urad and its dal traded lower on slack demand and buying from millers with urad (bold) being quoted at ₹95,000 , while urad (medium) ruled at ₹8,00-8,500.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Prince Charles announces new dedicated fund for Indian farmers



The complete details of the fund, likely to be worth millions of pounds, will be made public over the course of this year.

LONDON: Prince Charles has unveiled plans for a new dedicated fund, likely to be worth millions of pounds, to be created to help farmers in India break out of poverty.

The heir to the British throne announced the plan in his capacity as the Founder and President of the British Asian Trust (BAT), which works towards empowering lives in South Asia by harnessing the strengths of the South Asian diaspora in the UK.

"An area of work that I was particularly excited to see get underway in recent months is my trust taking a more in- depth look at the issues faced by rural farmers in India with the aim of establishing a dedicated fund to implement the kinds of intervention that the research clearly points out is

needed," the 67-year-old royal said at BAT's gala annual dinner at Natural History Museum here last night.

Describing agriculture as a "vitally important" sector of the economy and "one that nearly half the rural houses in India rely on as the principle means of livelihood", Charles said the trust's focus will be on farmers with small holdings.

"These small holder farmers often realise only a small proportion of the value of their products and can get caught in a poverty trap with no obvious way out. By making real inroads into helping the sector upscale, the fund will increase productivity in a sustainable way and make a staggering difference to so many lives," he said.

The complete details of the fund, likely to be worth millions of pounds, will be made public over the course of this year.

Meanwhile, the trust also finalised its "largest-ever fund" dedicated to work in Pakistan to support skills training for some of the country's most disadvantaged people alongside charity partner, the Aman Foundation.

BAT will engage with the UK government's Department for International Development (DfID) to launch a UK-wide appeal to raise three million pounds. DfID will match pound-for-pound as part of the campaign which marks the trust's first national public appeal, having raised millions from South Asian communities around the world in the last nine years solely via corporate and private donations.

Many of these corporates and celebrity ambassadors of the trust, including filmmaker Gurinder Chadha and actor Sanjeev Bhaskar, joined Prince Charles and wife Camilla at the gala dinner event which included a charity auction which raised 900,000 pounds (over USD 13 lakh).

"2016 will be another exciting year ahead for the British Asian Trust," British Asian Trust's CEO Richard Hawkes said.

The trust was founded in 2007 by Charles, who wanted to do something about the widespread poverty that he saw in South Asia with the help of the entrepreneurial spirit of the British Asian diaspora. It works with local grassroots organisations in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal to help disadvantaged people transform their lives.

Coir Kerala event's social media activity has made consumers in the US aware of the 'coir' product



The Coir Kerala event's social media activity through platforms like Facebook, which has improved since last year, has made consumers in the US aware of the 'coir' product.

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Speaking at an international seminar session on 'Market Channelling' at Coir Kerala 2016, John Nicholas Hahn, former CEO of US-based firm Cotton Incorporated, stressed the need to tap into user-friendly marketing mediums, such as social media, which is cost-effective and reaches out to millions of people.

"Also, thanks to e-commerce platforms, producers can reach out directly to consumers, cutting out re-sellers and wholesale distributors," said Hahn, who is a consultant to a number of emerging textile markets in the developing world.

While a large number of coir units are small and medium enterprises, supply chain planning is important to stay ahead of the competition from other states and countries, he suggested.

Agriculture Ministry in talks with Arun Jaitley on inter-state taxes



The government is working towards integrating 200 mandis by March-end, another 200 will be connected to the online platform in 2017 and the rest by 2018.

NEW DELHI: The Agriculture Ministry is in talks with the Finance Minister over the issues related to inter-state taxes on farm produce for smooth implementation of an online national agri-market.

The issue assumes importance in view of the pending GST (Goods and Services Tax) Bill, which aims to facilitate a uniform tax levied on goods and services across the country.

"We are speeding up the work for setting up an online agriculture market. There are concerns related to inter-state taxes and levies. We are discussing

with the Finance Minister on these issues," Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said at an ASSOCHAM event here.

Sharing details on the sidelines, the minister said the inter-state levies charged on movement of farm produce need to be addressed for efficient functioning of a common e-agriculture market.

The government is working towards integrating 200 mandis by March-end, another 200 will be connected to the online platform in 2017 and the rest by 2018, he said.

The Centre has received proposals from states like Karnataka, Gujarat, Telangana and Maharashtra for developing necessary infrastructure in wholesale markets. A strategic partner for implementing the national agri e-market has also been identified, he added.

The online national agri-market is the need of the hour as farmers are deprived of fair share of prices because of the current mandi system, which is characterised by inefficient physical operations, excessive crowding of intermediaries, fragmented market chains and low scale.

In July 2015, the Cabinet had approved setting up of an online national agriculture market with a budget of Rs 200 crore. The platform seeks to integrate 585 wholesale markets across India with an aim to provide more options to farmers to sell their produce.

On farmers' participation in commodity futures market, the minister said they are not in a position to participate because most farmers do not have enough marketable surplus and ready cash to meet the margin requirements.

