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THE HINDU

“NDA more generous than UPA in granting drought aid”

Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Mohan Kundariya here on Thursday said the NDA government considered Odisha government’s demand for drought assistance more positively than previous UPA government.

“Odisha was hardly given five per cent of total calamity assistance demanded in memorandum by the State government during UPA regime. However, NDA provided over Rs. 800 crore as against the demand of Rs. 2200 crore of drought assistance this year,” said Mr. Kundariya hitting out at the Congress at a press conference here on Thursday.

Unlike UPA government, the NDA government was also quick to release drought assistance to Odisha, he said.

The minister said the Narendra Modi government was aware of farmers’ plight in the era of climate change.

“We have come up with new crop insurance scheme in which farmers will be compensated for the climate change-induced damages. Farmers will also not have to pay higher amount for insurance premium,” Mr. Kundariya said.

He pointed out, “farmers will pay 2 per cent of crop insurance as premium for Khariff crop while 1.5 per cent for rabi crop. During the time of payment of compensation, 25 per cent of assistance would be immediately deposited in farmer’s account. And rest 75 per cent would be paid after completion of process.”

Anicut to come up at Athiyur

A new anicut would come up across the Vellar at Athiyur in Kunnam taluk in the district.

The anicut, which seeks to harness the rain flow in the river, would be built at a cost of Rs. 8.11 crore by the Public Works Department with assistance from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

This would be the first anicut downstream the river after the one at Thozhuthur and it would come as a boon for local farmers.

It would help improve the groundwater in Kunnam taluk apart from augmenting the drinking water source of local habitations, PWD officials said.

The anicut would run for 240 metres and a height of 1.71 metres.

About 257 cubic feet of water harnessed at the anicut would be channelised through canals to Athiyur, Keezha Mathur, Kaiperambalur, and Vayalur tanks and help stabilise irrigation for about 1,204.80 acres.

Flood embankments and a sand vent would be built as part of the work and inlet canals for a distance of about 10 km would be renovated.

The work would be completed within a year.

Work on the construction of the anicut was inaugurated on Wednesday by M. Chandrakasi, MP, in the presence of Deiveegan, Executive Engineer, Public Works Department, and representatives of farmers' organisations.

Neera plant to be opened tomorrow

Chief Minister Oommen Chandy will inaugurate the Neera processing plant of Thirukochi Coconut Farmer Producer Company on Saturday at 2 p. m. at Onakkoor, Pampakuda. The plant has been set up at an initial cost of Rs. 3.55 crore and has the capacity to process 8,000 litres of neera per day.

Civil Supplies Minister Anoop Jacob will inaugurate the company office complex. Excise Minister K. Babu will launch Neera and Agriculture Minister K. P. Mohanan will inaugurate the copra dryer at the complex, said a press release here. Jose K. Mani, MP, will inaugurate the Neera honey plant. T. K. Jose, chairman, Coconut Development Board will deliver the keynote address and P. Joy Oommen, chairman and managing director of Kerala Financial Corporation, will distribute the financial assistance to Neera producing companies.

Farmers' convention on January 31 to focus on agriculture-related issues

Swaraj Abhiyan, in association with Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, Karnataka Dalit Sangharsh Samiti and Jana Sangrama Parishat, has organised a convention of farmers at the Nehru Maidan in Sagar on January 31. Shivananda Kugwe, secretary of the abhiyan told presspersons at Sagar that social activists Yogendra Yadav, S.R. Hiremutt and writer Devanur Mahadeva would take part in the convention.

Food for Thought



Social systems that are affected by climate change

Leading scientists believe that climate change will impact human health through three “social-systems”: Nutrition, Occupational Health and lastly, Conflict and Migration.

Nutrition is how much and what quality of food we get to eat. How much nutrition we get is a function of our agricultural production, post-harvest food losses, food prices and access, socio-economic factors (such as whether the third girl child will receive her “fair” share) and diseases that affect nutrition.

Climate change has a role to play in most of these.

Agricultural yields will fall steeply in hot countries in a business-as-usual scenario. This will mean that there is less food available locally. A hotter climate also means food will rot faster unless properly stored. This again means less food is available locally. It is estimated that 40 per cent of India’s vegetables and fruits rot post-harvest before reaching our plates. Food prices could increase as populations grow (and production falls in tropical countries) and food might need to be imported from temperate climates. This will also affect access: A poor farmer will have more access to locally grown crops rather than imported food. Diseases such as diarrhoea would increase in a flood-drought alternating climate, lowering any nourishment the food provides.

The World Bank says there are 60 million underweight children in India. This is a big problem.

Nutrition in early childhood and for a pregnant woman is critical: any malnutrition here affects brain development that has lifelong consequences for the child. Children who are malnourished in the womb or in their very early years perform worse than their better-nourished peers in school and are more likely to succumb to serious infections in childhood. Further, childhood malnutrition in India is likely because of infection or

inappropriate feeding and caring practises in the first few years of life. This means the increased disease load that comes with the changing climate will add a double whammy to an already vulnerable group: poor children will have less access to food and a higher disease burden resulting in very poor nutrition.

A perhaps-non-intuitive action point is to encourage breast feeding. A common source of infection for babies is poorly sterilized feeding bottles. Breast feeding has the twin benefits of minimising infection risks and providing optimal nutrition. Another is to bring a midday meal scheme equivalent for toddlers.

The second social system to consider is Occupational Health: to understand this idea better, let us consider the lives of two people: Priya who works as a receptionist in a hotel in Mumbai and Prakash, who along with his family, works the fields growing cotton in Vidarbha. Fast forward 10 years. The temperature would be a little more than a degree warmer than it was in the past century. Water resources would very stressed with several of the groundwater aquifers running dry in the agricultural belts in India.

Sunita's life has become harder in the past few years. Traffic is now so bad, and so many people have moved to Mumbai that she now has a solid two-hour uncomfortable commute. It's also noticeably hotter. Due to the frequent flooding in Mumbai, the tourist and business traveller inflow has come down. Those who come prefer to take the last flight out, reducing the guests staying at Sunita's hotel. So management is not very generous with salaries and is stricter with requirements. Still, the lobby is air-conditioned which makes for a welcome relief from the heat.

Prakash does not know how he will last out one more year. Many families in his village have left, trusting an unknown dream in a distant city. He has built farm ponds on his soil, uses drip irrigation and is meticulous in keeping up to date on the latest trends on growing cotton, but if the rain falls when it never has – in the harvest season when the fragile bolls of cotton are open to the skies, what can he do? It's also getting hotter every year and working the fields is killing. Three women have died so far in this season because of heat exposure. He is not sure how to survive.

Half of India's workforce works in agriculture. Agricultural work is back breaking, fully exposed to the elements – including the slowly climbing temperature. Several studies report that the loss of productivity has already occurred during the hottest and wettest months due to climate change. This will get worse in the coming decades. The only solution is to improve the skills of our people to move out of agriculture and create an environment that produces jobs for them. Moreover, one study indicates that in South East Asia half the afternoon work hours will be lost by 2050 due to a need for rest breaks.

So what to do?

The clarion call is clear: We need to move out jobs where productivity is dependent on physical labour and to weather-proof our working environments. This means educating our population fast and well. And creating millions of jobs to employ those smart graduates. Will India start to stand up?

(Climaction is a fortnightly column that is published in MetroPlus Weekend on alternate Fridays. The views expressed in the articles are those of the author.)

The next article in this series will appear on February 5.

Feedback and questions may be e-mailed to climaction2015@gmail.com

Farmers float one more company

It has 17 farmers' interest groups with 340 members



The fifth Farmers' Producer Company has been launched at Vellianai near here.

