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# THE HINDU

## Commodity prices

*Chilli prices have warmed up in the last year. Sharp fall in yields due to poor rains, low inventories to meet domestic demand and high export demand have taken prices higher by 50 per cent in the last year. In Chennai, chilli is currently sold at ₹ 42 per kg, up from ₹ 28 per kg a year ago.*

Here are the prices of various commodities in Chennai.

Price scale is given as Rs./kg

Commodity	Quantity	Now	Year ago
Rice	1 kg	30	30
Wheat	1 kg	35	32
Atta	1 kg	30	34
Gram Dal	1 kg	75	49
Tur Dal	1 kg	156	83
Urad Dal	1 kg	166	86
Moong Dal	1 kg	118	111
Masoor Dal	1 kg	95	80
Sugar	1 kg	34	33
Milk	1 ltr	37	37
Ground Nut Oil	1 ltr	129	101

<b>Commodity</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Now</b>	<b>Year ago</b>
Sun flower Oil	1 ltr	91	85
Gur (Jaggery)	1 kg	53	56
Tea	1 kg	220	220
Salt	1 kg	18	17
Lime	1 kg	60	50
Apple	1 kg	140	150
Papaya	1 kg	30	24
Pineapple	1 kg	40	52
Pomegranate	1 kg	120	140
Sapota	1 kg	40	34
Banana	1 kg	30	32
Bitter Gourd	1 kg	40	30
Brinjal	1 kg	60	24
Cabbage	1 kg	26	22
Cauli Flower	1 kg	48	24
Garlic	1 kg	240	160
Ginger	1 kg	90	45

Commodity	Quantity	Now	Year ago
Chilly	1 kg	42	28
Onion	1 kg	21	21
Potato	1 kg	24	26
Tomato	1 kg	40	16

\*Source: Ministry of Consumer Affairs, National Horticulture Board

### 'Govt. must not pressure PSU banks to lend to corporations'



*Officers' conclave opposes privatisation of nationalised banks*

Social responsibilities of the banking sector will take a back seat if state-run banks start functioning like their private counterparts, Prabhat Patnaik, economist and political commentator, said.

Mr. Patnaik, who was also the Vice-Chairman of Kerala State Planning Board, said the government first should stop interfering in their functioning and pressuring the public sector undertaking banks to grant corporate loans.

India could not have achieved green revolution, strengthen the priority sector lending in agriculture, fishery, small business and other sectors without the

PSU banks, he told delegates at the 20th All India Conference of Corporation Bank Officers' Organisation here.

The state-owned banks should focus on strengthening the domestic market as the economic slowdown across the world has shrunk the market affecting exports from India.

This can be done through promoting education, health and agriculture sectors in rural areas, he said. Private banks will not be able to achieve this and public sector banks should go back to the 1960's making a specific demand with the central government in this regard.

### **No to privatisation**

All India Bank Officers' Confederation President Y. Sudarshan said trade unions are opposed to privatisation of public sector banks. Citing non-performing assets as one of the grounds for privatisation is myth, he said.

A majority of the bad debts can be attributed to corporates and the government should empower public sector banks to recover non-performing assets.

Mr. Sudarshan also said the unions are opposed to the proposed Industrial Relations Bill, seeking to consolidate various laws pertaining to trade union and other industry-related activities.

The government could achieve many of its projects due to the public sector banks. When officers and staff work overtime to implement government schemes they should also be compensated properly, he said.

The two-day conference is being attended by over 2,500 delegates from across the country.

### **10 lakh ryots to be involved in natural farming: Minister**

The State government is planning to encourage natural farming in an extent of 10 lakh acres involving 10 lakh farmers in the next five years, according to Agriculture Minister Prattipati Pulla Rao.

Inaugurating the eight-day training programme in natural farming led by Subhash Palekar for model farmers here on Sunday, Mr. Pulla Rao said the

target for the current financial year was to cultivate various crops in an extent of 3.12 lakh acres.

“We have divided each district into 10 clusters and have chosen 130 farmers from each sector for the training programme. In all, we have invited 6,000 farmers from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States. These farmers are expected to do the knowledge transfer in their respective villages, once the training programme is over,” he said.

Mr. Pulla Rao said Mr. Palekar had proved his mettle in natural farming and had become a role model for farmers across the country.

Maintaining that the government was keen on implementing all the recommendations of the M.S. Swaminathan Committee, Mr. Pulla Rao said special focus would be laid on East and West Godavari districts, where coconut was a major horticulture crop.

### **Farmers asked to improve pulses production**

*Role of credit support for improving agriculture economy stressed*



Farmers at the agri exhibition held at Krishi Vigyan Kendra at Sandhiyur in Salem district on Saturday. —Photo: Special Arrangement

To showcase the rabi season agriculture and horticulture related technologies and pulses production strategies for the benefit of the farmers and stakeholders, an exhibition and seminar was conducted at Krishi Vigyan Kendra at Sandhiyur here on Saturday.

The pre-rabi campaign-cum-seminar on Agriculture and Horticulture Technologies for the district was attended by progressive farmers, farmers’

club leaders and agriculture entrepreneurs where farm implements and other products were on display.

N. Sriram, Programme Coordinator, explained the importance of the campaign for improving production and thereby increasing the income level of farmers in the season. He said that the United Nations has declared 2016 year as International Year of Pulses mainly to improve the production and productivity of the pulses crops and to ensure nutrient security among the people through pulses based food.

C. Rajendran, Joint Director of Agriculture (in-charge), emphasised the need and approaches for improving the pulses crops production so that the productivity is doubled and income level of the farmers gets increased.

Deputy Director of Agricultural Marketing, Salem, Sugumar said that converting the group into farmers' producers' organisation for bringing in more value addition of products would benefit all.

NABARD District Development Manager Bhama Bhuvanewari emphasised the importance of farmers' clubs and farmers' producers organisations for improving the agriculture production, productivity and income of the rural farming community. "Farmers should have the professional skills, especially for planning and adoption of hi-tech agricultural technologies for improving the income," she said.

