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## THE HINDU

### TS cotton farmers seek lowering of Bt. seed price



A Bt. Cotton field. - A File Photo.

*Mr. P. Sugunakar Rao said that the farmers were agitated about the Bt 2 cotton seeds not living up to promise of tackling pest attacks.*

Cotton farmers of Telangana want the committee constituted by the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare to recommend lower maximum sale price (MSP) of Bt. cotton seeds.

“They suggested an MSP of Rs.400 to Rs.600 per packet (of 450 grams). The existing price of the seed is Rs.930,” said P. Sugunakar Rao, farmer representative in the committee and national general secretary of BJP Kisan Morcha.

Speaking after an interaction with leaders of various farmers' association, many of them affiliated to various political parties, here on Saturday Mr. Rao said that the farmers were agitated about the Bt 2 cotton seeds not living up to promise of tackling pest attacks. The farmers, he said, had sustained heavy losses because of the bollworm (pest) attack and questioned the pricing policy of the seed producers, which included royalty fees.

Even while refraining from suggesting an ideal MSP, in view of being a member of the committee, he said that the meeting with Telangana farmers, from five districts, is to be followed up in coming days with the cotton farmers of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Assuring that he would place the views of farmers before the committee, Mr.Rao said that the panel was expected to meet this month-end and decide on the MSP. In doing so, it was also required to take into account the need for the company to have resources to undertake research on producing seeds in tune with Indian climatic conditions.

The committee has been formed, under the provisions of the Cotton Seeds Price (Control) Order, 2015, for recommending the MSP of Bt. cotton seed for 2016-17. Figuring in the nine-member committee, chaired by Joint Secretary (Seed) to the Central Department of Agriculture, is the Agriculture Secretary to Telangana Government.

### **Students' idea of promoting alternative agricultural practices hailed**

The zeal among school students to reach new heights in the field of science and technology and the talent that make future scientists was on a rich display at the Budding Scientist Contest organised by *The Hindu In School* in association with Manipal Hospitals at Siddhartha College of Arts and Science here on Monday.

Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Commissioner N. Srikanth, who was the chief guest, was impressed with the wide variety and standard of exhibits put up by the children in seniors (Classes 8 to 10) and juniors (Classes 5 to 7) categories.

In his brief interaction with the students, Mr. Srikanth exhorted them to strive to find new things in life and give shape to their ideas as innovation was the key to success. He congratulated *The Hindu In School* for extracting the hidden talents among students through such events.

Mr. Srikanth stopped at the exhibits of a Future Dream Canteen and a Smart Coastal Village of St. John's English Medium School, Vijayawada and A.P Social Welfare Residential School and Junior College (APSWRSJC) at Duppalavalasa in Srikakulam district.

St. John's team members B. Sudha Raj and Ch. Sai Suraj gave to Mr. Srikanth a pamphlet which listed popular south Indian recipes idly, dosa, bonda and biryani made of algae, earthworm bajji, frog, fish and mushroom juices, orange chicken and cockroach pakodi.

Looking at a poster that showed among others the health benefits of algae, especially to patients with HIV/AIDS, Mr. Srikanth suggested that a citation of its scientific basis would be good as it let's the students and also teachers gain knowledge from authentic sources.

He was particularly appreciative of the students' idea of promoting alternative agricultural practices in the capital region which is going to witness dislocation of farming activity.

The students suggested algae was one good source of nutrition and helps in easing the distress faced by farmers to some extent.

*He was the chief guest at the Budding Scientist Contest*

### **Tea mosquito attack takes a toll on trees**



The affected guavas



### The tea mosquito

*Thousands of trees have fallen prey to the bug, there are warnings that attack will be severe in summer*

Trees, particularly neem, guava, cashew-nut, drumstick and cocoa, are under attack from *Heloteltis antonii*, an alien species known as tea mosquito, across the State. Thousands of trees have already fallen prey to the bug and there are warnings that the attack will be severe in summer.

“The leaves of the neem trees affected by the bug wither away and fruits get a warty appearance. It substantially reduces their market value as consumers are wary of buying these fruits,” said M. Kalyanasundaram, professor and head of the department of entomology, Agriculture College and Research Centre, Madurai.

### **Farmers told not to panic**

Mr. Kalyanasundaram, who visited the fields affected by the insect, advised the farmers not to panic as adult trees would fully recover in the wake of monsoon. But protective measures, such as spraying of thiamethoxam, are essential for plants less than one year old to survive.

“But we should avoid widespread spraying of insecticides as they will only aggravate the situation. They will destroy bio-pest control agents and enemies of the tea mosquito bug, particularly *telenomus*, an egg parasitoid, that lays its larvae in the egg of tea mosquito,” said Mr. Kalyanasundaram, who has done extensive study on the insect.

Fifteen years ago tea mosquito posed no threat. But climatic changes and weather conditions led to its emergence as a major threat to plants. “It is a mirid bug, piercing and sucking the sap of the plants. It injects toxins into the plant, leading to the destruction of plant cells. Both the male and female mosquitoes attack the plants and the female ones lay egg in the tender part of the leaves,” he said.

Mr. Kalyanasundaram clarified fruits with warty appearance were eatable and would not pose any health hazard. “If the consumers reject the fruits it will encourage farmers to resort to pesticides and that, in turn, will create harmful effects,” he said.

***Fruits with warty appearance are eatable and would not pose any health hazard, says expert***

### **Over Rs.1,700 cr. drought relief for TN**

The High Level Committee that met in New Delhi under the chairmanship of Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh for central assistance to states affected by drought on Monday approved the sanctioning of Rs 1,737.65 crore to Tamil Nadu from the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF). Besides, it sanctioned Rs 32 crore from the National Rural Drinking Water Programme for the State.

This was the highest allocation by the High Level Committee on Monday. According to a release issued by the Press Information Bureau, Union Minister for Finance Arun Jaitley, Union Home Secretary Rajiv Mehrishi and senior officers of the Ministries of Home, Finance and Agriculture attended the meeting.

The Committee examined the proposals based on the report of the Central team which visited the states affected by severe drought.

## They show the way in organic farming



Students and teachers of Goodwill English School, Pookottumpadam, with officials of the Agriculture Department at their vegetable farm near the campus.

The students of Goodwill English School, Pookottumpadam, are setting a model for other CBSE schools to follow by taking up organic farming. Supported by the State Department of Agriculture, the school is promoting high-tech organic vegetable farming.

Amarambalam Agriculture Officer Liju Abraham on Monday inaugurated the farming activities taken up by the students under the banner of Goodwill Farm Club.

“We call this high-tech because we are using not only modern technology, but high-yielding seeds as well,” said farm club president Shanil Salam. Vegetables such as lady’s finger, brinjal, snake gourd, bitter gourd, long beans and tomato are being grown on an acre of land near the school. The children take care of the crops every day. They have intercropped Mallika to ward off pests.

Ajil Pulath, who won the best student farmer award this year, was present at the inaugural. P.V. Satish, agriculture assistant, directed the students on ways to be adopted to achieve their goal in organic farming.

Sahodaya School Complex district president M. Abdul Nazar delivered the keynote address. He demanded that the CBSE sanction grace marks to the students for farming.

School Principal P.K. Bindu, vice principal Jamshitha Fiyaz, coordinator C. Sriraj, club members M. Afrin Rahma, Aleena James, E.P. Rilwan, S. Alfred, M.C. Anupama, and M.A. Gayatri led the students.

### **Award for KAU former Director of Research**

T.R. Gopalakrishnan, former Director of Research, Kerala Agricultural University, has been conferred with the first Dr. Kirthi Singh Lifetime Achievement Award instituted by the Indian Society of Vegetable Science.

The award was presented to him on February 12 during the national symposium at the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Varanasi.

Dr. Gopalakrishnan has been selected for the award in view of his commendable contributions and research achievements in the field of vegetable science. The noted vegetable breeder has developed 29 improved vegetable varieties in tropical vegetables. The brinjal varieties Surya, Swetha, Haritha and F1 hybrid Neelima and chilli variety Ujwala developed by him are popular due to their resistance to bacterial wilt.

Dr. Gopalakrishnan has guided 47 postgraduate students and published 119 research papers, six books and 18 articles. He received the Krishi Vigyan Award in 1996-97 for the best agricultural scientist in Kerala, Young Scientist Award during the first Kerala Science Congress (1989) and Dr. Harbhajan Singh Award (1993). He is also a fellow of the Indian Society of Vegetable Science and honorary fellow of Hi-Tech Horticultural Society, Meerut.

### **Taking science to the people**

G.S. Unnikrishnan Nair will stop at nothing to popularise science. An Assistant Director of Agriculture, who is on deputation at the Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSSB), Mr. Nair has won two awards at the National Science Film Festival, organised by Vigyan Prasar at Mumbai, for his documentary 'Sacred Harvest'.