It is christened as Karur Moringa (murungai) and Vegetables Farmers' Producer Company. It will focus on the activities of farmers, who raise moringa and vegetables in Thanthoni, Kadavur, K. Paramathy, and Aravakurichi blocks of the district. It has 17 Farmers Interest Groups with 340 members.

Collector S. Jayandhi inaugurated the company at a function at Vellianai on Thursday.

She said the members of the company should be increased to 1,000 so as to avail benefits from the Government for Equity Capital Grant and Credit Guarantee cover for their future loans from financial institutions. The company should adopt modern technologies such as shade net nursery, protected cultivated method, and others to increase the production and productivity of the horticultural crops.

J. Diraviam, Senior Scientist and Head, ICAR-Krishi Vigyan Kendra, said the company had been promoted by NABARD under the scheme of "Producer Organisation Promoting Institution" through ICAR-KVK, where support was available for mobilisation of farmers through awareness programmes, capacity building of members on agricultural technologies through training, and exposure visits and capacity building of Board of Directors of the company.

A. Parthiban, Assistant General Manager, NABARD, said the company would distribute quality inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides to farmer members at affordable prices. It would play an important role in aggregation and marketing of moringa and vegetables to get better price for farmers.

Organic route gets shorter

The organic life is a little hard to live, but a bit of it is possible with easier access to organic produce



It is just the beginning Vendors and buyers at the organic market selling more than just vegetables at Our Sacred Space in Secunderabad Photo:Nagara Gopal

When a film director says, the story of his movie is organic, we sit up and lend our ears. When a designer says his idea is organic he attracts attention, but when a farmer mentions organic and quotes a premium price, reactions aren't quite the same.

But instead of having a debate for and against a farmer, let's just look at how organic food is slowly but steadily and consciously making its way into our lives for a good reason. Don't quite agree?

Well, look at the craze during the mango season gone by. How many of us would do anything to lay our hands on a basket of farm fresh mangoes, which are pesticide free?

In fact the term pesticide-free itself is a big winner with many health-conscious eaters.

And making this possible are small and big growers. To develop the use of

organic products into a habit and promote healthy living, some brands like Sunrise Organics are making home deliveries but that seems to help them meet only 25 percent of the target.

But are they complaining? Seems not, because this is one delivery system of fresh organic produce that's willing to deliver even 500 gm of any vegetable.

“It is about changing one's lifestyle and promoting something more valuable for our health and nature. So we are willing to go that extra mile if any customer wants anything from us,” says a spokesperson from Sunrise Organics.

When news of the North-eastern state Sikkim turning 100 percent organic made headlines, it was a pleasant surprise for everyone and an effort that received much appreciation.

But do we know that a village at a distance of 100 km from Hyderabad has been fully organic for the past couple of years?

Enabhavi is an ‘organic village’ and it took many years and efforts by its farmers to come to this decision and reap its fruits.

Food scientist and activist, G. Ramanjaneylu says the hurdles are faced only initially.

Once the farmers see the health of the soil, they are ready to bid goodbye to pesticides. And some of the produce he speaks of can be procured from Sahaja Aharam at Tarnaka.

Regulars of pesticide-free food are aware of the addresses that they need to go to stock their stuff. The Sunday bazaar (or Aadivaram Angadi as its called) at Our Sacred Space has become synonymous with everything organic — bags and soaps and even ready to eat options to grab a bite in one's early steps towards the organic world.

When Shyam Penubolu of Jiva Organics is asked whether it is the consumer or the grower who can promote organic food, he says it's a tough question to answer.

“I feel we are at a nascent stage. It isn't a picture perfect story and customers need to give us that benefit of doubt before looking on the 'organic' tag with suspicion. This said, there are ardent fans of organic foods who are also willing to pay a premium price for the products they buy.

This is when markets like 'our good seeds' and 'adivaram angadi' comes in handy; they allow buyers to build a connect and in that way customers can visit farmers and know how the food they eat is grown and what should make them make a choice.

Organic growing isn't only about our well being, it is a well being on the whole.”

This struggle isn't anything new and N. Balasubramanian of 24 Letter Mantra rightly puts it when he says, “All good things come with a struggle. Similar is the story with match making.

When we began in 2004 it took us four years since we began selling our produce. Now having becoming a link between the farmer and the consumer, our aim is to improve livelihoods.

Having said that, it is also about gaining the trust of both. But I would say that the conversion rate for customers is at almost 100 percent and that is a good indicator.”

It is about changing one's lifestyle and promoting something more valuable for our health and nature

Agrarian distress deepens in Anantapur district

Mounting debt the reason for the extreme step

One more farmer has committed suicide due to indebtedness in the district.

The farmer, Pedda Obulesu, of Yellanuru mandal headquarters village in the district was found in an unconscious state in his farm on Wednesday with a bottle of pesticide lying next to him.

The farmer was declared dead when he was brought to the Yellanur government hospital. Family members of the deceased informed the police who are investigating the case that Obulesu had taken loan for education and health requirements of the family members besides input for agriculture one season after the other for the last six years without any profit.

The police told *The Hindu* that the body of Obulesu was sent for post-mortem examination to the government general hospital at Anantapur. The post-mortem report confirmed that the death was due to poisoning from pesticide.

Focus on 'Navya Andhra'

Create land bank, says Minister

Deputy Chief Minister K.E. Krishnamurthy on Thursday exhorted revenue officials to double up efforts to create a land bank in the district to attract new industries to the State.

Reviewing the functioning of the Revenue Department, Mr. Krishnamurthy, who also holds the Revenue portfolio, said officials right from the grassroots level had a crucial role to play in the building of 'Navya Andhra'. He lauded the efforts of the revenue staff in providing succour to people during the recent floods in the district.

He also asked Revenue employees to do self-introspection and resolve land-related matters. The Minister wanted the revenue staff at the village level to camp in each village for days together to swiftly resolve issues concerning farmers.

‘Irrigation projects a necessary burden’



Irrigation Minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao pats a farmer as the latter expresses his views at a training programme, in Vijayawada on Thursday.- PHOTO: V.RAJU

The State government was investing crores of rupees in the irrigation section despite financial deficit, keeping in mind the future productivity and prosperity of the State, Minister for Major Irrigation Devineni Umamaheswara Rao has said.

Inaugurating a training programme on water conservation organised for the members of the Water Users' Associations (WUAs) here on Thursday, the Minister stressed the importance of WUA members and Irrigation Department officials to work in tandem to ensure that the irrigation projects were completed and the best use was made of available water without wastage.

He said the Irrigation engineers and the WUAs should work with a sense of responsibility for the benefit of farmers.

He said Rs. 89 crore was spent in Krishna District under the 'Neeru-Chettu' scheme this year. He said permanent offices would be constructed shortly for WUAs, Distributary and Project Committees, but until then regular meetings should be held in government offices that were available for the purpose.

WUA members and office bearers should meet often to discuss issues of importance to farmers.

He said that a special legislation had been brought to give farmers more control over arable land.

He said that the WUAs had the responsibility of preparing plan for the release and use of water and to ensure that water was available even to tail-end users.

It was for executing this very important duty that the government constituted the WUAs for proper usage, distributary committees for proper distribution and project committees for the proper coordination of usage and distribution, he said.

The time had come for WUAs to take part in the creation of irrigation projects along with the government, he said.

Training on fish farming

A free one-day training programme on 'Carp fish farming' will be held at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Veterinary College and Research Institute premises on Mohanur Road on January 27.