A. Udayakumar, Lead Bank Manager, Salem, explained the role of credit support for improving the agriculture economy and farmers' income and asked them to develop proper agri business plan.

Demonstrations on various farm implements, pest and diseases management practices, mango crop technologies, sustainable sugarcane initiatives and practices exclusively for rabi season were presented by the KVK scientists. More than 260 farmers from all the 20 blocks of the district participated.

## Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative working well for farmers



**FARMER-FRIENDLY:**The Seed Treatment Machine that was commissioned on Saturday at the production unit of Sakthi Sugars Limited at Ezhumathur, in Erode district.

Twenty-two Shade Nets have been developed for optimum resource utilisation by sugarcane farmers in Modakurichi block with the help of Agriculture Department under the Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative introduced since 2011-12 in the command area of Sakthi Sugars Limited, Modakurichi unit.

The novel method to grow single bud sets to develop settlings / seedlings in trays filled with enriched coir pith in shade nets has been yielding the desired results.

To produce quality settlings, both pesticides and fungicides are treated and UV chamber is used to induce the sprouting. Necessary micro nutrient mixer and water soluble fertilizer spray has to be administered periodically. After hardening, 30 days old settlings are supplied to farmers and the shade net entrepreneur themselves arrange for labours to plant the settlings, V. Thiruvankadam, Senior General Manager, Sakthi Sugars Limited, Modakurichi unit, said.

Farmers are able to obtain higher yield by five to 10 additional metric tonnes per acre under SSI when compared to the conventional method.

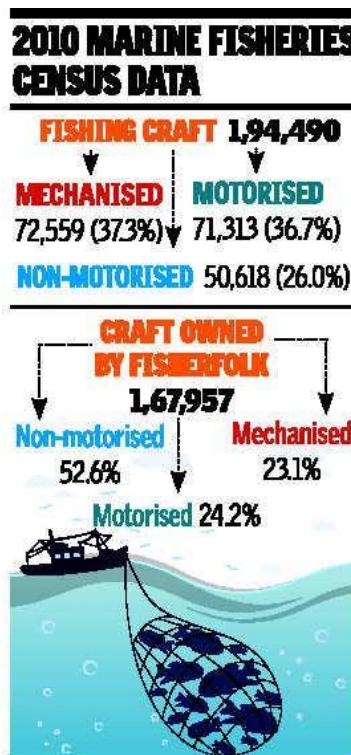


According to the Executive Chairman of Sakthi Sugars Ltd., M. Manickam, who has been monitoring technologies reflecting SSI implementation from bud cutting to cane harvest, the latest introduction is bud treatment device.

On Saturday, Mr. Manickam commissioned the device introduced by Sugar Cane Breeding Institute, Coimbatore, and developed by Sakthi Sugars Limited, Modakurichi, in the presence of Baksiram, Director of Sugar Cane Breeding Institute, Coimbatore. **The treatment of bud in this device will help to control seed/soil born pathogens and impart drought tolerance to the seedlings.**

### Fisheries census from Feb. 1

*3,000 enumerators will visit an estimated 11 lakh fishermen families in 73 districts*



The month-long National Marine Fisheries Census will get under way on February 1 under the aegis of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), executed by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), covering all maritime States and Union Territories.



Data for the island regions of Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep will be collated by the Fisheries Survey of India, says a posting on the CMFRI website.

The 30-day exercise will yield data on marine fishermen families and population; fishing craft and gears; and social and educational as well as demographic profile of the marine fishermen community in the country.

The marine fisheries census, involving an expenditure of nearly Rs.4 crore, is funded by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries under the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.

Around 3,000 enumerators will visit an estimated 11 lakh fishermen families in 4,250 marine fishing villages in 73 districts.

The process of data collection will be supervised by 220 officials of the ICAR-CMFRI across its 26 centres.

### **Data collection**

The schedule for data collection is designed to yield accurate information on the social, educational, fishing, and infrastructure aspects of marine fishermen families.

Specific details such as fishing, processing, value addition, handling, marketing, etc., will emerge from the data.

A schedule has also been prepared for collecting data on infrastructure in fishing villages and on fish harvesting and processing facilities available in coastal districts.

The exercise covered 3,202 marine fishing villages, 1,332 fish landing centres, and 7,56,212 fishermen households.

## Flower show draws a large crowd to Kadri Park



Sunday saw a large number of visitors at the Kadri Park flower show in Mangaluru, and above, a variety of flowers on

*A food festival is also on at the Deer Park across the road*

One thing that makes the Kadri Park flower show different this time is the amount of space; the show is not just restricted to a corner of the park. There are stalls spread over one half of the park. If one is not interested in them, one can walk through the inner circle of the park to see dolphins, peacocks, elephants and fish made of flowers and vegetables.

A large number of people visited Kadri Park on Sunday morning for the four-day flower festival and food festival, which began on Saturday. While the flower show is at the Kadri Park, the food festival is in the Deer Park. Park Road that lies in between the Kadri Park and the Deer Park has temporarily been closed for putting up a stage for rendering cultural programmes under the Karavali Utsav for four days. The only hitch to people visiting the show is the distance they have to walk as traffic movement on Park Road has been barred between Dinky Dine Restaurant and the Circuit House.

While those coming from Padua school have to park their vehicles near Dinky Dine Restaurant, those coming from the Circuit House side should park their vehicles on the Circuit House premises and walk to the two venues.

An entrance fee of Rs. 10 for an adult and Rs. 5 for a child is being collected for the flower show.

The first few stalls of the flower show are those related to saplings of jackfruit and other plants brought from nurseries in Mulky, Puttur and other parts of the district. There is one stall that sells organic manure. There are stalls selling agriculture equipment for tilling, sowing, cutting weeds and also climbing arecanut trees.

The section related to kitchen and terrace gardening has been drawing a good number of visitors. Among the things that have drawn attention is a model by a Bengaluru-based firm of growing vegetables and flowers using water. Called as “Hydroponic” way of growing plants using water mixed with mineral nutrients, the firm’s sales promoter said that people can grow any type of vegetables and flowers using this technique.