The 28-minute-long documentary, made as part of an independent project, focuses on the science behind organic farming. It seeks to dispel the notion held by a section of the scientific community that it was a mere 'layman farming method'.

“Organic farming has much to it than meets the eye,” he says. This is Mr. Nair’s second award at the National Science Film Festival. His documentary ‘Breeds of Wealth’, commissioned by the KSSB, had won an award the last year. The work focused on the nutrient content of the natural products provided by cattle. Having graduated in agriculture and completed a journalism course, Mr. Nair spared no opportunity to popularise science. He has written several science articles and books for children. He is also credited with having directed the agro-magazine programme, ‘Noorumeni’, on Doordarshan’s Malayalam channel. He has won as many as 11 awards, including five national-level recognitions. “The importance of the popular and rural aspects of science can never be discounted. Every age-old practice has a scientific background in them,” he said. Mr. Nair now considers the visual medium to be immensely effective in influencing viewers.

### **Samba paddy harvest over in about 50 per cent of the area**

*Farmers with small landholdings working hard for harvest*



Paddy being thrashed at Kumaravayalur near Tiruchi. Labour shortage has made it a tough task for small farmers.— PHOTO: A. MURALITHARAN

Harvest of “samba” has been completed in about 50 per cent of the area of 51,758 hectares of land in the district — 34,440 hectares in the delta segment and 17,318 hectares in non-delta category.



Harvest had been completed on about 50 per cent so far while harvest would be in the balance areas of 26,840 hectares – 22,500 hectares in the delta region and 4,340 hectares in non-delta area.

An official of the Agriculture Department told *The Hindu* here on Monday that the productivity was more in non-delta region. than the delta area.

The department has completed 22 crop cutting experiments across the district so far. The yield was eight tonnes in the non-delta fields against 6.12 tonnes in delta region.

### **Small land holdings**

The official said that farmers of smaller land holdings toiled hard in harvesting the paddy. Members of families of small land-holdings had been adopting economic measures for raising paddy crop. “They work jointly right from transplanting the nurseries to protecting the crop from weeds and from application of fertiliser to manually harvesting it,” the official said.

The phenomenon was more pronounced at Kumaravayalur and surrounding villages where a large number of members — all relatives, have been working hard in harvesting the ‘BPT 5204’ popularly known as ‘Andhra Ponni’ variety.

According to P. Karuppan, a farmer of the Kumaravayalur, non-availability of workers posed a great challenge for paddy growers. He said that while women members in a family looked after the major work such as transplanting the nurseries and clearing the weeds, men were responsible for harvest and post-harvest related works.

Official source said the percentage of farmers with small land-holdings was far less as compared to the total number of farmers in the district. In several cases, these small land-holdings were cultivated on lease basis.

### **Steps to sensitise farmers about Walta Act**

In view of the ongoing red sanders smuggling activity in the Rayalaseema region, the forest department has mooted steps to sensitize the farmers and individuals holding sprawling estates about the AP Walta Act (Andhra

Pradesh Water, Land and Trees Act 2002) and necessity to follow certain norms before felling and transporting wood.

Apart from widespread presence in Seshachalam hills in Chittoor and Kadapa districts, red sanders plantations are also seen in private lands, mostly agriculture fields and estates, close to the foothills. Divisional Forest Officer (East) K. Venkataswamy said that though the farmers are at their will to grow any tree species on their lands, coming to certain wood species such as red sanders and teak, they should obtain permission from the forest department before cutting them as per the Walta Act.

“Our personnel would just collect Rs 10 per each tree, irrespective its size. This will help distinguishing of smuggled wood from forests and timber from private lands,” he said.

### **Centre, West Bengal in row over growing tea on farmland**

The Centre is at loggerheads with the West Bengal over the State government’s one-and-a-half -decade-old notification banning conversion of agricultural land into tea cultivation area.

Stating that the 2001 notification was affecting a large number of small growers — estimated to be around 20,000 — mainly in north Bengal, the Centre recently asked the West Bengal government to lift the ban.

However, the State government says the ban — imposed as part of land reforms — was to prevent ‘tea gardeners’ from purchasing (forcibly and through other means such as cheating) land belonging to tribal people. The ban is also to prevent tea gardeners from illegally encroaching upon government-owned land. Besides, the State government says the prohibition was to maintain “an appropriate environmental balance in life and livelihood” in the area.

The Union Commerce Ministry has of late adopted a proactive approach to improve the prospects of the tea sector, particularly in West Bengal and Assam together accounting for over 80 per cent of the country’s tea production.

In a rare move, the Ministry in January-end invoked a provision under the Tea Act, 1953 and directed the Tea Board (a Central government agency coming under the Ministry's jurisdiction) to take over the management and control of seven tea estates owned and managed by Duncan Industries in north Bengal, on finding that the deteriorating conditions there had been hurting over 17,000 workers.

The Centre noted that the State government's revenue authorities were not granting 'No Objection Certificate' (NOC) to small growers who have planted tea after the 2001 notification.

The State government had said legal action could be taken against those trying to expand tea cultivation in new areas in violation of the notification, which had followed the West Bengal Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, 2000.

### **Industry status likely for robo sand manufacturing**

The Cabinet sub-committee on sand mining has favoured industry status to 'robo sand' manufacturing. The sub-committee under chairmanship of Finance Minister Yanamala Ramakrishnudu met here on Monday. The sub-committee decided to place its recommendation before the Cabinet, according to Mining Secretary Girija Sankar.

If the State Cabinet approves the proposal, the robo sand manufacturers would be eligible for all incentives given to an industry. Concession in power, 75 per cent concession in Value Added Tax (VAT) and 50 per cent slash in seignorage and investment subsidy would be given to the manufacturers. The concession in VAT would be applicable if the crushers' owners buy new equipment for robo sand manufacturing. Marketing tie up facility would also be provided to the manufacturers. This apart, 50 per cent of sand requirements of all government constructions would be met from robo sand, he said.

### **e-auction**

Mr. Girija Sankar also said that e-auctioning of sand reaches in six districts was put on hold for two days. This includes the reaches that were not auctioned in East and West Godavari districts, Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, Kurnool and Anantapur districts, he said. Mr.

Ramakrishnudu at the meeting pointed out that there were bidders who quoted more than Rs. 500 per unit fixed by the government and less revenue than expected by the government. There was a need to formulate policy in this regard, he said. The sub-committee also held discussions with the farmer representatives on sand available in pattas lands which under possession of the farmers. The Minister said that the suggestions of farmers would be taken into consideration. Agriculture Minister Prattipati Pulla Rao, Labour and Employment Minister K. Atchannaidu, Mines and Geology Minister Peethala Sujatha were also present.

*Sub-committee to place its recommendation before the Cabinet for approval*

### **Amaravati fishermen a worried lot**

*Pour out their woes before national association chairman*



Chairman of National Association of Fishermen Gajendra Bhanji addressing a press conference in Vijayawada on Monday.— PHOTO: V. RAJU

There are ample fish in the Krishna river upstream the Prakasam Barrage, but the fisherman of Amaravati and Vijayawada are not being allowed to eke out their livelihood for security reasons. Sand quarrying is another form of livelihood for them which has also been abruptly stopped. These are the complaints made to National Association of Fishermen (NAF) chairman Gajendra Bhanji.

Dr. Bhanji, a doctor of medicine, along with National Green Tribunal (NGT) petitioners Satya Bolisetti and Pandalaneni Srimannarayana along with another leader fighting for farmers with lands in capital area Anumolu Gandhi visited a fisherman hamlet near Rayapudi village on Monday morning. Members of all 34 families attended the meeting. Some of the families have been eking out a living in the area for nearly 30 decades. And the new capital has come as a bolt from the blue robbing them of their livelihood.

They are not allowed to fish near the barrage because it is too close to the Chief Minister's residence which is on the river bank and there is no use of fishing further away from the barrage as there is neither water nor fish.

Though all sand quarrying is carried out in the name of the Boatmen's Association, the bigger boats which cost Rs. 15 lakh are only being allowed to ply sand now. There are no takers for the smaller boats of the fishermen. The people of the hamlet alleged that various types of pressure were being put on them by both officials and non-officials alike to pack and leave the village.

The fishermen told their leader that they were not being given any loans.

### **Plea to CM**

Dr. Bhanji, addressing a press conference, said that the National Association of Fisherman would take under its wing the fishermen of Amaravati. The total population of fishermen, both marine and inland, in the country was 22 crore and there were between 40 and 50 lakh fishermen in each state. The community was well represented in Parliament also so no political party could ignore them.

He said that the Chief Minister should visit the village and personally look into the problems the social and economically backward community was facing.