A press release from N.Akila, Senior Scientist and Head, said that the programme would deal with rearing the fish, selection of the place for pond, feed management and to increase productivity. The release said that carp fish farming is very profitable and farmers, members of self-help groups, youth and interested persons can participate in the training programme. For registration contact phone: 04286-266345 and 266650. Last date for registration is January 26.

Horticultural varsity to take up research on indigenous vegetables

As a first step, a study will be conducted on the properties of wild melon



Karnataka has several indigenous varieties of vegetable which have medicinal properties.

The University of Horticultural Sciences-Bagalkot has taken up research on indigenous and largely unpopular vegetables in the State in a bid to promote them. As a first step, a study will be conducted on the properties of wild melon, which belongs to the Cucumis melo category.

Vasant Ganiger, Professor in the Vegetable Science Department, who is heading the research, says that Karnataka has several indigenous varieties of vegetable which have medicinal properties.

“Wild melon is one such variety which is known to almost every farmer in north Karnataka belongs to the region. Yet, this vegetable with anti-oxidant properties is not so popular among people,” Prof. Ganiger said.

He said that as per initial studies, it had been found that several varieties of this drought-resistant vegetable had an acidic-sweet taste and there were bitter types too. While those with acidic-sweet taste could be used for preparing curry and pickles and could be kept for nearly a month, those with bitter taste could help diabetic patients reduce sugar level.

Prof. Ganiger said that as this vegetable had plenty of seeds, he was trying to find out whether they could be used to extract oil.

“ If the presence of oil is found in its seeds, they could be a good alternative to oil seeds.

The farmer could cultivate it extensively as it will give them higher revenue. As it is drought resistant, it can be cultivated in the drought-prone district,” he said.

He said that he had identified some 24 varieties of wild melon found in Vijayapura and Bagalkot districts for research.

In future, he plans to conduct research on other varieties such as lettuce.

“ If these vegetables become popular, then they could be a better alternative to traditional vegetables. It will also encourage farmers to cultivate them,” Prof. Ganiger said.

CRDA to allot returnable plots to farmers by April

By and large, farmers will get the plots in the vicinity of their village/land, says Commissioner

The AP Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) is mulling over allotting developed/returnable plots by this April.

The CRDA authorities have “almost sorted out” the issues relating to the returnable plots. The size of the returnable plots is being finalised.

A step before that, the CRDA will have to complete the ongoing process of receiving objections and suggestions on the draft master plan. A final notification on the master plan is likely to be issued in February. The rigmarole of inviting objections and suggestions on the final master plan would follow it. The CRDA would prepare plans for each village thereafter.

But the returnable plots would be allotted through lottery system, which has become a bone of contention. A section of farmers is sceptical that it would not get developed plots in its own village.

Farmers recall that the government had promised that the developed plots would be allotted in their village itself.

More particularly jareebu farmers are agitated.

Their apprehension is not unfounded as the GO 84 dated April 17, 2015, lucidly says, “The location of the “Reconstituted Plot” will be retained as close to its original location as possible, subject to specific planning concerns. Party No. 2 reserves the right to locate the Reconstituted Plots as per the approved policy of the Government of A.P./CRDA. The land owners who have executed development agreement for jareebu lands under the LPS shall be given reconstituted plots as near as possible to the jareebu lands.”

CRDA Commissioner N. Srikanth, however, says, “By and large, the farmers would get returnable plots in the vicinity of their village/land. And, as per the government’s assurance, the jareebu farmers will get returnable lands in jareebu areas.” In a few villages it might not be possible if zoning system envisaged in the perspective plan was to be considered. Notwithstanding, the CRDA is expecting that the returnable plots exercise would be completed by April-May first week, he says.

The CRDA would allot the developed plots in proportion to the lands parted with by the farmers. The CRDA is considering various options and issues involved in the size of the plot. If a farmer has to get 120 sq. yards plot and the standard developed plot is 125 sq. yards, the farmer would have to pay the amount for remaining 5 sq. yards. The CRDA is contemplating allotting developed plots with a size of 125 square yards to 4,000 sq. yards. It is planning to give farmers plots of 1,000 sq yards, 700 sq yards, and 500 sq yards. Similarly, if a farmer is to get more sq. yards than what is allotted is another issue. The government is contemplating issuing saleable certificate by calculating the value of the remaining sq. yards.

Complex issue

For every acre of land pooled, 800-1,000 sq yards of residential and 100-450 sq yd of commercial land has to be returned

Since a major portion of the riverfront is marked as commercial zone, farmers are apprehensive about allocation in other areas

Land Pooling Scheme Ownership Certificates will be issued to the farmers as part of returnable lands

Sangha seeks 'Kumki' land for farmers of coastal districts

The district unit of the Bharatiya Kisan Sangha has urged the State government to provide 'Kumki' land to farmers of Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts.

'Kumki' land refers to those plots situated adjacent to the agricultural land or fields of the farmers. It is used for cattle grazing and to grow grass for cattle. The shrubs grown on 'Kumki' land is also used as fertilizer in the fields.

Long-pending demand

Speaking to presspersons here, Japti Satyanarayana Udupa, general secretary of the district unit of the sangha, said that it had been a long-pending demand of farmers of these two districts that 'Kumki' land adjacent to their fields should be allotted to them. The 'Kumki' rights were a basic right enjoyed by the farmers in the two coastal districts. In fact, the 'Kumki' rights were recognised and granted by the then British government to farmers in the district of South Canara (later renamed as Dakshina Kannada, from which Udupi district was carved out in 1997), which was then part of the Madras Presidency. This was made clear in the Madras Board Standing Order, 1896. The farmers also had the right to use of leaves, wood, agriculture and forest products grown or available in this land. Till 1973, the farmers could give an application and get the 'Kumki' land converted into agricultural land. But to due some problem arising out of a land dispute, the government gave the power to grant 'Kumki' land to the Deputy Commissioner in 1971. However, the government issued another circular in May, 1973, which prohibited the grant of 'Kumki' land. This situation was continuing for the last 43 years.

Over six lakh farmers from coastal and Malnad districts were fighting for the rights for 'Kumki' land. As per government figures, nearly 1.97 lakh farmers in Udupi district and 2.13 lakh farmers in Dakshina Kannada, had rights over 'Kumki' land.

The farmers had built houses and plantations on 'Kumki' land. In many cases, they had also developed dry 'Kumki' land and made them cultivable. Hence, the government should provide 'Kumki' lands to the farmers, who had been waiting for it for over four decades.

The sangha had already planned to move the courts over this issue, Mr. Udupa said.

B.V. Poojary, Ramachandra N., B.K. Ramesh, Vasudev Shanbhag, leaders of the sangha, were present.

Aavin sets up own treatment plant in Salem



The effluent treatment plant coming up on the Aavin premises in Salem.—
Photo: E. Lakshmi Narayanan

The Salem District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union Limited has installed the most efficient and advanced system to treat the waste water generated from the milk processing unit at its head office at Sithanur here.

The trial run of the new facility is in progress at present.

The new facility has been set up as part of the Union's corporate social responsibility towards sustainable socio-economical growth of farmers and protecting the environment.

The treatment plant at the Salem District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union, established in 1983, and at present processing 5 – 10 lakh litres of milk daily, is designed by Pune-based United Envirotech Private Limited.

The plant has been designed to treat 10 lakh litres of waste water a day at an average COD (chemical oxygen demand) load of 3,500 mg / litre. The plant consists of pre-treatment such as screen chamber, fat remover and chemical doser, said K. Santhi, general manager of the Salem unit.

The pre-treated waste water is being treated in Anaerobic UASB Reactor as a primary treatment.

The waste water is further treated in Aerobic process by diffused aeration system.

To achieve the pollution control board norms of 30 mg / litre BOD (biochemical oxygen demand) tertiary treatment is provided.