### **On the lookout for success stories**

Sceptical over taking up alternative crops to tobacco, growers have urged government agencies to show them success stories.

A delegation of tobacco farmers representing the FCV Tobacco Growers’ Federation of Karnataka participated in a meeting to discuss alternative crops to tobacco organised by Central Tobacco Research Institute (CTRI) at Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh on January 18. The meeting was attended by scientists, officials and other stakeholders and was aimed at drawing up a contingency plan for cultivation of tobacco in view of India’s commitment to WHO’s FCTC.

“We made our position clear that there is no crop that fetches us as much as what tobacco crop does. Farmers have already tried ginger, banana and other crops, but have failed. If there are success stories, tell us,” federation president Javare Gowda said.

CFTRI head S. Ramakrishnan said he had represented to the authorities the findings of their research on the “next best options” for tobacco crop.

After interacting with farmers and agriculture department officials, the scientists of CTRI have recommended cotton, maize, green chilli, and ginger as next best options to tobacco.

### **Low cost of land, labour is Mysuru's USP**

Ready availability of land at relatively cheaper rates will be a major factor cementing Mysuru's USP as a new investment destination after Bengaluru.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah recently laid the foundation stone for a new industrial area spread over Tandya, Adakanahalli and Immavu in Nanjangud-Mysuru region. The vast swathe of industrial land is spread across 2,312.24 acres of which Immavu has 1,085.09 acres, while Tandya has 554.15 acres. Adakanahalli plot is spread over 673 acres and all these areas are contiguous making development easy.

Land will not be a dithering factor in future for genuine investors and is relatively cheap when compared to the cost in Bengaluru. Suresh Kumar Jain of MIA said an acre of land acquired from KIADB will cost around Rs. 35 lakh to Rs. 40 lakh in the Mysuru region while it will cost not less than Rs. 1.5 crore to Rs. 2 crore in Bengaluru. All this will be highlighted during Invest Karnataka-2016.

Another raw material, water, is relatively found in abundance in Mysuru compared to Bengaluru. On the connectivity front, Mysuru is better compared to other cities as its proximity to Bengaluru is an advantage. Though lack of commercial flights to Mysuru is a handicap, the track doubling between Mysuru and Bengaluru is officially over but for a 1.5 km stretch and electrification is under way, which will reduce the commuting time to less than 2 hours.

While there is a vast pool of human resource to draw to the labour force, it is highly untrained as a majority of the youth in the region are from villages with agricultural background. But a new skill development centre under Skill India Initiative is being launched at Nanjangud to train youth for various industrial jobs.

## Farmers warned of blast disease

*The disease affecting standing paddy is spreading fast in the district*



Scientists from Krishi Vigyan Kendra and Agricultural Research Station, Virinjipuram visiting a paddy field affected by blast disease.-Photo : Special Arrangement

Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Virinjipuram has warned farmers of blast disease – a fungal disease - affecting standing paddy crops in the district. The misty weather in Vellore district has turned conducive for the fungal growth, leading to sporadic attacks in various parts of the district.

M. Pandiyan, professor and head, Agricultural Research Station (ARS) and KVK, Virinjipuram said the rice blast disease was spreading fast in several parts of the district. There was good growth of paddy crops following rains. “We visited a few affected fields after farmers started to approach us. The fungal attack has been occurring in the last two weeks. It has been attacking short duration paddy crops of 105 to 110 days,” he said. A number of paddy fields in parts of Anaicut, Latheri and Virinjipuram were affected by blast disease.

Day time temperature below 28 degree Celsius and cloudy weather, and night time temperature of 19 degree Celsius was conducive for the fungus growth, he said, adding, “The present misty weather in the district is conducive for the fungus growth. One variety of rice – CO 51 – has been found resistant to the disease attack, while it is sporadically seen in rice varieties such as ADT 36 and ADT 43.”

KVK has issued advisory to farmers to reduce or even stop use of urea as it will pave way to fast fungal growth. “Spots in the shape of eyes on the crops are the symptoms of the disease. It will affect all parts of the crops leaving



burnt-like symptoms. We are advising farmers on appropriate use of fungicide in proportion to their field area to control the fungal attack,” he added.

During the farmers’ grievance redressal day last week, the scientists advised farmers not to go by the suggestions of shop keepers for use of fungicide. Farmers were asked to bring samples of the affected crops to KVK and ARS for appropriate advice on control measures.

### **Workshop on terrace gardening**



Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information and Training Centre is conducting a workshop on landscape gardening and terrace gardening on January 27 and 28 respectively, said a press release. Time: From 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Ph: 044 - 2626 3484.

### **A beautiful pea green dal**

*The plebeian thavar dal is quite something else when it is green and fresh*



We are all familiar with pigeon pea lentils or *thubar dal* as it is better known. But, how many of us actually give a thought to the pigeon-pea plant? I know I haven't. I just buy my regular supply of dal from the stores and that's about it. A few days ago my sister-in-law, Ramya, pointed out a tall shrub.

The pods resembled the familiar country beans but the size and variegated stripes did not.

I was actually looking at the *thuvarai*. Ramya plucked one deep green pod and popped it open to reveal round pale green pea like kernels. I tasted it and knew straight away that this was going to find its way to my table. My everyday dry lentil just got elevated to a fresh produce status.

In its tender state the *thuvarai* is sweet and juicy.

I'm a big fan of all beans and legumes. My store room shelves hold large glass bottles of all kinds of *payiru*, my freezer has boxes of sprouted beans and my lunch menu always features one of these on a daily basis.

I was thrilled to add one more variety to my list. Not only are these high in protein but adapt themselves beautifully into a variety of cooking styles and recipes. They can be made into a gravy, a semi-masala side dish or even fried to be served as a snack.

The plant resembles a dry, sparse, sort of unruly shrub. The kind that would grow in more arid regions. And it takes about six months to start bearing fruit.