“My advice to the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh is not to disturb the fishermen of Amaravati. Steps should be taken to ensure that their livelihood and way of life is protected even in future and that the water of the river is not polluted,” he said.

Dr. Bhanji, who is governing body member of the National Fisheries Development Board, Hyderabad, said that the Andhra Pradesh government should also take care to safeguard the interests of the fishermen living on the coast and not ride roughshod over them while developing it. He said the fisherman's association would take it up at the highest level if the State government did not respond amicably to their problems and plight.

### Sweet days in store for mango lovers

<b>MANGO CULTIVATION IN KOLAR</b>	
<b>TALUK</b>	<b>CULTIVATION AREA</b>
Srinivasapur	26,000
Mulbagal	12,369
Kolar	5,170
Bangarpet	3,686
Malur	1,599
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48,824</b>

The mangroves in the 'Mango Barn of Karnataka' are a feast to the eyes now with the trees flowering abundantly. As the fragrance spreads, it has also raised hopes of a good yield among the worried farmers, who had suffered huge losses the last two years.

This year too, the cultivators are an anxious lot with inclement weather delaying the flowering season. Normally, mango trees flower between December-end and the second week of January. But with the cold having receded now and the temperature picking up, the trees have begun flowering. This comes at a time when withered mango trees in thousands of acres have been felled due to lack of humidity.

### Blessing in disguise

The unseasonal and incessant rain in November-December last year, due to the low-pressure area that developed over the Bay of Bengal, may have

come as a blessing in disguise for mango farmers in the region as the increase in groundwater level and humidity in the surroundings appear to have helped the trees.

Kolar district's contribution to the country's mango production is huge, with mango being grown in more than 48,000 hectares here. Of this, Srinivasapur taluk alone accounts for 26,000 hectares. The district's average annual mango production is around five lakh tonnes. Badami, Banisha, Neelam, Rasapuri, Mallika and Bengalur are the varieties cultivated in the district.

### **‘Good yield if no**

### **rain for now’**

“As of now, the flowering is very good and we can expect a good mango yield this season provided there are no showers in the next fortnight,” said P.R. Suryanarayana, a mango cultivator at Panasamakanahalli in Srinivasapur. However, rains in March would be ideal for a good yield, he added.

Mr. Suryanarayana remained wary of competition from other states and played down chances of huge profits for cultivators.

“One has to see how the yield is in other major mango growing states such as Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh,” he said.

### **Nendran from Tiruchi district enjoys good market in Kerala**

*Officials, farmers want facilities in district value-addition to banana*



Nendran banana being harvested in the district is being readily marketed to Kerala for value-addition as chips and powder.

The district accounts for about 1,000 acres of area under “nendran” variety with attractive harvest of 1,000 bunches an acre. The price for the crop depends on the demand in Kerala.

Both farmers and Horticulture Department officials say the crop was raised on the well-drained area with fertile soil.

Manikandam block in the district has a majority of the area under cultivation.

Farmers have been plead for setting up industries for value-addition, particularly for making chips and powder.

Officials justify the plea saying that there was a growing demand for “nendran” variety as it was rich in carotin (Vitamin A), essential for enhancing faculty of vision.

Officials said that entrepreneurs should come forward to set up nendran production units and other value-added products in “nendran”. But the absence of industries has been a major bottleneck in the poor area in “nendran” in the district.

The duration of the crop is about one-year-old.

As it is easily perishable, farmers instantly market it to Kerala.

Unlike other banana varieties, “nendran” could not be raised as a ratoon crop.

### ***In good demand***

- Nendran in good demand because of its nutritional value***
- Absence of industries forcing farmers to send the fruit to Kerala***



## Desi cotton procurement centre planned



Workshop on revival of desi cotton under way in Gandhigram near Dindigul on Monday.— PHOTO: G. Karthikeyan

The Gandhigram Trust plans to start a cotton procurement and sales centre, a first for the State. Among other efforts, it plans to revive ‘karunkanni,’ a cotton variety getting extinct. It will convert cotton into value-added products, including naturally-dyed yarn, and sell it to other khadi units for cloth production. It has roped in traditional farmers in Athoor and Reddiyarchathiram blocks in Dindigul district to raise this variety. Similar efforts are on to revive 23 traditional cotton varieties throughout the country.

These points were highlighted at a workshop on ‘Revival of desi cotton and contemporary khadi’ held at Gandhigram near here on Monday. Trust secretary K. Siva Kumar said that the proposed facility would procure the entire produce from farmers and add value to it. The main aim was to end farmers’ marketing problem. This short staple yarn was best suited for producing bandage cloth and bed sheets.

The natural dyeing unit would use cotton to make naturally-dyed yarn to tap emerging markets. Seeds would be supplied to farmers and the unit would act as a full-fledged model centre for organic cotton and value addition. It would also facilitate formation of a federation of desi cotton producers in the State, he added.

Ananthoo of TULA Organic Clothing said that 97 per cent of cotton produced in the country before Independence was of traditional variety. The

British, who tried to kill native varieties, and introduce foreign varieties could convert just three per cent of farmers. But, after Independence, Indian scientists had successfully killed traditional varieties and converted 97 per cent per cent of farmers into 'hybrid cultivation.' Now, khadi units were using foreign cotton. Production and input costs for traditional varieties were very less when compared to those from Egypt and the US, he added.

### **Other varieties**

Krishna Prasad of Sahaja Samrudha, a people's movement in Karnataka, said that 23 traditional varieties, especially Bengal Desi, Pundur, Kaala cotton, Wagadh, Karunganni, Jayadhar and Pandrapura, were being raised in the country for the past 1,000 years. Efforts were under way to revive these varieties. All Indian varieties had been grown as inter-crop to channa, coriander, chillies, pulses, tomato and onion, he said.

Traditional cotton grower Visvasam of Vellode said that 500 acres of karunkanni variety had been raised in Reddiyarchatram and Athoor blocks. Owing to lack of marketing facilities, many farmers had shifted to other crops. These farmers would be encouraged to grow this variety. Besides Dindigul, Karunkanni was grown in Kovilpatti and Vilathikulam only, he added.

### **Subsidy for mini-tractors**

The Andhra Pradesh State government has accorded administrative sanction to provide 50 per cent subsidy or Rs. 1,93,000 — whichever is less in supply of mini tractors to the farmers four Rayalaseema districts.

The districts covered under the subsidy scheme are Anantapur, Kadapa, Chittoor and Kurnool, according to a Government Order issued here on Monday.

## Vegetable plants expo a big draw



Kinash 2016,' an exhibition of vegetable and medicinal plants and products from the project works undertaken by students of the Botany Department of Sacred Heart College, Thevara in Ernakulam, turned out to be a big draw.

Medicinal and vegetable saplings produced by students as part of their hands-on training programme; products from two self-help groups based on jackfruit and coconut and display of Indian spices were part of the show. Sales were brisk at the stalls where students displayed their handworks like home-made chocolates and other sweets.

M. S. Francis, head of the Department of Botany, who was in-charge of the programme on Monday, said that it was organised to inspire students to put their knowledge into practice and also to spread the message that farmers should be given an opening to sell their produces.

If farmers are given a brief window of time at educational institutions they can be saved from middlemen, said Dr. Francis, who said that the college authorities had drawn up a plan of action to spread the message and to bring it to the attention of the State authorities.

Students in the Botany Department are given training in 14 areas that include mushroom cultivation, bonsai-making, orchid cultivation, floriculture, chocolate-making etc. The syllabus has been revised to include these programmes of practical training after the college received its autonomous status. The exhibition was inaugurated by the manager of Sacred Heart College Jose Kuriedath.

## **Govt. intervention may aid growers**

*They seek minimum price for cardamom*

Cardamom growers hope that grading and fixing the minimum price by government would help in preventing buyers forming a cartel at the auction centres.

The Spices Board of India at its recent meeting, involving representatives of cardamom growers, had agreed to forward a proposal to the government for fixing the highest, average and minimum prices for a kilo at Rs.900, Rs.750 and Rs.650 respectively.

If the auctioneers quoted a price below that, the government would intervene to purchase the cardamom at the minimum price, as per the proposal.

### **Competitive level**

K.S. Mathew, leading planter and former president of Cardamom Growers Association, told *The Hindu* on Monday that if the government intervened, the auction would be at a competitive level.

He said that unlike other cash crops such as pepper or coffee, buyers for cardamom were limited and it was possible for them to decide the prices at a monopolistic, competitive manner. If the government intervened at least for a month, there would be remedy for the present crisis faced by the farmers.

### **Not much difference**

Farmers said that Value-Added Tax exemption had made only a Rs.10 difference in the prices per kg.