The treated water is crystal clear and being used for farming and gardening.

The combined treatment process of Anaerobic followed by diffused aeration system saves substantial amount of electrical energy as compared to conventional process.

The treatment ensures clean environment, trouble-free operation and easy maintenance, the General Manager said.

During the anaerobic treatment methane rich biogas is generated. This is being used in the boiler / canteen as fuel thereby saving fossil fuel and generating additional revenue for the union.



In distressed Vidarbha, resolution for suicide-free village brings hope



Bahadura village in Akola's Balapur taluka published a circular, signed and sealed, resolving to keep their village a 'zero-suicide' one, with a promise that every villager would be willing to help another farmer in distress.

Even as drought, unseasonal rain, hailstorms, crop failures and mounting debt crippled the lives of farmers across the state and the number of farmer suicides rose sharply in 2015, one village in Vidarbha's Akola district started 2016 with a New Year resolution. Bahadura village in Akola's Balapur taluka published a circular, signed and sealed, resolving to keep their village a 'zero-suicide' one, with a promise that every villager would be willing to help another farmer in distress.

"We, the villagers of Bahadura, Balapur taluka, pledge to our village deity and our families that we will never break down due to drought, crop failure or financial troubles. Committing suicide is a blot on one's family and one's village, and we will never let it happen. If we find any farmer, farm labourer or any other person from our village in monetary distress, we will all come together to lend him a helping hand and live with self-respect," the villagers said in an official note bearing the stamp and signature of the village's sarpanch and deputy sarpanch.

The resolution added that committing suicide was not a solution to their problems but the beginning of more problems. "Neither will we ever commit suicide, nor will we let our fellow villagers take their lives. Together, we resolve to make our village a suicide-free one," said the note.

Bahadura, located about 27 km west of the district headquarters of Akola, has a population of 668 people as per the 2011 census, and a working population of 386 people. Agriculture is the main source of income here. Of the total working population, at least 324 people are dependent on agriculture with 120 being landowners or co-owners and 204 farmers working as farm labourers, as per the census data. While agricultural income has been steadily shrinking, there has not been a single instance of a farmer committing suicide in Bahadura until now, say villagers. However, in the Vidarbha region as a whole, comprising the districts of Amravati, Yavatmal, Wardha, Washim, Akola and Buldhana, over 3,000 farmers have chosen to end their lives since 2012, depressed and unable to meet ends any more.

“Though our village does not have a history of farmer suicides, one cannot deny that times are tough. Villagers hear of cases of farmers from neighbouring villages taking drastic steps. Every day, we get to read in the papers about the difficulties in agriculture, water scarcity and depression that farmers in the state are going through. We don’t want any villager from Bahadura to be influenced by what is happening around us, and take any drastic step, so we decided to take some precautionary steps,” said 25-year-old Deepak Ghyare, Bahadura’s deputy sarpanch who is big farmer himself. Within days of adopting the resolution, the gram panchayat leaders organised a public meeting of farmers in the village on January 12. With the help of Yuva Rashtra, a local non-government organisation working for the welfare of farmers, they educated the villagers about the various options to maximise their income and brace the deep agrarian crisis that has gripped the state.

Vithalrao Patil, the village sarpanch, said, “We are advising farmers to start small enterprises related to farming or take up additional work such as making agarbattis (incense sticks), investing in a sewing machine and working as a tailor, making dairy products to reduce dependency on farming. I have been from house to house, meeting farmers and understanding their predicaments. I came across at least 3-4 cases where I thought the person was in despair and really needed help.”

In the meeting, leaders told the farmers that they should plan their day in such a manner that they were able to bring home about Rs 200 by the end of the day. Patil and other members of the gram panchayat also assured the villagers of help in setting up small businesses, or taking up small jobs, and asked anyone in need to flag their problems at village meetings.

“If a farmer faces trouble in getting a loan for something that he wants to start, we will help him get it by giving a personal guarantee. I have spoken to shopkeepers to give farmers raw materials for their enterprises in advance. If they fail to pay up, I will step in. We are also finding donors to help out the really poor farmers with sewing machines and goats,” said Patil, who has been Bahadura’s sarpanch for the past four years.

The gram panchayat also appealed to rich farmers of the village to come forward and bail out fellow villagers in need, if necessary. However, 30-year-old Amol Patil, who owns one of the largest farms of 27 acres in the village, said even if people wished to, no one was really in a position to help

out others financially. “If you look at the situation purely from monetary point of view, everyone is facing issues. Though agriculture is our main occupation, it is not very dependable anymore and expenses are rising.”

Amol said it was good that the village leaders were not focusing on giving money to the poor farmers, and had set sight on a larger goal of giving them sustainable livelihoods.

Meanwhile, the sarpanch is now in touch with other sarpanchs of neighbouring villages to help them adopt similar resolutions and support their farmers. “We have appealed to the gram panchayats of villages, including Kawtha, Mokha, Nagad, Sagad, Hingna, and Zurad, all in Akola district, to adopt a zero-suicide resolution and conduct similar counselling sessions for farmers,” Patil said.

“A lot can change with a few steps in the right direction,” he added.

Maharashtra staring at a disaster with Jalyukt Shivar becoming contract-driven

Water conservationist Dr Rajendra Singh shares his concerns

Water conservationist and Stockholm Water Prize winner Dr Rajendra Singh Thursday cautioned the Maharashtra government about the Jalyukt Shivar Yojana becoming contract-driven. Singh, who has been visiting the villages where the scheme has begun in full swing, said at a speech in Mumbai University that he has already conveyed his concerns to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

“I think it is a significant project for its focus on the community coming together. I have heard that in some places the Yojana is being handled by contractors. Even if there are contractors appointed, it needs to have strong community control for transparent running,” Singh told The Indian Express.

He also said that the budget allocated to the scheme is quite less. The scheme, advocated as a flagship programme by the CM, has been initiated in 6,200 villages so far. The government has contributed Rs 1,000 crore for its first phase, with an additional Rs 400 crore having come from community funds and CSR.

Singh, who was in the city for the Reframing the Environment: Resources, Risk and Resistance in Neoliberal India seminar organised by the Department of Sociology, Mumbai University, also said that the state's water situation is staring at a disaster.

“The state's rain pattern has no relation with its crop pattern. Marathwada, which receives 200-300mm rainfall, has over 15 sugar factories and it seems that nothing is being done about it. Since independence, many agriculture ministers have come from the state with 40 per cent of the dams in the country built here. Yet, the most number of farmer suicides also are from the same state. How can this be called development,” he said in his plenary speech on Thursday.

Singh, who is known for reviving the age-old practice of rain water storage tanks or johads, has helped revive rivers in the arid state of Rajasthan. Also known as the ‘waterman of India’, Singh has been traveling across 17 countries in the past year to raise awareness about water rights.

Commenting on COP21, he said that dialogue between the countries has become a ‘green business’. “The focus has become climate mitigation while the focus needs to be climate adaptation where each country finds ways to adapt in ways possible against climate change,” he said.

On the debate about environment vs development when expanding infrastructure in a city like Mumbai, Singh said that the model at play in Mumbai will not survive for long. “Cities like Mumbai are red spots of climate change. This has to stop and we need to move towards sustainable development,” Singh said.

hindustantimes

India ranked 22nd in world's best countries, Germany tops list

India was ranked 22nd on an inaugural list of the world's best countries on Thursday, which was released in Davos on the sidelines of the WEF Annual Meeting and is topped by Germany.

China is ranked 17th on the list, which ranked 60 countries on the basis of sustainability, adventure, cultural influence, entrepreneurship and economic influence.