The *thuvarai* plant plays a big role in soil rejuvenation. It is a drought tolerant crop which accounts for its woody, twisted look. It actually does not take too well to overwatering or excessive rainfall. There are a group of bacteria that form a symbiosis with the legumes and help in the production of nitrogen in the soil. Dry farm lands grow a mix of oil-seeds, pulses and legumes because these enrich the soil. It is recommended to plant this *thuvarai*, when the soil is damp, well before the flowering season, when it has the time to go through a cycle of growth.

The leaves that shed from the plant make good mulch that improves the soil. It is a good idea to use it as a border plant for a vegetable patch. Not only does it condition the soil but acts as a barrier against wind.



Ramya cooked me a delicious thuvapai curry. The seeds, went perfectly with the South Indian flavours of onion, garlic, curry leaf and tomato. We had it for lunch with millets, then for dinner with dosai and again for breakfast with idli. It was a big hit with the family and I went thuvapai picking the very next day.

## **e-Pragathi: govt. to invite bids for all packages by March**

e-Pragathi, a State enterprise architecture for designing and delivering government services online in a coordinated manner by integrating all departments for the convenience of citizens and businesses, will become operational in two years.

**ALL FOR CITIZENS**  
**OBJECTIVE OF E-PRAGATHI**  
DELIVERING GOVT. SERVICES ONLINE BY INTEGRATING ALL DEPTS FOR CITIZENS' CONVENIENCE

<b>ON TRACK</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>e-Pragathi architecture has <b>14</b> packages and <b>72</b> projects covering all crucial depts</li><li>e-Pragathi, launched in <b>October 2015</b>, will be implemented under <b>PPP mode</b></li><li><b>Rs. 2,500-crore</b> project will get govt. funds to the tune of <b>Rs. 1,500 cr.</b></li></ul>	<b>MAKING IT TRANSPARENT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>e-Pragathi will integrate all departments and services through free flow of information, thus making it virtually one government department for accessing any service in a transparent manner</li></ul> <p><b>J. SATYANARAYANA,</b> IT Advisor</p>
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“The State government typically has 33 departments and over 300 agencies extending around 700 services across all departments. e-Pragathi, as part of the e-governance initiative, will integrate all of them through free flow of information, thus making it virtually one government department for accessing any service and benefit in a transparent and efficient manner,” IT Advisor J. Satyanarayana said.

The e-Pragathi architecture has 14 packages and 72 projects covering all key departments. It will have data of people and services at one place catering to various requirements of students, women, physically disabled, farmers, artisans, senior citizens, employees, businesses and industry.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) for the first package for the primary sector, which is farmer-centric, was issued on December 14, and bids will have to be submitted by February 7. RFPs for education and core packages will be issued shortly. “Our aim is to invite RFPs for all the 14 packages by March,” Mr. Satyanarayana said.

While the primary sector will have agriculture and allied sectors, water availability, e-mandi and education package will cover primary schools to universities, massive internet courses, computerising mid-day meal scheme, skill development and e-enabled monitoring and payment systems.

The core package will have e-highway. It serves like an exchange to access information pertaining to any department. It will have various components, including people hub, securing of data related to them such as benefits availed by them, so that one need not furnish bio-data details every time he or she avails a service. The land hub component will have details of over two crore land holdings of farmers, while the App store will encourage developers to develop Apps related to government services.

### **Cauliflower, a luxury here**

*In Canada, five cauliflowers cost more than a barrel of oil*



TO EAT OR NOT TO EAT Cauliflower heads are costly in Canada. PHOTO: NYT

Steamed, sautéed or stir-fried, cauliflower is standard fare on many dinner tables. In Canada, it is a luxury.

A head of cauliflower there now goes for around 8 Canadian dollars, a tripling in price, the strange foodie fallout from the low price of oil and other commodities.

The recipe for high-priced cauliflower starts with the currency.

As prices for commodities have dropped, the value of the Canadian dollar has fallen, a direct link to an economy that is dependent on oil and other resources. It makes imports, like fresh U.S. vegetables during the dark Canadian winter, look especially costly.

Two years ago, one Canadian dollar was worth 93 U.S. cents. On Wednesday, it stood at 69 U.S. cents.

The drought in California, where Canadians get most of their vegetables in the off-season, just compounds the sticker shock. With less bounty in the fields, farmers' prices, in U.S. dollars, are higher than normal.

As a result, fresh vegetables feel more like a splurge for Canadian consumers.

Iceberg lettuce sells for 3 Canadian dollars, up from the typical 90 Canadian cents. One head of broccoli goes for \$4, compared with \$1.50 for two in the past. Last winter, a head of cauliflower was selling for 2.50 Canadian.

“We’ve gone through this cycle before with the dollar,” said Jim McKeen, owner of McKeen Metro Glebe, a grocery store in downtown Ottawa. “But there were issues on prices anyways because of supply in addition to this whole fiasco with the Canadian dollar. It’s a perfect storm.”

The Canadian dollar, in part, reflects the trouble in the country’s economy.

For years, Canada rode the global commodities boom. The rapidly growing Chinese economy — and its seemingly insatiable appetite for commodities — helped increase the price of oil, potash, nickel and the other Canadian resources.

With China’s demand now faltering, commodity prices have reversed course. Oversupply of oil has similarly devastated its price. Both factors are taking their toll on the Canadian economy. The gross domestic product

increased just 0.6 percent in the third quarter of 2015, after six months of negative growth.

Since October, the decline in the Canadian dollar, already looking shaky against a surging U.S. currency, has picked up speed.

In many ways, a weaker currency is helpful to the economy. The United States is overwhelmingly the largest market for Canadian exports, which are now less expensive across the border because of the currency's fall.

And commodity exports are almost all priced in U.S. dollars. So foreign exchange gains have helped cushion some of the blow to Canadian oil producers and mining companies, which largely sell their resources elsewhere.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, last week, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau emphasized Canada's strengths in technology and education rather than its ailing natural resource sector.