The suggestion for keeping the cardamom at the godown of Spices Park and arranging money through the banks, if the prices quoted were below the minimum prices, was not acceptable for farmers.

### **Coffee's case**

Malanadu Karshaka Raksha Samithy general secretary Raju Xavier said farmers should be allowed to sell cardamom in the open market to get competitive prices. He said that when coffee was allowed in the open

market, its prices showed a marginal increase. The open market, instead of auctioning, would help in getting remunerative prices for cardamom growers, he said.

## **Hortcorp mobile units to reach residents on call**

### *Residents' associations can use booking facility*

: With the aim of improving the supply of organic vegetables at affordable rates, the Kerala State Horticultural Products Development Corporation (Hortcorp) plans to actively involve various residents' associations in the city.

Under the new mission, the five mobile distribution vehicles now in possession of the Hortcorp will be stationed in areas requested by the residents' association members, where they can make a hassle-free purchase.

Hortcorp officials say the residents' association can make use of the booking facility now under way and block a convenient date for their members for bulk purchase. Once in a week, the associations can make use of the service with no additional charge, they add.

“So far, we have been stationing our vehicles in areas we select, but, the new service will be more convenient for the residents in the city. We have very spacious vehicles to carry all varieties of vegetables to the buyers,” says Hortcorp's Business Development Officer S.D. Dilshak.

### **Positive response**

He adds that the mobile vehicles have been in service for more than eight months in the city and have received a positive response from the buyers.

Hortcorp officials said the vegetable items directly procured from farmers at the Vengeri Urban Wholesale Market would be used for mobile distribution.

“Already, we have got several bookings from residents in the city and we hope that it will also be a good opportunity for the farmers working in the sector,” they added.

For service booking, contact phone: 9895355044.

- *No additional charge to be levied from associations*
- *Vegetables to be procured Vengeri wholesale market*

### **Maha govt orders closure of fodder camps in 3 districts**

Minister for Rural Development Pankaja Munde has urged a rethink on the decision

The Maharashtra government on Monday directed the District Collectors of drought-hit Osmanabad, Beed and Latur to temporarily shutdown cattle fodder camps, a decision which was disapproved by a BJP Minister and invited criticism from the Opposition.

The government cited availability of ample local cattle fodder for the next three months to temporary close down the camps, started by the administration after drought was declared in these Marathwada districts last year. In a circular to the Collectors of the three districts, the government referred to their reports in which they have said that fodder from rabbi season crops would last for another three months.

After May, the government will take stock of the situation and if there is a shortage of cattle fodder, it may start the camps once again, it said. The Collectors were also directed to ensure that adequate stock of cattle fodder is available in the summer months.

The circular evoked opposition from within the government with Minister for Rural Development Pankaja Munde calling for a rethink on the decision.

In a statement, Ms Munde said she has spoken to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and urged him not to allow closure of these cattle camps.

The Chief Minister's response was positive, said Ms Munde, who is also Guardian Minister of Beed and Latur districts. She suggested on-site inspection of cattle fodder camps before arriving at a decision to close them.

Opposition NCP criticised the Fadnavis government over the decision, saying it may lead to suicide by already distressed farmers. "The decision

will force farmers to commit suicide and the blame shall be on the government,” said NCP member and Leader of Opposition in Council Dhananjay Munde.

The decision will lead to cattle dying due to lack of fodder and water, he said in a statement . — PTI

### **“Release water to save paddy crop”**

A group of farmers from a few villages on the Palayamkottai outskirts appealed to the district administration to release water from Palayam Channel to save the standing paddy crop.

Submitting a petition to District Revenue Officer M.G. Kulandaivel during the weekly grievance day meeting held on Monday, the farmers said farming activities in Ariyakulam, Thalavaipura, Melakulam, South Ariyakulam, Sirukulam, Kuththupaaraikulam, Muththarasankulam and Uththamapandiankulam were being taken up with the water being released in the Palayam Channel. Since the irrigation tanks feeding the ranches of these hamlets did not have sufficient water, the water to be released from the Palayam Channel alone could save the standing paddy, which would be ready for harvest in another fortnight.

“When we submitted petition to the Public Works Department officials 15 days ago, they replied that water from Palayam Channel could be released only after removing water weeds obstructing the flow of water from the irrigation channel. However, the officials did not keep their promise and the crop was gradually withering,” said the petitioners.

### **“Open DPC”**

Farmers from Gangaikondan, led by panchayat president S. Arulmani submitted a petition seeking opening of paddy direct procurement centre in their village as farmers cultivated paddy on over 6,000 acres with the water available in the irrigation tanks in over 30 villages.

As a paddy direct procurement centre functioned at Gangaikondan during the last season, it could be reopened at the same place or at Aladipatti or Anaithalaiyoor, the farmers said.

## **“Ensure regular disbursal”**

Members of the Tamirabharani Visually Challenged Persons’ Association submitted a petition to ensure regular disbursal of monthly assistance to them, which was stopped a few months ago. The State Government’s order that the differently abled persons should be 80 per cent impaired for getting the assistance should be withdrawn and assistance should be given to even persons having 40 per cent disability.

The monthly assistance of Rs.1,500 being now given to the physically challenged should be increased to Rs.5,000.

## **Food safety officials raid fruit market**



Staff of Institute of Preventive Medicine, Hyderabad, seizing the fruits being riped with carbide, at Kedaeswarapeta Wholesale Fruit Market, in Vijayawada on Monday.- PHOTO: V. RAJU

*Officials destroy Rs. 5 lakh worth papaya fruits after finding calcium carbide contents in them*

Officials of Institute of Preventive Medicine (IPM), Hyderabad, along with Food Controllers and Food Safety Officers conducted raids on Kedaeswararaopet Wholesale Fruit Market to check the use of calcium carbide in ripening fruits.

The team headed by IPM Director P. Manjiri inspected banana, papaya and other fruit stock points in the market and verified the process being followed by the merchants to ripe different varieties of fruits.



“Following the directions of Commissioner of Food Safety of Andhra Pradesh, K.V. Satyanarayana, the raids were carried out and the teams collected 20 samples of different fruits. The samples have been sent to laboratory for examination,” said Krishna District Food Safety Officer T. Shekar Reddy.

Officials found calcium carbide contents in papaya fruits stored in a fruit stall, and stocks worth about Rs. 5 lakh were seized. The papayas were immediately destroyed, Assistant Food Controllers N. Purnachandra Rao and R. Nageswaraiah, who participated in the raids said.

### **Raids on sweet shops**

Later, the teams conducted surprise raids on nine sweet shops at various places in the city. They collected samples to check harmful chemicals and the substandard quality sweets.

Dr. Manjiri said traders who are booked on charges are liable for imprisonment up to six months, besides Rs. 5 lakh penalty. If the sweet shop owners are preparing the dishes with substandard ingredients, the District Joint Collector can impose Rs. 3 lakh penalty, she said.

“The samples collected from the sweet stalls have been sent to laboratory and action would be taken once we get the report,” said Eluru Food Safety Officer A. Malakonda Reddy.

### **‘Harekala menasu’ to get a new lease of life**



'Harekala menasu' is cultivated in Harekala, Pavor and Amblamogaru villages along the banks of the Netravati in Mangaluru taluk.

*This fast disappearing variety of chilli will soon be registered with the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority*

Thanks to Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Yekkur, the unique chilli of the district — 'harekala menasu' — which is facing threat due to shrinking cultivation area, will soon be registered under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority.

Harekala menasu (Pariyalada munchi in Tulu) is cultivated in Harekala, Pavor and Amblamogaru villages, along the banks of the Netravati, in Mangaluru taluk.

Harekala menasu was cultivated in more than 250 acres in these villages two decades ago. However, now the cultivation area has shrunk to 15-20 acres due to various reasons, Manohar Shetty, general secretary, Dakshina Kannada unit of KRRS, said. This variety of chilli is suited best to prepare non-vegetarian dishes and pickle, he said.

Harish Shenoy, assistant professor of Agronomy, KVK, said that registering the chilli under the authority offers certain protection to its growers under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001.

“Notable among them is that if any breeder, including seed companies, use this chilli for producing hybrid varieties, its growers are entitled for a royalty from the breeder,” Mr. Shenoy said.

There is also a provision for compensation to the farmers for non-performance of variety under Section 39 (2) of the Act. Farmers are eligible for recognition and awards for the conservation of plant genetic resources of landraces. Once registered, it would not take away the rights enjoyed by the grower. The farmer can continue to save, use, sow, re-sow, exchange, share or sell the produce, he said. Mr. Shenoy said that harekala menasu was exhibited at a workshop-cum-exhibition on bio-diversity and protection of plant varieties and farmers' rights at B.R. Hills, Chamarajnar, on December 26, 2015. The chairperson of the authority, R.R. Hanchinal, then instructed to register it under it.