The survey was conducted among 16,200 business leaders and other high-fliers.

Apart from Germany being in the first position, other countries in the top five are Canada (2), UK (3), the United States (4) and Sweden (5).

The report has been prepared by US News and World Report and New York-based brand consultancy BAV Consulting and Wharton School of Business.

About India, the report said the country faces its fair share of international and domestic challenges.

“India has a fast-growing, diverse economy with a large, skilled workforce. But because of its population, it’s also one of the poorest countries in the world based on income and gross national product per capita.”

“Although agriculture employs the most workers, services are the major source of economic growth. Due to its educated, English-speaking workforce, India has become an important centre of information technology services, business outsourcing services and software workers,” it noted.

Attention health freaks: Gluten-free diet is a big fat lie



The study, conducted by Dana Lis, a PhD candidate from Australia made an attempt to understand whether gluten, a protein found in bread, rye and barley, had any influence on the body at all. (Shutterstock)

Gluten-free diet has become the new fad among the health conscious, especially those with an athletic bent of mind. Many aspiring sportsmen forsake gluten in their diets for superior performance but a [new study](#) suggests that the benefits of a gluten free diet are greatly exaggerated. More than 1000 athletes took part in a study published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* last year which indicated that 41% of them followed a gluten-free diet. Only 13% of them, however, had been medically diagnosed with some form of allergy to gluten, indicating that most of them followed the diet mostly because of its purported health benefits, reported the New York Times.

The study, conducted by Dana Lis, a PhD candidate from Australia made an attempt to understand whether gluten, a protein found in bread, rye and barley, had any influence on the body at all.

Many participants in the study told researchers that they believed the diet would help them avoid digestive problems. Some estimates suggest that 90% of athletes, especially those who take part in endurance sports, experience some form of gastrointestinal problems after a workout.

Lis devised an ingenious solution to solving this problem. She developed two sports bars, both indistinguishable in taste but with one of them containing gluten. Then, she invited cyclists to take part in an experiment where they would be fed random bars for one week each, neither the researchers nor the participants having any idea about which bar they were consuming.

The participants were asked to fill daily questionnaires about any gastrointestinal problems they may be facing. At the end of each week, they were put through a strenuous time trial session to test their athletic performance.

The results, surprisingly, showed no real differences. “An athlete’s nutrient intake and timing are so critical to performance,” Dana Lis concluded. “I hope that people learn to be more objective in terms of what they hear and read about gluten-free diets and nutrition in general.”

Of course, the study was small-scale and short term. Whether the results change over the course of a longer testing period remains to be seen.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Centre mulls fortified wheat, rice in PDS



Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Ram Vilas Paswan (centre), at a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday

Inter-ministerial consultations going on; standards to be finalised: Ram Vilas Paswan

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21:

The Centre is considering introducing fortified wheat and rice in the public distribution system (PDS), for which inter-ministerial consultations are underway, Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan told reporters here on Thursday.

“Consultations are on with the Woman and Child Development (WCD) and the Health Ministries,” the Minister said at press conference here, to highlight the achievements of his Ministry in the past 19 months.

While the WCD Ministry is looking at the nutrition aspect, food regulator FSSAI (which is under the Health Ministry) is working on the standards, said Vrinda Sarup, Secretary (Food & Public Distribution), adding that while

standards for *atta* (wheat flour) had already been drawn in February 2015, those for rice were yet to be finalised.

Food Security Act

Stating that the Food Security Act will have rolled out in all States by April this year, Paswan said 97 per cent ration cards had already been digitised and 10.10 crore cards had been seeded with Aadhaar to make the system more transparent.

Cash transfers for food have begun in Chandigarh and Puducherry from September 2015, he said, adding that next in line was Dadra & Nagar Haveli. With the price of pulses still ruling high, the Minister termed the gap between demand and supply as the “biggest challenge”, adding that so far 44 lakh tonnes had been imported, and 15,000 tonnes were procured from farmers to create a buffer stock.

“This will take care of any panic in the market,” he said, adding that the target for food grain buffer stock this year had been set at 1.5 lakh tonnes, adding that procurement in kharif and rabi for 2015-16 will be done at market price above the minimum support price, out of the Price Stabilisation Fund.

Pulses production in the 2015-16 crop year (July-June) is expected to fall or remain flat due to a deficit monsoon.

Kesari dal

Asked about his views on Khesari dal, Paswan said he is in favour of lifting the ban if the new varieties are found fit for human consumption.

“I have consumed Kesari dal for 15 years and nothing has happened to me. It’s tasty, cheap and nutritious. Since its cultivation is easy, it will help ease the pressure on pulses imports and production,” he added.

Kesari dal was banned in 1961 as its consumption was linked to lathyrism (paralysis of the lower limbs).

As per media reports, FSSAI has sought the Health Ministry's approval to hold public consultations on approval of three new varieties — Ratan, Prateek and Mahateara.

Sugar demand

Commenting on the first back-to-back drought in nearly three decades, Paswan said sugar production in the 2015-16 season would be enough to cater to the local demand.

On cane arrears to farmers, he said only ₹2,500 crore was pending, against ₹21,000 crore due in March 2015.

(This article was published on January 21, 2016)

Rubber bodies condemn port restrictions on import of rubber



There cannot be any Make in India if raw material is not available or if restrictions are placed on its availability to the manufacturers".

KOCHI, JANUARY 21:

Rubber consumers represented by All India Rubber Industries Association and Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association have strongly criticised the port restrictions on import of rubber, terming the move as anti-industry.

Restrictions were placed on import of a critical raw material such as rubber strike at the very root of Make in India Initiative. India is grossly deficient in production of rubber. Despite the fact that rubber prices in India are about 20 per cent higher than international prices, there is acute deficit. Rubber imports are therefore inevitable for manufacturing. Port restrictions are another way of putting non-tariff barriers for import of raw materials, said Raghupati Singhania, Chairman ATMA.

Governments in other natural rubber producing countries are providing incentives for domestic value addition. On the other hand, India is increasing restrictions on availability of raw material to the industry, he added.

Prime Minister had assured that rubber products manufacturing will be included in Make-in-India. However there cannot be any Make-in-India if raw material is not available or if restrictions are placed on its availability to the manufacturers, said Mohinder Gupta, President AIRIA.

Earlier the export obligation period was drastically reduced from 18 months to 6 months wherever natural rubber is allowed as an input (under Advance Authorisation scheme) making it difficult for MSMEs to cope with such stiff laws. Later the import duty on natural rubber was enhanced to 25 per cent making it one of the highest in the world. And now port restrictions have been placed on import of rubber. Certainly the Government has not kept in mind the plight of thousands of rubber MSMEs who will be gravely affected by this decision”, he said.

(This article was published on January 21, 2016)

Hatsun Agro posts strong growth in Q3 despite tough conditions

CHENNAI, JANUARY 21:

Hatsun Agro Product has reported a 60 per cent jump in net profit for the third quarter of the current year, as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year.

Investments in expanding capacities, infrastructure and branding, have all paid off giving the company, the largest private sector dairy player, the benefit of economies of scale.

Net profit

Hatsun has reported a net profit of ₹17.55 crore (₹10.87 crore) on a total income of ₹830.09 crore (₹713.22 crore) for the quarter ended December 31, 2015.

The company procures and markets liquid milk under the brand name Arokya; ice creams branded Arun Icecreams and Ibaco; a range of dairy products under the brand Hatsun.

RG Chandramogan, Managing Director of Hatsun Agro, said the company has managed to report a good performance despite adverse weather conditions, including intense rains and flooding in Tamil Nadu.