"Our natural resources are important and always will be," Trudeau said. "But Canadians know that growth and prosperity is not only based on what's under our feet but particularly on what we have between our ears."

What's good for the broader economy in the long term, though, isn't necessarily good for consumers' wallets in the near term.

Consumer costs are creeping up in a number of areas.

The turnover in the grocery aisle, compared with, say, a clothing store, is faster, meaning changes in currency are more quickly reflected. And profit margins are thin, so grocery stores are less willing to absorb the losses.

The current collapse of the country's dollar could have a more significant impact in supermarkets than it did in the early 2000s, according to Sylvain Charlebois, a professor at the University of Guelph in Ontario and one of the authors of an annual study of Canadian food prices.

Charlebois estimated that about 140 Canadian food processing plants have closed in recent years. Many were owned by multinationals that have replaced Canadian production with imports from their larger U.S. plants.

The result, Charlebois said, is that price increases will be seen throughout grocery stores and not just in their fresh produce aisles. Already, he said, some breakfast cereals have hit 10 Canadian dollars.— New York Times News Service

*Iceberg lettuce sells for 3 Canadian dollars, up from the typical 90 Canadian cents. One head of broccoli goes for \$4, compared with \$1.50 for two in the past. Last winter, a head of cauliflower was selling for 2.50 Canadian.*

### Tobacco farmers to be urged to adopt ‘next best option’

With the 2020 deadline to reduce tobacco cultivation in India fast approaching, as per its commitment to World Health Organisation’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the Tobacco Board officials have decided to encourage farmers to opt for crops that are the “next best option” to tobacco.



Tobacco Board officials admit that it will be an uphill task to convince farmers, particularly after the average price of tobacco went up this year. -FILE PHOTO: M.A. SRIRAM

ALTERNATIVE CROPS			
☐ Dryland areas — cotton, maize, green chillies		☐ Irrigated belt — ginger	
TOBACCO IN KARNATAKA			
☐ Farmers holding tobacco cultivation licences	☐ Unauthorised tobacco growers	☐ Area under tobacco cultivation	☐ Authorised crop size for 2015-16
43,000	20,000	75,000 hectares	100 million kg
☐ Anticipated yield 2015-16	☐ Average price 2014-15	☐ Average price 2015-16	
80 million kg	Rs. 107.49 a kg	Rs. 134.57 (as on January 22, 2016)	

Armed with findings of the Central Tobacco Research Institute’s (CTRI) Station at Hunsur, the officials will hold hobli-level meetings with tobacco farmers to convince them to reduce the area of cultivation and grow the

crops such as cotton, maize and green chillies in dryland areas and ginger in irrigated belts.

While cotton will be promoted in tobacco growing areas of H.D. Kote, maize will be advocated to tobacco farmers in Hunsur and Periyapatna. Similarly, green chillies will be promoted in other rain-fed areas. In the irrigated belt of K.R. Nagar taluk, farmers will be encouraged to grow ginger.

Though marigold was also an option in H.D. Kote area, it was found to be “unremunerative” to lure tobacco farmers.

### **No single alternative**

“We will discourage farmers from growing any tobacco crop in irrigated areas. Tobacco grown in irrigated areas is considered a saline variety that does not command a good price in the market,” a Tobacco Board official told *The Hindu* .

Though there is not a single alternative crop to tobacco, which continues to be the most remunerative crop for the famers in the belt, the Board that is under pressure to reduce the area under tobacco cultivation will be promoting the “next best option”.

However, the Board officials admit that it would be an uphill task to convince farmers particularly after the average price of tobacco went up this year. “Against the average price of Rs. 107.49 a kg last year (2014-15), the average price this year was Rs. 134.57 a kg,” an official said. The tobacco auction, which began in October last year, is expected to continue till February this year.

### **Growers unsure**

Meanwhile, President of Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) Tobacco Growers’ Federation of Karnataka Javare Gowda told this correspondent that there was no alternative to tobacco crop.

Dismissing cotton as an alternative, Mr. Gowda said many farmers, who shifted to ginger, had “burnt their hands”. “Farmers to tried alternatives have



lost their money,” he said. Also, there was a well established system for cultivation and marketing of tobacco that no other crop offered.

### **Farmers’ federation to hold ‘loan waiver convention’**

The recently formed Federation of Farmers' Associations has announced a mega ‘Loan Waiver Convention’ here on February 19.

The federation, representing 92 associations, will seek waiver of loans by both nationalised and cooperative banks, its newly elected president Deivasigamani said, after a meeting of the Federation here last week.

The 16 other demands include change to forest law, and linkage of rivers. DMK, Congress, TMC and other frontline parties have accepted to take part.

Senior farmer leaders N.S. Palanichamy, ex-MLA, and Chellamuthu took part. Farmer leader of Erode Kasiannan chaired the meeting.

K.M. Rama Gounder of Krishnagiri was elected secretary and Ayyakannu of Tiruchi as presiding chairman.

### **Seed fest a hit among farmers at Karuvanchal**



A view of the seed festival being organised by the Fair Trade Alliance Kerala at Karuvanchal in Kannur on Sunday.



An exhibition of indigenous seeds and a collection of carefully preserved agrarian items at Kuruvanchal here is drawing farmers from the region.

The fifth Vithulsavam (seed festival) being held under the auspices of the Fair Trade Alliance Kerala (FTAK), an organisation of small holder farmers drawn from the hill areas of the State, has exhibited a large collection of seeds of agrarian crops.

The organisers of the exhibition said that 20 stalls of the FTAK displays the seeds and agrarian items. Among the seeds on display include those of 600 varieties of rice as also dozens of vegetable types and pepper.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Andy Good, founder of Equal Exchange, United Kingdom, on January 22. The exhibition will conclude on January 26. The organisers said that delegates from France, Italy, Switzerland, U.K., Peru, Mexico and Australia participated in the round table programme held on Sunday. The small farmer logo on FTAK products was also released on the occasion. A career guidance workshop and a farm quiz will be conducted on January 25, they informed.