Papers to this effect would be submitted to the authority by March or April.

Mr. Shenoy said that commercially viable crops can be registered under the authority.

The Union government, in a notification issued last July, included all varieties of chilli for registration under the authority. Hence harekala menasu now qualifies for registration.



### **Inflation cools to (-)0.9% in Jan as food prices ease**

This is the 15th straight month since November 2014 that deflationary pressure persisted and wholesale inflation has remained in the negative zone.



Reversing four months of rising trend, WPI inflation fell to (-)0.9 per cent in January as food articles, mainly vegetables and pulses, turned cheaper.

The Wholesale Price Index-based inflation was (-)0.73 per cent in December. In January 2015, it was (-)0.95 per cent.

This is the 15th straight month since November 2014 that deflationary pressure persisted and wholesale inflation has remained in the negative zone.

Food inflation stood at 6.02 per cent in January as against 8.17 per cent in December, showed official data which were released today.

Inflation in pulses and onion eased to 44.91 per cent and 5.51 per cent, respectively. The rate of price rise in the case of vegetables was 12.52 per cent in January and for fruits, it stood at (-)2.32 per cent.

Price growth in potato was (-)17.08 per cent while that of egg, meat and fish came in at 5.69 per cent.

The inflation print in the fuel and power segment was (-)9.21 per cent and for manufactured products, it read (-)1.17 per cent in January.

The November Inflation has been revised to (-)2.04 per cent from the provisional estimate of (-)1.99 per cent.

Last week, data showed that retail inflation has been rising for six straight months and stood at nearly one and a half-year high of 5.69 per cent in January.

The central bank looks into mainly retail inflation data while firming up its monetary policy stance.

RBI also takes into account industrial production numbers. As per latest data, IIP contracted 1.3 per cent in December as against a decline of 3.4 per cent in November.

**hindustantimes**

**Hurt by crops, drugs and communal tension, Punjab seeks change of power**



The state is passing through one of the worst agrarian crises. The cotton crop has failed and adequate compensation has not been given to the farmers. (REUTERS)

Punjab, once the most developed state in India, has had a traumatic past and is now facing a troubling present. The assembly elections are a little over a year away but the process of electioneering has started creating waves. The reason is simple. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is preparing for a grand entry in the state after having tasted success in the assembly polls in Delhi last year and in the Lok Sabha polls in Punjab two years ago.

For the past nine years, the Shiromani Akali Dal has been in power in the state in alliance with the BJP. Last time it barely managed to win. Akali leader Parkash Singh Badal is a veteran of many electoral battles and is respected for his fight against the Congress. But he is not the same man we knew. His son Sukhbir Singh Badal is virtually running the state as deputy chief minister. During their tenure, Punjab has touched a new low and a very strong anti-incumbency undercurrent can be felt. Punjab is now hurtling from one crisis to another: The drug crisis, farm crisis, Panthic crisis and financial crisis.

Experts say drugs were introduced to the state under the Congress regime. Now the problem has turned unimaginably dangerous. Village after village has been swept away by the drug menace. A whole generation has been wasted. The most tragic thing is the fact that this has been done under the patronage of their own leaders, the leaders the people have voted for. And under the rule of the Badals, terrorists and drug lords are having a free run.

In Punjab there is mysterious silence on the drug menace in the power corridors. But there are whispers all around. The names of a very senior Cabinet minister and a powerful politician of the state are openly bandied about in public also. A deputy superintendent of police and a drug dealer, on interrogation, hinted at the involvement of a person close to the Badals, but nothing happened thereafter.

The state is passing through one of the worst agrarian crises. The cotton crop has failed and adequate compensation has not been given to the farmers. Farmers' suicide is no news in Punjab now. The situation has come to such a pass that last month a farmer immolated himself on the day of his daughter's wedding.

Punjab has turned into a bankrupt state. There is virtually no money to pay salaries and pensions to government employees. It's a small state but has incurred a debt of Rs 1.3 lakh-crore. There is no fiscal discipline and corruption is rampant. Industry has moved to other states. Ludhiana, once hailed as the Manchester of the east, is now a barren land. I spoke to many industrialists and they say that unless one pays a substantial amount of money as bribe, it is impossible to run a business.

Finally, the Badals have played with fire. The people of Punjab are deeply religious. Unlike other states, religion plays a very important role in determining the course of politics in Punjab. The Akal Takht and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) are very powerful institutions. But the Badals, after assuming power, tried to hijack these institutions. A few months ago they became so audacious that they decided to transfer/sack the Panj Pyare, a revered institution in the Sikh religion, on frivolous grounds. It has been alleged that at the behest of the Badals, Guru Ram Rahim was pardoned by the Akal Takht and when people reacted in anger the pardon was withdrawn after two weeks. It was the same Ram Rahim who is alleged to have impersonated Guru Govind Singh, the 10th Guru, something that has infuriated the Sikh community.

The Badal government committed a blunder in the response to the desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib. When pages of the Guru Granth Sahib were torn and thrown away by some miscreants, a stir took place. The community was protesting peacefully when the police opened fire on the protesters and two young men were killed. Now, one can see posters and banners saying that the Akalis are not welcome.

Terrorism has once again come back to haunt the people. Three incidents have already been reported and Pathankot is the latest. It is common knowledge that the police are compromised; competent officers are not given appropriate postings.

Punjab is a classic example of how a developed state can turn into a sick one. People have alternated enough between the Akalis and the Congress because of the lack of an alternative. Today Punjab is looking for one. The state is willing to look out of the box to fight the political malaise. The overwhelming response to AAP's Maghi Mela last month is a pointer in that direction. If AAP could continue the present momentum, Punjab is heading towards a major upset in the Indian political system. Punjab is looking for a

massive change, a change to send the message that the days when people could be taken for granted are gone. The state is ready to throw all the rogues to the dustbin of history.

*Ashutosh is spokesperson of AAP  
The views expressed are personal*

## THE HINDU BusinessLine

### A new lease of life for Mangaluru's unique chilli variety



Harekala chilli in farmer Kishore Safaliga's farm at Harekala near Mangaluru RAVIPRASAD KAMILA

Harekala chilli to be registered with the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority

#### **MANGALURU, FEBRUARY 15:**

A native variety of chilli in Mangaluru taluk, *Harekala menasu*, will soon be registered under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority.

Situated on the banks of River Nethravathi, Harekala, Ambalamogaru and Pavoor villages are known for a particular variety of chilli known as Harekala chilli (*Harekala menasu* in Kannada). This particular variety does not have GI (geographical indication) tag.

However, it is one of the 'hot' favourites in the preparation of non-vegetarian dishes and pickles in the region.

## **Shrinking area**

Harekala chilli, which was cultivated on an area of more than 200 acres two decades ago in these three villages, is being grown in hardly 10-15 acres of land now.

Kishor Sapaliga, a young farmer who is cultivating this variety, said that he is one of the few farmers in these villages cultivating this crop for the past several years.

Grower can get yields up to 400 kg an acre during the four months of its harvesting. Sapaliga got around ₹160-220 for a kg of Harekala chilli in the last season.

Harish Shenoy, Assistant Professor of Agronomy at Krishi Vijnana Kendra in Mangaluru, said that the process of registering this variety of chilli under Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority is in process.

The move will provide certain protection to its growers under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act 2001, he said.

## **Desilting of canal**

Shrinking acreage and shortage of farm labour apart, the survival of this unique variety of chilli now hinges on the desilting of a two-km-long natural water canal in the villages where it is grown.

Manohar Shetty, who owns the land in Harekala and an office-bearer of the district unit of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, told *BusinessLine* that though the farmers are ready to expand the area of cultivation of Harekala chilli, factors such as the accumulation of silt in the natural canal running through the villages is limiting them to take up any further expansion.

The farmers in around 200 acres of catchment area of the canal were earlier getting the benefits of this canal to carry out cultivation of paddy, Harekala chilli and sugarcane, he said.

Sadashiva Samani, a farmer from Harekala village, said that the silt has not been removed from the canal for the past several years.

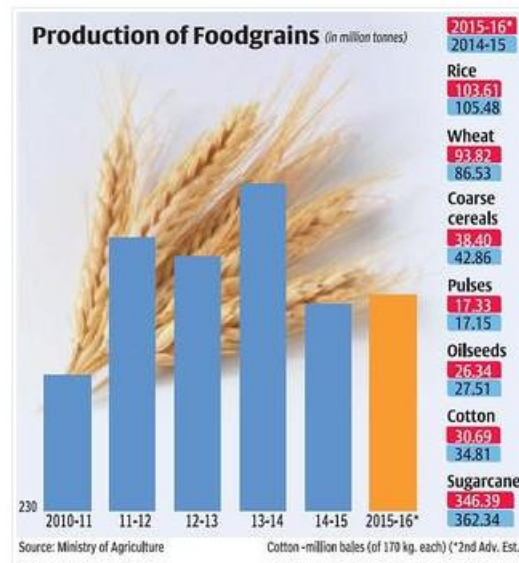


As a result of this, water from the catchment areas remains stagnant in the nearby field. Shetty said that several appeals to the officials of the departments concerned have not yielded any results. “We are ready to bring back the glory of Harekala chilli by cultivating it on 200 acres in the catchment areas, if steps are initiated to remove silt from the natural canal,” he said.