Ice cream sales

Sales of ice creams and curd had been hit more than usual during the season, which is even under normal conditions a low period. Situation returned to normal around December 15, and the worst is behind, he said.

(This article was published on January 21, 2016)

Spices Board meet likely to generate biz worth Rs. 2 cr

KOLKATA, JAN 21:

Traditional spice growers across Sikkim got their first-ever chance to interact face-to-face with a country-wide array of exporters at buyer-seller meet organised by the Spices Board.

The meet saw around 60 stakeholders participate; and according to the board, transactions worth 18 tonnes of spices, accounting for a worth of about Rs. 2 crore are expected to be materialised soon.

A chunk of this business will be large cardamom which is largely endemic to the Himalayan state of Sikkim.

“The buyer-seller-meet will act as a trigger to more such deals in Sikkim. We have set the ball rolling,” A Jayathilak, Chairman, Spices Board, was quoted in a release issued by the organisation.

(This article was published on January 21, 2016)

Three varieties of kesari dal released for cultivation

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21:

Three new varieties of kesari dal – Ratan, Prateek and Mahateora – have been released for general cultivation, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said on Thursday.

“The three varieties of kesari dal (*Lathyrus sativus*) or grass pea, developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in collaboration with State agriculture universities, have low p-N oxalyl- L-p-diaminopropionic acid (P-ODAP) content,” Singh said in an official release.

He said the new varieties had ODAP content in the range of 0.07-0.10 per cent, which is safe for human consumption.

Kesari dal, a key Rabi pulse crop, is mainly cultivated in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Bihar and West Bengal in about 4-5 lakh hectare of area, and its annual production is about 2.8 to 3.5 lakh tonnes.

Average production

The Ministry said the average production of the dal is 650-700 kg/ha. Till the 1980s, it was being cultivated in about 10.0 lakh ha.

Singh said kesari dal, because of its hardy nature, “Is best suited for moisture stress conditions and requires fewer inputs, except quality seed, and can be

successfully grown under paira (relay) cropping in rice fallow situation.” The Minister’s statement comes on the back of media reports citing an RTI reply that said the ban was being lifted after the Indian Council of Medical Research had cleared the new varieties as ‘fit for consumption’.

At a time when prices of pulses are ruling high, the Congress has accused the Centre of “playing with the health of the people”.

(This article was published on January 21, 2016)

Aquaculture industry estimates 10-15% growth in production

KOCHI, JANUARY 21:

Marine Products Exports Development Authority’s farmer-friendly initiatives have boosted aquaculture production, with the agency anticipating 10-15 per cent growth this fiscal year.

During 2014-15, tiger shrimp production was 73,155 tonnes, whereas the contribution of vannamei shrimp was to the tune of 3,53,413 tonnes. The technical assistance extended by MPEDA in all maritime States, catering to farmers’ needs, helped achieve the growth. The figures available with MPEDA revealed that West Bengal leads the show in tiger shrimp production, registering 73 per cent, followed by Odisha (13.77 per cent), Kerala (4.98 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (4.04 per cent) and Gujarat (2.98 per cent). In vannamei shrimps, it was Andhra Pradesh came to the forefront beating other maritime States.

Stakeholders emphasised the need to encourage aquaculture production, as the figure in the first six months of this fiscal touched around 3 lakh tonnes, showing a 10 per cent growth over the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year.

However, they pointed out that the western coast contribution in aquaculture was a meagre 10 per cent vis-a-vis 90 per cent in the eastern coast, led by Andhra Pradesh.

Why the west coast lags

Lack of booster policies and reform oriented schemes in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, and Kerala compared to robust farmer and industry friendly schemes Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal, have been a major factor for this disparity, they added.

MPEDA officials attributed the east coast's dominance to flat land areas – favourable for aquaculture production – compared to hilly regions on the western coast.

The unavailability of requisite land in the west coast also contributed to low production. Kamlesh Gupta, Chairman and Managing Director of WestCoast Group, a Gujarat-based shrimp producer and exporter, pointed out that the AP government introduced multiple schemes for farmers as well as feed and seed manufacturers, besides reduction in power tariff and Interest subsidies. However, western coast States are yet to evolve such policies.

Promotion of aquaculture activities by the Gujarat government, he said, is not encouraging even though the State has the longest coastline, stretching 1,600 km.

Currently, land availability for farming is limited and the need of the hour is fast processing of pending applications for allotment of brackish water land.

(This article was published on January 21, 2016)

Jeera down on low demand

RAJKOT, JANUARY 21:

Jeera prices down on the back of slow export demand, as well as weak buying by stockists. Moreover, favourable weather and higher sowing has brightened production expectation. Traders said demand was quite slow from exporters, and domestic buyers were also not buying in heavy quantities as supply was sufficient to match demand. About 1,500-2,000 bags of jeera arrived in Unjha mandi of Gujarat. Price quoted was ₹15 down to ₹2,650-2,800 per 20 kg, for the best quality. Average jeera price was quoted ₹2,400-2,600 per 20 kg. At Rajkot APMC, jeera arrival was

registered about 250 bags and price decreased ₹20 to ₹2,400-2,600 per 20 kg. According to the Department of Commerce, export of jeera during first 6 month of 2015-16 (Apr-Sep) was 44,140 tonnes.

(This article was published on January 21, 2016)

Protect intellectual property, for starters



Tech for all: Fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory

Digital India and Startup India will be affected in the absence of a regulatory set-up that encourages innovators

The government is on a high gear to induce growth and create new jobs through wider entrepreneurship, the latest endeavour being the grand launch of the Start Up India campaign last week. Technology will play a critical role in this effort.

Enabling the poor through JanDhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) framework or augmenting the nation's entrepreneurial energy, the triangle of technology, innovation and intellectual property protection has to be borne in mind by the government, courts and regulators.

Realising the hallowed objectives of initiatives such as Digital India, Make in India and Startup India depends on the facilitating framework of the economy to reap the fruits of technological innovation.

Think global

Thus it is time to rejig the thinking across industry, judicial and regulatory framework so as to enable formation of global startups in India.

Impetus to technology innovation is through R&D and enabling an intellectual property (IP) framework aimed at nurturing innovation. The draft National IPR Policy which we hope to adopt soon has the main objective to ensure a secure culture for fully realising the IP potential.

Let's take example of the telecom sector, one of the fastest growing sectors in India. One stated mission of the National Telecom Policy 2012 has been to promote R&D, design in cutting edge ICT technologies and IP creation to promote entrepreneurship and manufacturing. Predominantly seen as a service sector, the time has come to take concrete steps to boost manufacturing in the telecom sector and cutting net imports of electronics to zero by 2020.

We also need to get into the global supply chains which would mean necessary imports, as that will be the future of international trade. Nearly sixty per cent of international trade is now through global supply chains, and India is a minor player.

Chinese companies are also active in global supply chains. China has steadily built up a culture of innovation and IP protection and has become a patent powerhouse.

Their companies are playing a major role in development of new mobile communication platforms. For instance Huawei is having about 25 per cent of the world's patents in 4G. Such a strong portfolio developed over time due to high R&D shows the strategy of the company to become a global leader.

Such notion of respect for the IP by promoting R&D will be beneficial for businesses in the long run as they seek to become global players.

Fair practices

In the global supply chains, technology standards are common platforms allowing products to work together. Standards are pervasive, interoperable, and are the drivers of innovation and dynamic competition. Complementary innovation implies that a product is made possible by the combination of patents.

Proprietary technology that has been declared essential to the implementation of a standard is referred to as a standard-essential patent (SEP). Multitude of patents and standards involved in consumer products such as cellphones increases the complexity of SEP licensing negotiations.