"Therefore, while the commodity exchange must be strengthened and developed, the physical market should undergo major transformation first as the fundamentals have to be sound. Only then will farmers be empowered to participate and benefit from the commodity exchanges," he said.

Government raises MSP for milling copra by Rs 400/quintal



Government hiked the minimum support price (MSP) of milling copra for 2016 season by Rs 400 per quintal to Rs 5,950 to boost coconut cultivation.

NEW DELHI: Government today hiked the minimum support price (MSP) of milling copra for 2016 season by Rs 400 per quintal to Rs 5,950 to boost coconut cultivation.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi also approved an increase of Rs 410 in MSP of 'ball copra' to Rs 6,240 per quintal.

"The MSP of milling Copra has been increased by Rs 400 per quintal to Rs 5,950 per quintal and MSP on ball copra has been raised by Rs 410 per quintal," Power Minister Piyush Goyal told reporters after the meeting.

MSP of copra is expected to ensure appropriate minimum prices to the farmers and step up investment in Coconut cultivation and thereby production and productivity.

The decision is based on the recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), an expert body, which took into account the cost of production, overall demand-supply, domestic and international prices and cost of conversion of copra into coconut oil, among other factors.

Milling copra is used to extract oil, while edible grade of copra (ball copra) is consumed as a dry fruit and used for religious purposes.

The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) and National Cooperative Consumer Federation of India Ltd (NCCF) would continue to act as Central Nodal Agencies to undertake price support operations at the minimum support prices in the coconut growing states.

Centre gears up to popularise crop insurance scheme, invite pvt insurance companies for bids



The Centre's ambitious crop insurance scheme, announced last month, can prove to be attractive to farmers but only if its implementation is glitch free.


New Delhi: The Centre's ambitious crop insurance scheme, announced last month, can prove to be attractive to farmers but only if its implementation is glitch free. The next step will, therefore, be the real test of the government when it invites empanelled private general insurance companies to bid for clusters of districts across the country.

The selection of insurance company from amongst the empanelled companies to act as an 'implementing agency' within the defined area will be done by the concerned state government. It will be done on the basis of the lowest weighted premium, quoted by these companies, for all notified crops

within the particular cluster of districts.

Since the Centre aims to cover at least 50% of the total crop area of 194.40 million hectare under the new scheme in two years time, it has decided to involve its 642 Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVKs), spread across the country, to reach out to as many farmers as possible in their respective districts to share information on the scheme which has provisions of very low premium and quick claim disbursements.

Unlike existing schemes, it also has the advantage of getting insurance cover for post-harvest crops. Under the new scheme, the insurance coverage is available up to a maximum period of 14 days from harvesting for those crops which are kept in "cut and spread" condition to dry in the field against specific perils of cyclone and unseasonal rains.

HEALING TOUCH	
PRIME MINISTER CROP INSURANCE SCHEME:	
ROAD TO IMPLEMENTATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Agriculture ministry empanelled Agriculture Insurance Company of India (AIC) and some private general insurance companies to participate in the scheme ➤ Final selection of implementing agency for particular clusters of districts will be selected from amongst the companies on the basis of lowest weighted premium ➤ Scheme will be implemented on an 'Area Approach Basis' with assumption that all the insured farmers face similar risk exposures within the defined area ➤ In due course the defined 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ One insurance company will exclusively be allocated one small state or clusters of districts within a big state ➤ Selection of implementing agency (insurance company) will be made for at least three years 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ areas will be geo-fenced/geo-mapped region having homogeneous risk profile for the notified crop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Centre to involve over 600 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) across the country to reach out to as many farmers as possible in their respective districts with information on the scheme ➤ Agriculture ministry ropes in IT & communication ministry to propagate the message through digital medium and mobile phones by spelling out the advantage of the scheme

Farmers under the new scheme will have to pay a uniform premium of only 2% for all Kharif crops and 1.5% for all Rabi crops as against the average premium rate of 5.5% for food-grains under the existing schemes which had last year covered only 20-25% of the total crop area.

Existing schemes will now be replaced by the new scheme - called Prime Minister's Crop Insurance Scheme - once it is implemented from the Kharif crop cycle (beginning June).

"Messages of advantages under new scheme will reach the farmers through multiple efforts. The KVKs - institutions for imparting training to farmers and introducing them to new farm technology and sustainable agricultural practices - may play an important role in this regard", said a senior agriculture ministry official.

Besides, the ministry has also roped in IT & communications ministry to propagate the message through digital medium and mobile phones by spelling out the advantage of the scheme. The idea of such a move was discussed when the agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh had held a meeting with IT & communications minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and HRD minister Smriti Irani on January 22.

Under the new scheme, it was decided that only one insurance company will exclusively be allocated one particular state or two-three areas in bigger state for at least three years to cover as many farmers as possible.

"This move will allow a particular company to set up infrastructure and make rapport with the farmers of the area so that more and more farmers come under the insurance net", said the official.