Shetty said that he is planning to mobilise growers in the villages for a ‘shramadaan’ on removing silt, he added, “My intention is to bring back the lost glory of Harekala chilli and to provide a good market for this unique crop from the region,” he said.

(This article was published on February 15, 2016)

### Foodgrain output estimated higher at 253 million tonnes



Barring wheat and pulses, production of other crops is seen lower in 2015-16

### NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 15:

Total foodgrain production during 2015-16, estimated at 253.16 million tonnes (mt), has been higher by 1.14 mt over the production of 252.02 mt during 2014-15. This is despite a setback in Kharif crops due to deficient monsoon and Rabi crops due to shortage of water in reservoirs and a relatively warmer winter.

However, the total production of rice during 2015-16 is estimated lower at 103.61 mt – down from 105.48 mt during 2014-15, while oilseeds output has been estimated to decline by 1.17 mt over last year’s production of 26.34 mt, according to the 2nd Advance Estimates for 2015-16 released by the Agriculture Ministry here on Monday.

Coarse cereal production is also estimated to be lower at 38.40 mt (42.86 mt).

Sugarcane production is also estimated to be lower by 15.95 mt at 346.39 mt compared with the same period last year, while cotton production is estimated at 30.69 million bales (of 170 kg each) against 34.81 million bales during 2014-15. Jute production is estimated at 9.89 million bales (of 180 kg each), marginally lower than 10.62 million bales produced during 2014-15.

However, wheat production is estimated higher at 93.82 mt (86.53 mt). This is also higher by 2.29 mt than its five-year average production, the Ministry said.

“Total pulses production of 17.33 mt during 2015-16 is marginally higher than the previous year’s production of 17.15 mt,” the Ministry said.

(This article was published on February 15, 2016)

### **Kochi tea auctions witness mixed trend in prices**

#### **KOCHI, FEBRUARY 15:**

Kochi tea auctions witnessed a mixed trend as prices of several varieties were irregular and lower.

The market for high-priced teas in the CTC dust witnessed some resistance in sale no 7 and the prices was lower by ₹3-5 a kg and more. However, the decline in prices was less for good medium and black plainer teas, the auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said.

Leading blenders and upcountry buyers lent fair support for good liquoring teas while there was a subdued demand from loose tea traders. The quantity on offer in CTC dust was 9,60,500 kg.

Of the 9,000 kg on offer in orthodox grades, the market for primary grades was dearer. Exporters were the mainstay for the small quantity of orthodox dust sold.

In Cochin CTC dust quotation, good varieties fetched ₹107-156, medium grades quoted ₹96-133 and plain varieties stood at ₹91-113.

The leaf sale market was also irregular with select best high-grown brokens and Fannings barely remaining steady in orthodox grades. The quantity on offer was 169,500 kg. Whole leaf was firm to dearer following quality.

With a fair demand, the quantity on offer in CTC grades was 84,500 kg. Other varieties were irregular and lower by ₹3-5 and sometimes more.

(This article was published on February 15, 2016)

### **Wheat procurement target set at 300 lakh tonnes**

#### **NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 15:**

The wheat procurement target for Rabi marketing season (RMS) 2016-17 will be same as the last year at 300 lakh tonne.

This was decided by the Centre in consultation with State Food Secretaries at a conference here on Monday chaired by Vrinda Sarup, Secretary (Food).

“In consultation with the States, it was decided to procure 300 lakh tonnes (lt) of wheat during RMS 2016-17, which is the same as was for the last season. The actual procurement of wheat during RMS 2015-16 was 280.88 lt, inspite of wheat crop getting affected due to untimely rains and hailstorms during last March-April,” an official statement said.

The State-wise break-up of the target of wheat procurement during this Rabi 2016-17 is as follows: Punjab will buy 110 lt, Madhya Pradesh 68 lt, Haryana 65 lt, Uttar Pradesh 30 lt, Rajasthan 18 lt, Bihar 7 lt, Uttarakhand 1 lt, Gujarat 0.85 lt and other States 0.15 lt.

It also pegged rabi rice procurement at 50 lakh tonnes, taking its target for total rice procurement in 2015-16 (October-March) to 350 lakh tonnes.

Till last week, the government had bought 261 lt rice from farmers in the current procurement season that started October, up over 21 per centon year.

(This article was published on February 15, 2016)

### **Cardamom gains flavour on buying support**



#### **KOCHI, FEBRUARY 15:**

Cardamom prices were up a tad last week on good buying support coupled with decline in arrivals at the auctions held in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Some enquiries from upcountry markets and good buying support from exporters have improved the prices, PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *BusinessLine*.

All the north Indian centres, except Delhi, have shown interest to buy. But, Delhi buyers stayed away citing good stocks in hand, market sources said. Current season's harvesting will by and large come to an end this month, they said. Exporters continued to stay active and have bought some where between 80 and 100 tonnes last week, they said. However, availability of exportable grade material remained thin, they said.

According to the trade, because of good crop this season and consequent to increase in fruit-bearing the capsule size has become small. This phenomenon is also affecting the price trend, they said.

However, they said good colour cardamom was still fetching moderate prices but its availability has become tight.

Total arrivals last week dropped to 648 tonnes from 768 tonnes the previous week. The individual auction average moved up by ₹10-20 and was vacillating between ₹525 and ₹595 a kg.

At today's auction by Cardamom Planters' Association, Santhanpara, held in Bodinayakannur, arrivals increased to 52.8 tonnes and almost the entire quantity of was sold out. The auction average moved up to ₹534.98 from ₹529.14 a kg.

Total arrivals during the season up to February 13 were at around 20,580 tonnes and sales were at 19,860 tonnes. The individual auction average stood at ₹611.48/kg.

Prices of graded varieties (₹/kg): 8mm bold good green colour 900-950; 7-8 mm 720-730; 6-7 mm 590-600; below 6 mm: 500. Good bulk was being traded today at ₹550-560 a kg.

(This article was published on February 15, 2016)

### **Cotton blooms on fresh demand**

#### **RAJKOT, FEBRUARY 15:**

Cotton prices edged up on fresh demand from domestic yarn mills after price declined in the last week. Gujarat Sankar-6 cotton gained ₹100 to ₹33,300-33,500 per candy of 356 kg. About 35,000 bales of 170 kg each arrived in Gujarat and 1.25 lakh bales arrived in India. Kapas went for ₹880-925 per 20 kg and gin delivery kapas was at ₹930-955. Cottonseed traded unchanged at ₹430-445. About 150 trucks were arrived from Maharashtra at Kadi mandi of Gujarat and price was at ₹900-940.

(This article was published on February 15, 2016)

### **India for Safe Food calls for overhaul of rules on pesticide use**

#### **NEW DELHI, FEB 15:**

Seeking complete overhaul of regulations governing the use of pesticides, India for Safe Food has written to Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh,

drawing his attention to suspected carcinogenic pesticides still making their way into the food chain.

Suggesting the assessment of bio-safety and efficacy of each pesticide prior to its registration, the letter, signed by Kavita Kuruganti of the Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture, has questioned why so many chemicals (261) are registered in the country “when farming can be done without such chemicals?”

Pitching for use of organic fertilisers, the letter urges the Indian pesticides regulatory regime to catch up with the advances in pest management science.

While welcoming the government’s move to set up the Anupam Verma Committee to review the continued use in India of 66 pesticides, the letter sought immediate implementation of its recommendation to ban 13 pesticides and phasing out of six pesticides by 2020.

It also called upon the Government to set up a portal along with the Health Ministry to collect information from the public as well as certain departments on pesticide poisoning cases – accidental, occupational and intentional.

“Each such reporting on the portal should trigger an investigation to confirm the same, and over a period of time, this body of evidence should be used by the government in its assessment of pesticides,” says the letter, adding that there should be “severe restrictions on licensing and sales” so that food and farming are kept free of toxins.

(This article was published on February 15, 2016)

## **WPI inflation contracts to -0.9%**

Industry bodies reiterate rate cut demand

### **NEW DELHI, FEB 15:**

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) remained in the negative territory for the 15th straight month in January this year at (-) 0.90 per cent, a tad higher than (-) 0.95 per cent in the same month last year.