FTAK representatives said that around 5,000 farming families in Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad and Kozhikode are involved in its indigenous seed preservation effort and various promotional programmes.

### **Forest Extension Centre ready**



The centre near Pazhuvur in Ariyalur district would be utilised to sensitise farmers, students, and members of the public to the importance of afforestation. —Photo: M. Srinath

Work on the construction of the Forest Extension Centre has been completed at Karuppur village near here. Spread over a plinth area of 1,600 square feet, it has been built at an expenditure of Rs. 31.95 lakh under the Tamil Nadu Bio-diversity Conservation and Greening Project.

It will be used for imparting training on raising and nursing saplings for stepping up forest cover across the district. Periodical training sessions would be organised to benefit students, teachers, environmentalists, and Forest Department in-service personnel, said Sivakumar, Assistant Conservation of Forests, here on Saturday.

The centre would be utilised to sensitise farmers, students, and members of the public to the importance of afforestation, he added.

### **De-siltation to be taken up in irrigation projects**

*It would provide large-scale employment to youth in rural areas effected by drought conditions*

The district administration plans to carry out de-siltation work in major irrigation projects like Sri Ram Sagar and Nizam Sagar, and medium projects such as Pocharam, Singeetham, Ramadugu and Koulas, under the Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Keeping in view the acute drought conditions prevailing in the district, the State government has also given administrative sanction to launch the de-siltation of projects as it would provide large-scale employment to unemployed persons in rural areas during this long dry spell. Therefore, it allowed the Collector and other officials to take the decision on the proposals for work at their level instead of sending them to the government.

As per the decision taken, principle works worth Rs.50 lakh could be undertaken immediately to remove residues from the projects. Collector Yogitha Rana has already asked the Irrigation authorities to prepare proposals for the work and accord the technical sanctions within a week.

## **Infrastructure needed**

To expedite the works simultaneously at all the projects, required infrastructure needs to be made ready before launching the work. Camps for coolies, cradles for their children, medical aid centres, and drinking water facilities need to come up at the camps.

Meanwhile, there are several doubts remaining as regards to the engagement of tractors, tippers and other vehicles to transport the sediment and where to dump it.

When contacted, the Superintending Engineer, Irrigation, C. Gangadhar, said that removal of all the sludge in projects may not be possible, but residue can be relocated to a certain extent. Only certain leads would be taken up in medium projects. Villages nearby would be identified to place the removed silt, he said.

In fact, the removal of sludge from the SRSP came up for serious discussion when D. Varaprasad was the Collector some five years back. It was planned to press into service about 5,000 vehicles, and farmers were requested to volunteer to transport silt in their tractors. However, the idea was somehow given up reasons unknown.

Now, it remains to be seen whether the new plan would come to fruition.

## **Mangrove mission paying off**



An area under mangrove vegetation at Valapattanam in Kannur.

*The mission envisages conservation of mangroves in government lands and those in areas in private possession.*

Efforts of the district administration to protect mangrove vegetation in the district are yielding results with some of the owners of mangrove areas in private holding have come forward to hand over their plots.

The 'Mission Mangrove Kannur,' started in June last year as an initiative to survey the entire extent of mangrove areas in the district to demarcate and notify to be conserved, has started to draw positive response from the owners of private mangrove areas.

The mission envisages conservation of mangroves in government lands and those in areas in private possession.

District Collector P. Bala Kiran told *The Hindu* that the mission had already secured 600 acres of mangrove areas as reserve forest and now got the consent owners of 43 acres in private possession.

He said that the land would be purchased through negotiation.

Mr. Kiran said that the tentative value of mangrove areas to be purchased from private owners was Rs.2.5 lakh per acre. The resources at his disposal could purchase 120 acres. But it would require an estimated Rs.30 crore for the purchase of the entire mangroves areas in private possession. He said he had submitted a proposal in this regard to the Central government through the State government.

The survey held under the mission identified 1,873 acres of mangroves, which included private holdings. Forest Minister Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan had formally inaugurated the mission on November 24 by declaring 100 acres of mangrove area as reserve forest. Since then 500 acres more have been declared as reserve forest. The mission proposal envisages the purchase of the mangrove areas from private owners.

## **Rajasthan govt to promote organic olive orchards**

Agriculture minister Prabhu Lal Saini said the state government would promote olive and jojoba plantations on warfooting in the new year.



Rajasthan CM Vasundhara Raje (Source: PTI photo)

A day after the International Conference on Olive and Jojoba in Jaipur, the Rajasthan government has announced that olive and date palm cultivation in the state would be made completely organic.

Agriculture minister Prabhu Lal Saini said the state government would promote olive and jojoba plantations on warfooting in the new year and introduce products like olive leaf tea and olive fruit, besides oil under the Raj Olive brand.

“The new plantations will all be organic only. We will try to convert the existing plantations to organic (farming) but that will take some time. We will also introduce new varieties of organic olive plants, which will yield fruit for salad, tea and other purposes, besides the existing oil producing varieties,” “ Saini told The Indian Express.

With agriculture in the state being primarily rain-fed, the Rajasthan government has been encouraging farmers, especially those in the arid Western and Northern regions, to cultivate exotic plant species like olive,

jojoba, dragon fruit and date palms—that need comparatively less water—in order to make cultivation profitable.

The state also provides subsidy for olive farming in 11 arid and semi-arid districts, namely Jaisalmer, Nagaur, Churu, Ganganagar, Jaipur, Bikaner, Hanumangarh, Jhunjhunu, Alwar, Tonk and Baran. Farmers cultivating the crop get Rs48,000 per hectare for the first year and Rs 3,400 per hectare for three years thereafter.

“We want farmers to produce, process, add value to and market their produce. It is time Rajasthan comes to be known for more than just bajra,” said Saini. The state now plans to formally declare olive as a plantation crop to attract foreign direct investment.

At the international conference concluded Thursday, Saini said the state would also experiment with growing dragon fruit and pistachios.