Within and across standards, patents go through a fierce competition phase to achieve the SEP status. Further, SEP holder has to forego the exclusivity of patent by agreeing with Standard Setting Organisations (SSOs) that the technology will be made available to all under FRAND (Fair, Reasonable and Non-Discriminatory) obligations.

Disclosure rules of the SSOs like European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) typically require participants to disclose patents or patent applications during the standard setting process before a standard is chosen. Licensing rules require that participants agree to license disclosed patents on FRAND terms.

Although agreed by the innovator to share IP on FRAND terms in case of SEPs, it does not imply that such technology and the related patents can be used without paying the royalties.

Over the last two years, the Delhi High Court and the Competition Commission of India have wrestled over the matters related to the SEPs. There have been interim orders in these cases indicating diverging views on the balance of interests between the SEPs holders and the users. Globally a norm has emerged that the SEP holder cannot pursue injunctive relief as long as the alleged infringer is willing to negotiate a license agreement on FRAND terms.

The assurance of FRAND licensing for the SEPs plays a crucial role in decreasing the possibility of injunctions that would remove products from the market. With disruptive innovation and constant improvements in a fierce price sensitive market, the product life cycle is short and injunctions

can distress the manufacturer using SEPs encumbered technology in mobiles.

There have been earlier instances of ex parte injunctions in case of SEPs in India which it seems the courts have abstained later on, which is a good development.

Delaying and shrouding tactics will not work as has been established by the Delhi High Court order of December, 2015. Piercing corporate veil, the Delhi High Court found a leading Indian mobile company in contempt of Court's earlier order for interim arrangement between parties to pay royalties for use of IP.

Curbing patent wars

This act of the parent company to incorporate a subsidiary to violate the court order of paying royalties for using the IP of the patent holder was not the correct approach as noted by the High Court. This case also points to a basic void amongst Indian companies of not respecting IP, and thereby not keen on R&D to develop their own IP portfolio.

FRAND commitments help in technology transfer through voluntary IP licensing thereby helping in curbing the patent wars. An interpretation of FRAND must discern the context in which such commitment is made.

It can be counterproductive to take recourse to intellectual property law or competition law to deal with SEP issue without first understanding the underlying voluntary contractual process which is aimed at development of innovative technology standards.

While the avowed goals such as Digital India and Startup India hinge on the dissemination, absorption and proliferation of technology, the time has come for a nuanced look at this complex motley of FRAND encumbered SEPs seen as the drivers of technological innovation.

Generally, regulators tend to activate their regulatory turf and jump into the fray disrupting the healthy sector. It needs to be borne in mind that sometimes regulating disruptive innovation can have chilling effects.

The writer is the secretary general of CUTS International. With inputs from Saket Sharma of CUTS Institute of Regulation & Competition

(This article was published on January 21, 2016)

Putting wind into renewables' sails



Business Line Wind power: Do not make it a sunset industry

India's green energy thrust is narrowly focused on solar. All renewable sources need to be treated at par

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to mainstream renewable energy (RE) and has set a target of 175 GW by 2022 .Some experts say the target is too ambitious. To an extent, they are correct that the targets are huge and pose challenge to grid operator due to inconsistent generation.

The counter argument is that even the demand is inconsistent and governments and utilities do very little on demand-side management. Further, with improved technologies, renewable generation can be predictable with reasonable accuracy.

The other important aspects to consider are pollution from fossil fuels, their finite availability, and the cost of imports. Renewable energy is abundant and domestic. Even if the targeted capacity is not fully achieved, the resultant successes will be better than meeting small targets. Therefore, the Prime Minister's decision is precise and significant.

Issues to tackle

These targets imply renewable additions at about seven times the current rate. This in turn will require a serious overhaul of the systems and processes. Inadequate grid infrastructure, open access issues, poor fiscal health of utilities, inconsistent policy processes at the State levels and lack of quality consciousness resulting in the creation of bad assets are the major issues blocking investments into renewable energy sector.

Of late, wind and solar are unnecessarily discussed as competition. Both the sectors have a successful global track record. The benefits and drawbacks for each depend on the application and location.

Wind power growth has declined from an addition of 3,000 MW in 2011 to only 1,600 MW in 2015-16 so far, against a target of 2,400 MW. This slowdown is mainly due to inadequate evacuation, refusal to enter into power purchase agreements by some States, political interference at local levels and cumbersome land acquisition processes

It is also not out of place to state that notwithstanding public posturing by centre and States, the regulatory regime is strongly weighted against wind energy.

Against the wind

In contrast with the various land and evacuation bottlenecks for wind, the government is bullish in promoting solar. State governments are de-risking large solar projects by acquiring land and creating evacuation facilities. For smaller projects, when the investor acquires land directly, the processes of land alienation is exempted. Solar projects are also let off from inter-State transmission and cross subsidy charges. Currently, they are exempted from forecasting and scheduling.

The Prime Minister's vision will benefit, if wind is given the same treatment. In particular, national renewable purchase obligation (RPO) must be announced immediately. The wind-rich States should be allowed to sell surplus wind energy generated to deficit States.

Areas near green corridor can be designated as manufacturing hubs to absorb power near source, reducing capital costs in transmission, and cutting T&D losses. India also needs to invest in gas-based spinning reserves along the green corridor for grid stability.

Role of the industry

While the government has much to do, the industry can also contribute by rationalising excessive manufacturing capacity, and passing on the benefits of higher hub height and larger rotor diameter trend towards lower capital cost per kWh.

Quality must be a key focus. Wind turbine manufacturers design their products to meet IEC standards and every turbine model that gets installed in India passes the qualifying criteria of NIWE. This requirement eliminates substandard products from the Indian market.

The same can't be stated for solar panels. There are many technologies and unheard names making solar cells and panels in India with no quality standards.

The government cannot ignore quality and will be compelled to issue quality guidelines for all solar projects. It is surprising that the positive learning from strict quality control in wind has not been mapped to solar. There appears to be an unseemly hurry to get on to the bandwagon of solar farming.

This would ultimately lead to higher costs and tariffs. It is also possible that the solar bubble will burst because we are not paying enough attention to quality and technology related issues.

Further, we should also revisit the tariff process. For wind, State regulators fix feed-in-tariff after due consultations with stakeholders and public hearings. However, for solar, tariffs are decided through bidding. It is perceived that bidding has contributed to reduction in tariffs. The recent low bids in Andhra Pradesh are also used to showcase this argument.

We think it is too early to celebrate. While aggressive bidding in power sector has led to low bids, it has often not led to realistic capacity additions. For solar, global oversupply of panels and slowdown in China are actually the major contributors to cost reduction. These can be factored into tariffs. If

High **inflation** of pulses hurts, as they account for nearly five per cent of the total **food expenditure** of an average Indian, according to a recent Crisil report. Data of the past decade show the key **agri commodity** is prone to price spikes every three years. Why have the prices of pulses remained elevated for such a long time, in a country that is one of the largest consumers and producers of the protein-rich item?



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Late winter good news for wheat farmers

Meerut: Good news may be in the offing for western UP's wheat farmers, who had suffered massive losses last year due to unseasonal rains. Experts believe that with the dip in temperature in the second week of January, the yield of the winter crop may improve.

Ashok Kumar, professor at Sardar Vallabhai Patel University of Agriculture's department of soil science, said, "Since wheat is a winter crop, cold temperature is necessary for it to grow. There are certain biochemical reactions that only take place when the temperatures are low. If the reactions don't happen, the crop ends up being really thin and long. A thin wheat crop means the yield will be poor. If the weather stays cold, the crop gets thick and the yield is much better."