Softening food articles inflation, fuel price cuts and subdued global commodity prices weighed on the January WPI, which contracted further from a December 2015 level of (-) 0.73 per cent.

The November WPI print has been revised to (-) 2.04 per cent from (-) 1.99 per cent earlier.



Food articles inflation — which had weightage of about 15 per cent in WPI — cooled down to 6.02 per cent from 8.17 per cent last month. This latest reading of food articles inflation was lower than the retail food inflation for the month under review.

Notwithstanding some correction relative to the previous month, inflation for pulses, vegetables and spices remained uncomfortably high in January 2016, said Aditi Nayar, Senior Economist, ICRA. “We anticipate that WPI inflation will print a tad below zero in February 2016 barring a sizable uptick in crude oil prices in the remainder of this month”, she said.

For the month under review, fuel inflation came in at (-) 9.21 per cent, cereals at 1.24 per cent, vegetables 12.52 per cent and pulses at 44.91 per cent. Manufactured products inflation for January 2016 came in at (-) 1.17 per cent as against 1.05 per cent in same month last year. It has been in negative territory for the fifth straight month.

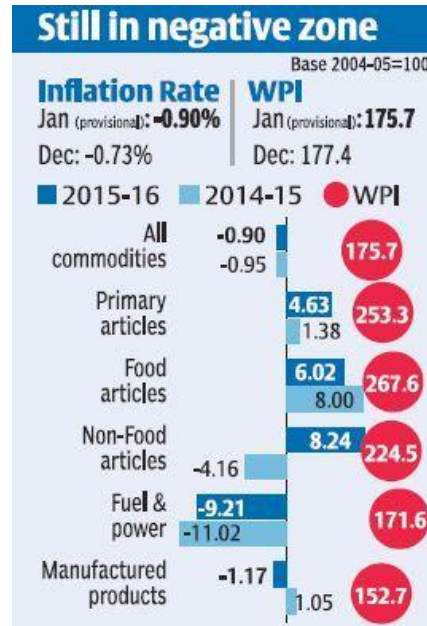
### **Industry view**

Reacting to the latest WPI print, apex industry chambers urged the RBI to continue with its benign monetary policy stance.

“The moderate inflation scenario should induce the RBI to continue with a benign monetary policy,” Chandrajit Banerjee, Director-General,

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) said in a statement here. Assocham President Sunil Kanoria said, in a statement, that the Reserve Bank of India should cut its benchmark interest rates in its next bi-monthly monetary policy since inflation as targeted by the apex bank is well within the range. This has created room for further rate cut to support demand in India, he said.

Srivats.kr@thehindu.co.in



(This article was published on February 15, 2016)

## Business Standard

### India sees lower 2016 wheat harvest at 93.82 million tonnes: Agriculture Ministry

The lower expectation is due to depletion of sparse soil moisture after two straight droughts





Indian farmers are expected to harvest 93.82 million tonnes of wheat in 2016, lower than a target of 94.75 million tonnes, the agriculture ministry forecast on Monday, after two straight droughts depleted some of the already sparse soil moisture.

India, the world's biggest wheat producer after China, produced 86.53 million tonnes of wheat in 2015, the agriculture ministry said.

The government revises its crop output estimates as it gets more information about crop planting.

Indian farmers plant wheat in October and November, and harvest starts from March.

  
**THE TIMES OF INDIA**

### **Giving science of agriculture its due**

Aedabad: By 2030, the western Indian states, including Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, will have 65% urban population and economy will be highly industrialized. There will not just be demand for more food but accessible, affordable, safe and nutritious food.

International experts and local stakeholders took up the issues at the three-day national workshop 'Forward Thinking for Agricultural Development in Western India' at Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University (SDAU) that concluded on February 11.

Ajit Maru, a person of Gujarati origin and working as senior knowledge officer with Rome-based Global Federation of Agricultural Research (GFAR), was instrumental in organizing the workshop in collaboration with agencies such as National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) and the Global Forward Thinking Platform.

"Agriculture, considered to be backbone of Indian economy, would be more important in days to come as it would not only provide food but also raw material for industries, fuel through biomass and also be able to use the waste water. Some of the issues discussed at the meet where experts from 21 agricultural universities from the region had participated include new water-saving ways such as plastic mulch irrigation and use of ICT for soil, weather and fertilizer monitoring," said Maru.

Maru said that the idea for the workshop had stemmed from his earlier visit around three years ago when he had observed that India is far behind western countries in agricultural technologies.

"The science has still not got its due as we are still employing same archaic methods for years and have not been able to take the technology to grassroots. I believe that we would not see the typical dhoti-clad farmer in next one or two decades as farming is going to rely heavily on technology," he said.

He said that the workshop connected the local farmers and stakeholders to the global experts where they worked on various scenarios for the year 2030 depending on the existing crop patterns, water availability, climate conditions, government policies and food demand in both domestic and international markets.

Maru said that the workshop aimed at being a connecting step between national and state policies by focusing on regions sharing similar farming culture and natural resources.

"The findings of the workshop would take form of a paper that we intend to present at an international conference in South Africa this April," he said. He along with other experts also met a number of state and central government officials to discuss the findings of the workshop.

## **Skills development for farmers on cards**

Pune: A Centre-appointed committee has suggested setting up skills development centres for farmers of Marathwada and Vidarbha to help them tide over crop failure and the resultant frustration.

BJP national vice-president Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, who heads the committee, said in the city on Sunday that 'Kaushalya Vikas Sansadhan Kendras' (skills development resources centres) can train farmers and also assist them in starting new enterprise which will fetch an assured income.

Sahasrabuddhe plans to submit his report to the government by next month. The 10-member committee was working on the concept for the last few months. "We held about 4 to 5 meetings. Our report is almost ready. The deadline to submit our report is March 6, but we will do it well before the last date," he said during a press interaction in the city on Sunday.

Sahasrabuddhe said the committee's focus is on small farmers who are totally dependent on farming. He said the concept of skills development is not capital intensive. "The thrust is on changing farmers' mindset. The government can set up a corpus as well," he said.

BJP's national vice-president Vinay Sahasrabuddhe said the BJP will take up campaigns under Swachha Bharat Abhiyaan, clean river project, Beti Bachao and other flagship programmes of the Modi government. Sahasrabuddhe said the party has identified national, state and district level coordinators to implement the programmes.

Under the clean river programme, the party will identify a river in every district to keep it clean. There will be a separate programme to keep the river Ganga clean which includes stopping release of effluents and appointment of guards. Under the Beti Bachao programme, they will put special efforts to spread awareness in 161 districts that have low sex ratio while the Swachha Bharat Abhiyaan will eliminate manual scavenging and rehabilitation of people involved in the work, he said.

# THE ECONOMIC TIMES

## Wheat output may rise 8.42% to 94 MT in 2015-16



Wheat output in India, the world's second biggest grower, is expected to rise by 8.42 per cent to 93.82 million tonnes in the 2015-16 crop year despite facing drought and warmer winter.

NEW DELHI: Wheat output in India, the world's second biggest grower, is expected to rise by 8.42 per cent to 93.82 million tonnes in the 2015-16 crop year despite facing drought and warmer winter.

In the 2014-15 crop year (July-June), wheat output had fallen to 86.53 million tonnes (MT) due to deficit rain and unseasonal weather conditions. Last year's wheat output has been revised further down by 2.41 MT in final estimates.

This year's wheat production is, however, likely to be lower than the record 95.85 MT achieved in 2013-14 crop year.

The output projections for wheat and other crops for 2015-16 were made in the second advance estimate released by the Agriculture Ministry today.

"Initially, there were fears that wheat production could take a hit due to warmer winters and decline in sowing area. But fall in temperature towards January-end and adoption of better varieties has improved the crop prospects," a senior Agriculture Ministry official said.

If there are no unseasonal weather conditions such as hailstorm in February-March, wheat output could further go up, which will be factored in the crop estimates of the ministry later, the official added.

The government usually comes out with four advance foodgrain production estimates before the final one.

The official said there are reports of yellow-rust disease outbreak in the wheat crop in parts of Haryana, which at present is not a serious issue.

However, the agri-research body Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Directorate of Wheat Research are keeping a close watch on such developments and giving timely advisories to the state governments.

Meanwhile, the Food Ministry has kept a target to procure 30 MT of wheat directly from farmers at a minimum support price. Last year, it had procured 28.08 MT.

As per the second estimate, total foodgrain production is pegged at 253.16 MT for the current crop year, higher by 1.14 MT, over the production of 252.02 MT during 2014-15.

Total foodgrain output is expected to exceed last year's level despite weak kharif crops owing to deficit monsoon and rabi crops due to shortage of water in reservoirs and relatively warmer winter, the ministry added.