Dragon fruit or pitaya, native to Mexico and grown extensively in South-East Asian countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and Cambodia, will be grown on an experimental basis at the agriculture department’s centre of excellence at Bassi and at Deorawas near Tonk. “If successful, the project will be replicated in districts of western Rajasthan,” he said.

Rajasthan will also collaborate with Sikkim, sharing its own know-how on olive farming and dairy, while attempting to benefit from the mountain state’s expertise in floriculture.

### **Oct-Dec earnings: Net sales fall, but profits rise on low input costs**

Raw material expenditure fell 30% in 1 year period, coming down from `87,781 crore to `61,506 crore

Even as revival in earnings for India Inc is being termed as the factor that will lead the turnaround of stock markets going forward, the quarter ended December 2015 seems to be another quarter lost on that account.

A look into the standalone results of the first 60 companies (excluding banks, and are part of BSE 500 index) that announced their results till Friday, shows that revenue growth for the group of companies remained

elusive and contracted by 9 per cent on account of slowdown in demand, low capacity utilisation and fall in commodity prices. The group of companies however, witnessed a growth of 6.6 per cent in the net profit on account of a sharp decline in the raw material expenditure.

The aggregate profit for the 60 companies in the analysis, rose from Rs 27,607 crore in December 2014 to Rs 29,428 crore , thereby witnessing a growth of 6.6 per cent. This came even as the net sales for the group of companies fell 9 per cent from Rs 1,99,837 crore to Rs 1,81,920 crore during the same period.

Raw material expenditure for the companies fell almost 30 per cent during the same period as it came down from 87,781 crore in December 2014 to Rs 61,506 crore in December 2015.

The India Inc story has been the same over the last few quarters as the companies have managed to post profits only on account of falling input cost and stable interest expenditure. Softening crude oil prices and other commodities, have been driving profit growth for the companies. The weakness in crude prices gained momentum over the last couple of weeks following the slowdown concerns in China and US deciding to lift sanctions imposed on Iran.

The companies also seem to have benefitted marginally from RBI's decision to cut repo rate (the rate at which RBI lends to commercial banks) by 125 basis points in the calendar 2015 as the group of 60 companies saw a marginal rise of 1 per cent in their aggregate interest expenditure during the quarter.

Reliance Industries posted a very strong profit growth for the quarter on account of rise in its gross refining margin that stood at a seven-year high of \$11.5 per bbl. Its net profit jumped by 41.9 per cent to Rs 7,218 crore over the same quarter last year, even as the revenue declined by 26 per cent. For RIL both raw material and interest expenditure fell by 39 and 31 per cent respectively.

IT majors TCS and Infosys reported strong revenue growth of 14 per cent and 11 per cent respectively, however, their net profits rose by only 4.3 and 4.2 per cent respectively.



Analysts say that it may take some time for earnings to recover.

A report from Kotak Institutional equities last week said, “The market could see another 5-7 per cent correction as a result of earnings cuts in the ongoing results season and de-rating of certain expensive stocks. Domestic industrial recovery is still distant and global commodity prices very weak, which pose downside risks to our ever-declining earnings estimates in certain sectors.”

## THE HINDU BusinessLine

### **Natural rubber output drops 14% in Apr-Dec; imports down 7%**



Domestic producers have been raising concerns over rising imports and fall in local prices. File Photo

Natural rubber production fell to 58,000 tonnes during last month, while consumption dropped to 84,000 tonnes from 85,820 tonnes.

#### **NEW DELHI, JAN 24:**

India's natural rubber production declined by 14 per cent to 4.4 lakh tonnes while imports fell by 7 per cent during the first nine months of this fiscal.

According to the Rubber Board's provisional data, production dropped to 4.4 lakh tonnes in April-December period of this fiscal from 5.1 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period of the previous year.

The consumption of natural rubber too fell by nearly 3 per cent to 7,43,260 tonnes during April-December 2015 from 7,64,685 tonnes earlier.

Imports dipped to 3,27,288 tonnes from 3,51,034 tonnes during the period under review.

As per the data, natural rubber production fell to 58,000 tonnes during last month from 63,000 tonnes in December 2014, while consumption dropped to 84,000 tonnes from 85,820 tonnes.

However, natural rubber imports increased to 37,078 tonnes in December 2015 from 34,324 tonnes in the same month of previous year.

Meanwhile, the government last week allowed import through only two sea ports of Chennai and Nhava Sheva in order to curb inbound shipments.

“Import of natural rubber of all varieties/forms ... is allowed only through sea ports of Chennai and Nhava Sheva (Jawaharlal Nehru Port),” the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) had said in a notification.

Domestic producers have been raising concerns over rising imports and fall in local prices.

United Planters Association of Southern India (UPASI) has said that cheap imports are harming India's rubber industry and the government should introduce safeguards to protect domestic players.

(This article was published on January 24, 2016)

**[India starts providing El Nino warning to South Asian nation](#)**



El Nino has hit monsoon hard in the sub-continent. File Photo

The warning is crucial for South Asian economies as agriculture in most of these countries, including India, depends on rains.

**NEW DELHI, JAN 24:**

After updates on temperature and monsoon, India has now started giving El Nino warning to South Asian countries.

Information on El Nino is being updated by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) for all South Asian countries including Sri Lanka, Maldives, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. The service is also extended to Myanmar.

“We have started giving information about El Nino to all South Asian countries,” Rajeevan, Secretary Ministry of Earth Sciences said. S Pai, senior meteorologist with the IMD, said the information is being updated every month.

“The World Meteorological Organisation has nominated India as the Regional Climate Centre and by that virtue, we give information to other South Asian countries on temperature and monsoon.

“Now, we have also started giving information on El Nino,” Pai said.

El Nino is associated with a band of warm ocean water that develops in the central and east-central equatorial Pacific ocean. Its impact is severe on

many countries, including South Asia, as it directly affects the monsoon and thereby the economy.

El Nino has hit monsoon hard in the sub-continent and under its influence India registered deficient rainfall for the second year in a row. So, the warning is crucial for South Asian economies as agriculture in most of these countries, including India, depends on rains.