He added saying, "This year, there was fear among farmers as the winter was not setting in. Usually, it gets very chilly in December but it was not the case this year. Even the first week of January was not very cold. It is only over the last few days that temperatures dropped. That brought hope for farmers."

Last week, the city saw its first winter drizzle which brought temperatures down. "This was the first drizzle reported in the city in this winter season. Trace rain was reported that could not be measured. This rain would lead to a dip in temperatures and make the mornings foggy due to the increase in humidity levels," said Brij Mohan, officer-in-charge, Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), Meerut.

According to the IMD, it was the drop in the diurnal range of temperature

(the difference between the maximum and minimum temperatures) that caused the chill in the city. The maximum temperature recorded in the city on Thursday was 14.7 degrees Celsius and the minimum temperature was 7.1 degrees Celsius. The diurnal range of temperature was 7.6.

Farmers are pleased with the changes in weather. Kuldeep Tyagi, national president of the Bharitya Kisan Andolan (BKA), said, "Wheat farmers were dejected last year after they had to face massive losses due to unseasonal rains. It had driven many to insanity and, in some cases, even death. I am glad that the weather gods are helping farmers this year so far."

9 herbal teas that for good for skin and hair

Two herbal teas have recently made their way into the list of drinks that are known for their beauty benefits.

You've heard it many times — green tea treats dark patches under the eyes and lavender tea reduces stress lines from the face. Tea, in its brewed form, has been known to treat all sorts of skin and hair conditions. They are rich in antioxidants and known for their anti-ageing and anti-inflammatory properties that when used topically on the skin or hair works wonders.

The latest to join the brigade of teas that treat skin and hair woes, Matcha and Kombucha are now being preferred by beauty professionals worldwide.

Green Tea

Everyone knows the many health benefits that green tea has to offer. However, apart from keeping one fit, this tea is also a popular beauty ingredient. If applied in the form of a face mask, green tea acts as an exfoliator. It brings shine to the face and also reduces excess sebum production. For the hair, green tea can be brewed and then used as a hair wash. The tannin in the tea adds lustre to hair. When combined with lemon juice, green tea helps reduce dandruff and acts as a hair

Chamomile Tea

If you are looking at a natural way to lighten your hair, washing your mane

with chamomile tea will do the trick. It lightens your hair by two shades! You can steep two chamomile bags in hot water, then mix them with lemon juice and apply it on your hair for 5-10 minutes. You can also use this tea as a natural shampoo and conditioner

Black Tea

The free radicals present in this tea delays the skin's ageing process. It also replenishes skin instantly when splashed on the face. Brew the tea and then let it cool down. Refrigerate it for a couple of minutes and then apply it on your face to soothe your skin.

Lemongrass Tea

Known to be an excellent detoxifying agent, it not only cleanses your system when consumed but also helps you get rid of blemishes and acne. Apply a cool mixture of this tea on your face daily.

Oolong Tea

If reducing wrinkles and dark spots is your worry, apply a paste of oolong tea on your face. The antioxidants present in it help remove toxins from your skin, thereby reducing age spots. It also protects your skin from pigmentation caused by the harmful UV rays of the sun.

Lavender Tea

Apart from its cooling and calming benefits, lavender tea is also known for reducing all sorts of skin infections. It treats hair loss and reduces dandruff as well.

Kombucha Tea

This is a lightly fermented tea, which is made with sugar, bacteria and yeast. It is sometimes also referred to as the Kombucha mushroom tea. It contains Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria and Yeast (SCOBY), which not only detoxifies your skin but also hydrates and improves skin elasticity. This tea helps improve skin tone, clarity and texture. It also brightens your skin and visibly reduces the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. You can drink this

tea on a regular basis and also apply a fine paste of it on your face for approximately half an hour.

Ginger Tea

Ginger is known to be an antiseptic that treats any kind of skin imperfections. From curing tanned and pigmented skin to reducing uneven skin tone, the benefits are many. It also increases blood circulation in the scalp, thereby reducing hair fall.

Matcha Tea

This green tea, derived from Japan, is known to be one of the finest teas in the world. Normally green in colour, this tea is rich in chlorophyll, which is known to be one of the ideal sources of antioxidants that helps detoxify your skin. Apart from consuming this tea, one can also apply it as a pack on the face. Further, the tea can be brewed and kept until cooled and then splashed on the face on a regular basis for a clean and spot-free complexion.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

India develops 3 lentil varieties to cut imports, curb prices



NEW DELHI: India has developed three lentil varieties of a particular strain that was banned five decades ago amid concerns that it led to nerve damage and paralysis, a move aimed at stepping up local supplies to curb domestic prices and cut imports.

The government-backed Indian Council of Agricultural Universities Research has developed the lentil, popularly called pulses, variety after India agreed to ..

US may collaborate with Haryana on agriculture



HISAR: US has expressed interest in collaborating with Haryana to boost its agricultural production and develop the farm sector in the state.

Officials from the US Embassy met Haryana Agricultural University Vice Chancellor K S Khokhar here today in this regard.

Douglas Fowler, Economic Officer and his associate, Michelle Janzen, from the US Embassy, New Delhi, called on Khokhar and discussed ..

Government procures 15,000 tonnes of pulses so far for buffer stock



NEW DELHI: Stating that pulses supply remain a "challenge", Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan today said the government is in import mode and has procured over 15,000 tonnes of pulses so far from farmers to create a buffer stock.

Last month, CCEA had approved creation of 1.5 lakh tonnes of buffer stock this year as retail prices are still ruling high at around Rs 180 per kg in most places.

Warmer than normal winters worry Indian rose exporters



PUNE: Rose exporters are worried that a warmer winter this year may lead to early maturing of flowers including the most sought-after varieties, French Top Secret and German Bordeaux, which are due for shipments to Europe ahead of the Valentine's Day celebrations.

"This year was warmer than last year, which may result in early flush in

some cases, though the period January 20-30 will play a key role," s ..

Poultry sector seeks FY17 maize import allocation



PUNE: Even as the maize prices are expected to remain stable after a correction in response to the imports being undertaken by state trading company PEC, trade veterans think that the industry has a short window of two months to get import allocations for 2016-17 from the government in order to keep the prices cool during the rest of the year.

Maize prices have declined by about Rs 750/tonne during last few weeks, giving a relief to end users like poultry and the starch industry. The NCDEX spot prices for Nizamabad have declined marginally in last two weeks by 0.45%. "More stocks are being liquidated now after the import process started," said Vasant Kumar Shetty, conveyor, All India Broiler Co-ordination Committee.

However, as the gap between demand and supply is huge, the prices are still high for the feed industry. "The total gap in demand and supply is more than 1 million tons. For the prices to cool down, the Indian government has to import more corn to fill this gap in demand and supply due to a sharp fall in Kharif corn production," said Rajiv Yadav, vice president (grains and oilseeds), Noble Agri.

Commerce Ministry has allowed PEC to import 5 lakh tonne maize under Tarrif Rate Quota (TRQ) at zero duty. PEC had floated first tender for import of 2.90 lakh tonne maize, with a condition that it will be 100% non-

GMO. Industry sources said that PEC will have to import 5 lakh tonne maize before March 31. But, in order to keep the prices controlled during May to August, when prices normally remain high, the industry wants the government to allocate import for 2016-17 by February.

"With the rabi harvest expected from April onward, there is a short window of 3 months for the shipments to come and cool domestic prices. Imports beyond March may not be allowed by the government due to new crop corn arrivals out of rabi crop and imported corn might have an adverse effect on corn farmers," said Yadav.

Currently, there is fresh arrival from the ongoing harvest of the late kharif crop from Karnataka, while the rabi crop is expected to arrive from end of March.