Besides wheat, pulses output is also estimated to increase marginally to 17.33 MT in 2015-16 as against 17.15 MT last year, though it is still not sufficient to meet the domestic demand of 22-23 MT.

Except for wheat and pulses, production of rice, coarse cereals, oilseeds, sugarcane, cotton and jute is pegged lower than last year.

Rice output is likely to decline to 103.61 MT in the current crop year from 105.48 MT last year, while coarse cereals output is estimated to fall to 38.40 MT from 42.86 MT in the said period.

Similarly, production of oilseeds is likely to drop to 26.34 MT this crop year from 27.51 MT last year, mainly due to fall in soyabean output.

Among cash crops, sugarcane output is estimated to decline to 34.63 MT from 36.23 MT, while that of cotton output is expected to drop to 30.69 million bales from 34.80 million bales in the said period.

### **Bengal Tea belt likely to face yet another major turmoil**



The tea belt in northern WB is heading for turmoil after tea trade unions warned aggressive protests against proposed food grain distribution system for workers.

**SILIGURI:** The tea belt in northern West Bengal is heading towards yet another turmoil following almost all tea trade unions joint warning of aggressive movement to begin by the end of February to protest against newly proposed food grain distribution system for workers.

In foothills and hills of West Bengal, around 11 lakh heads are dependent on over 300 tea gardens. "As per existing convention in this tea belt, garden authorities procure food grain from Government or open market at Rs 8 - 17 a kg and distribute it to workers at a subsidized rate of Rs 0.40 - 0.47 per kg. Each worker receives around 8 kg food grain per head per week for each one of his family members. This subsidy is considered as a part of wage. Against this, the new initiative is to bring all tea workers under National Food Security Act. Now the plantations will work as PDS agent to procure food grain at Rs 2 per kg from Government and distribute it to workers," explained Mr. S. Pathak, Secretary Darjeeling District CITU.

"We want the difference in procurement value from Rs 17 to Rs 2 per kg to be passed on to the workers. Because employers have always considered

their procurement value while calculating the amount of non-cash component of workers wage," said Mr. Pathak.

Importantly, the movement is being launched by a joint forum of national bodies like CITU or INTUC along with local level powerful organizations like Darjeeling Teri Doors Plantation Labor Union (DTDPLU) affiliated to Gorkha Janamukti Morcha in Darjeeling hills or Progressive Tea Workers' Union, the trade Union wing of Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikash Parishad. But INTTUC, the trade Union wing of ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal is not there in it.

Beside meetings and conventions in many areas, the field movement will begin on 17th march with wide spread Government office blockade program in entire tea belt. That will be followed by many other serious steps," said Mr. Jia Ul Alam, convener of the joint forum.

Plantation owners associations however are not ready to accept the demand. But, many of them have expressed concern over the issue that can significantly destabilize overall operation of plantation sector.

### **Government buys 8 lakh bales of cotton this year; not to buy more**



CCI has purchased 8 lakh bales so far in the 2015-16 marketing year and decided not to buy more as domestic prices have firmed up slightly.

NEW DELHI: State-run Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has purchased 8 lakh bales so far in the 2015-16 marketing year and decided not to buy more as domestic prices have firmed up slightly after demand from Pakistan.

Last year, CCI had procured 87 lakh bales of cotton. The cotton marketing year runs from October to September.

"We have procured 8 lakh bales at the minimum support price (MSP) so far in 2015-16. No further procurement would take place as prices have started increasing," CCI Chairman and Managing Director B K Mishra told PTI.

The cotton has been purchased particularly from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and some quantity from Maharashtra, he said.

This year too, the government's cotton procurement was expected to be higher at last year's level due to sluggish demand from China. But increase in shipments to Pakistan as well as announcement of bonus, over and above MSP, to cotton growers in Gujarat have supported domestic prices to rise.

Mishra said the country has already exported 40 lakh bales of cotton so far this year, of which 20 lakh bales were shipped to Pakistan.

The expected fall in the country's production due to a pest attack and drought for second straight year has also been supporting the prices, a trader said.

The government's Cotton Advisory Board has pegged the country's total cotton production to decline to 352 lakh bales in 2015-16 from 380 lakh bales last year.

India had exported 67 lakh bales in the entire 2014-15 marketing year.

**Food ministry aims to procure 30 million tonnes of wheat to create buffer stocks**





"In consultation with states, it was decided to procure 30 MT of wheat during 2016-17," the Food Ministry said in a statement.

NEW DELHI: Ample global supplies are likely to check wheat prices in India in the short term despite local production estimates remaining modest and the government targeting to procure as much as a third of the projected output, traders said.

The agriculture ministry expects production this year to total 93.82 million tonnes, compared with last year's 86.53 million tonnes. The food ministry aims to procure 30 million tonnes to build buffer stocks and to supply under welfare schemes. Private estimates on production are lower.

Globally, there is ample wheat at prices as low as \$200 (Rs 13,600) per tonne free on board that can be accessed by both the government and private trade, said grain analyst Tejinder Narang. "There is, for sure, a substantial decline in output of wheat this year from a high of 95 million tonnes two years back. As per the market view, the wheat production will close to about 82-83 million tonnes, provided weather conditions are stable," said Narang, who expects the market situation on wheat to remain fluid until July. A Delhi-based trader from SMC Comtrade said not much trade was happening in wheat futures.

"Prices should remain stable at Rs 1,520 a quintal, but if an upswing comes, it can be in the range of Rs 1,590 to Rs 1,610," said Subhranil Dey. Companies and analyst said apart from domestic wheat production, the market was keenly watching government stance on the removal of the 25% import duty on the grain. The CNF prices for Australian premium white wheat is around \$230 a tonne, which roughly translates to Rs 18,500 landed cost at mills in India.

### **Foodgrain output likely to increase to 253 million tonnes in 2015-16**

Wheat output is projected to go up by 8.42 per cent to 93.82 MT in 2015-16, from 86.53 MT in the previous year.

NEW DELHI: India's foodgrain production is estimated to increase marginally to 253.16 million tonnes in 2015-16 crop year on likely

improvement in output of wheat and pulses despite back-to-back drought.



The estimate is, however, lower than the record 265.04 million tonnes (MT) in the 2013-14 crop year (July-June), but slightly better than 252.02 MT achieved last year. Wheat, rice, coarse cereals and pulses are part of the foodgrain basket.

"Overall foodgrain output is likely to be better than last year despite deficit monsoon for two straight years. Since February-March is crucial for wheat crops, we hope there would be no unseasonal weather conditions like hailstorm that we witnessed last year," Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh told PTI in an interview.

This year, rainfall deficiency was 14 per cent. Timely contingency measures and promotion of better crop varieties restricted loss in production, he said, adding that there was also shift to other crops from wheat.

Barring wheat and pulses, production of coarse cereals, oilseeds, cotton, jute and sugarcane is estimated to be lower in 2015-16, as per the second advance estimate of the Agriculture Ministry to be released this week.

Wheat output is projected to go up by 8.42 per cent to 93.82 MT in 2015-16, from 86.53 MT in the previous year.

Pulse output is also estimated to increase marginally to 17.33 MT this year from last year's 17.15 MT though it's still not sufficient to meet domestic demand.

Production of rice, a major kharif crop, is however projected to drop by 2 per cent to 103.61 million tonnes in 2015-16 crop year, from 105.48 million tonnes in previous year.

As per the estimate, coarse cereal production is expected to decline 4.46 MT to 38.40 MT this year while that of oilseed output is projected to drop to 26.33 MT from 27.51 MT in the said period.

Sugarcane production is pegged lower at 346.3 million tonnes, cotton at 30.69 million bales of 170 kg each and jute at 10.40 million bales of 180 kg each.

Although agriculture contributes only about 13-14 per cent to the country's GDP, about 50 per cent of the population is dependent on the farm sector.

Among pulses, tur dal is expected to decline to 2.55 MT in 2015-16 crop year, from 2.81 MT in the previous year.

Similarly, urad dal production is also likely to decline to 1.74 MT from 1.96 MT in the said period, impacted by deficit rains.

However, production of gram dal is pegged higher at 8.09 MT in 2015-16 as against 7.33 MT while that of moong production is estimated to increase marginally to 1.55 MT from 1.50 MT in the said period.

Pulses are largely grown in rain-fed areas. The deficit rains for the second consecutive year have affected the crops.

Going by estimates, it is apparent that there will be a supply crunch in pulses this year as well, which would continue to put pressure on prices.

Among oilseeds, soyabean output is estimated to decline to 9.13 MT in 2015-16, from 10.37 MT in the previous year while the groundnut production is expected to fall marginally to 7.18 MT, from 7.40 MT in the said period.