India also provides information about cyclones originating in the north Indian Ocean, which has Bay of Bengal, Andaman Sea and the Arabian Sea, to seven countries including Pakistan, Oman, Maldives, Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Last year, it had also shared information about cyclones with Yemen and Somalia. It also has a Regional Specialised Meteorological Centre for Cyclone.

(This article was published on January 24, 2016)

### **‘Ensure speedy availability of new arhar seeds to farmers’**

#### **NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23:**

Agricultural scientists must ensure that high-yielding variety of the new arhar (tur) seeds, developed by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), is made available to farmers so that these are brought into the production chain at the earliest, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh has said.

“I am sure as the year rolls by, we shall see more improved varieties in the field, not only of pulses but the oilseeds, as well,” he said in his address on the occasion of Conference of Vice Chancellors of Agricultural Universities and Interface with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Directors here on Saturday.

Singh said the UN General Assembly had declared 2016 as the international Year of Pulses and “It is good to see that in the very beginning of the new year -- 2016, one of our leading institutions, IARI, New Delhi has released PADT-16, a variety of arhar that yields about 20 quintal/ha and matures in 120 days against 160-180 days taken by the presently used varieties.”

The Minister also shared that ICAR-IARI had developed a low erucic acid Indian mustard variety -- Pusa Mustard-30 (PM-30). This variety is low in

erucic acid (<2%) and has the best combination of other desirable fatty acids and is considered good for myocardial health, besides has high-yield potential, he said.

“This is first of its kind effort by IARI under public-private partnership mode to launch an indigenously developed health value product with improved oil quality,” he added.

Singh said it while was “heartening to see India as one among the 15 leading exporters of agricultural products in the world with significant exports of cotton, rice, meat, oil meals and sugar”, agriculture needs to attain and sustain an overall growth rate of about over 4 per cent.

“In the past we have been able to reach close to the target but have not achieved it. In the face of climate change, increasing and emerging abiotic and biotic stresses, the challenge is tough,” he said, calling for focus on research products that can provide break-through in yields and are accessible and affordable for farmers.

He also called upon scientists to address issues concerning rainfed agriculture, which accounts for about 56 per cent of the total cropped area, to boost food production.

(This article was published on January 23, 2016)

## **Business Standard**

### **New crop scheme to boost agri insurance business, say insurers**

Industry expects the business to grow from Rs 5,000 cr currently to Rs 13,000 cr by the end of FY17





With the government launching a new [crop insurance](#) scheme from April, the industry hopes that the move is likely to more than double the agriculture insurance business within very first year of implementation of the scheme.

“All the 11 [general insurance](#) companies, which offer agri insurance business, have business of around Rs 5,000 crore and it is likely to cross Rs 13,000 crore by the end of the next fiscal year as I expect many new players entering the fray in an aggressive manner,” Agriculture Insurance Company (AIC) chairman and managing director P J Joseph told PTI.

"We are fully geared up to implement the scheme as we know the business very well," he added.

Already the largest non-life insurer New [India](#) Assurance, which is a fringe player in the crop insurance front, has decided to grow the book aggressively.

"We are not much into crop insurance as of now. We have already written to the government requesting it to allow us to become an aggressive player in this area," New India Assurance chairman and managing director G Srinivasan said.

"The scheme gives flexibility to rate the segment appropriately. Farmer needs to pay a lesser premium due to the large government subsidy," he added.



Following the drought conditions in many parts of the country and the instances of farmer suicides, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 13 announced a new crop insurance,

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY), for the harried farmers with a low premium of just 2 % of the covered amount.

The scheme will be rolled out from the coming kharif season beginning June and the Centre and the states together will involve an annual outgo of Rs 8,800 crore in terms of subsidy which will be equally shared.

The Centre would incur an expenditure of more than Rs 8,800 crore annually at this rate of subsidy if 50 % of the total crop area of 194 million hectare is insured.

Under the new scheme farmers will pay only 2 % of the premium fixed by insurance company for kharif grain/ oilseeds crops and 1.5 % for rabi foodgrain/oilseeds crops. The remaining sum of premium would be borne by the Centre and states equally and aimed at covering 50 % of the crop area of 194.40 million hectare annually.

Last year, only 27 % of the crop area was insured which cost Rs 3,150 crore to the national exchequer.

Tata AIG General Insurance believes the new scheme will help increase the crop insurance penetration up to 50 %, from present low 23 % penetration, Tata AIG president M Ravichandran said.

SBI General Insurance said the merging of the existing National [Agricultural Insurance](#) Scheme (NAIS) into the PMFBY will offer it a further opportunity to offer crop insurance to a larger number of people.

"This will be possible as the area earlier covered under NAIS will be available to all insurance companies," its newly-appointed managing director and chief executive Pushan Mahapatra said.

## **Mangoes and grapes give K'taka farmers sweet taste of success**

In 1760, Hyder Ali, the ruler of Mysuru, established a small royal orchard near the Bengaluru Fort. For the orchard - it's known as Lal bagh now - he collected several native and exotic species of fruits and flowers, including some from as far as the Isle of France. Similar orchards were set up at Srirangapatna, in the present Mandya district, where Hyder and his son Tipu Sultan introduced several fruit species. They later became the commercial crops of the Mysore province.

With the efforts of British officers and Indian horticulture experts, Karnataka became the first state to have a separate horticulture department. In 2016, when India became the second largest fruit producer in the world, Karnataka too had its share of contribution. It was the sixth largest fruit producer.

KM Parashivamurthy, additional director of horticulture (Fruits and Floriculture), says the strong foundation of horticulture practice among farmers and institutionalisation of certain processes in the past decades helped the state to go strong. "A variety of mangoes (Rasapuri), banana, grape (Bangalore Blue) and pomegranate from Karnataka are much sought after in national and international markets," he said.

As per the department estimates, over four lakh hectares of land were under fruit cultivation last financial year (2014-15), when the state produced 67,99,887 million tonnes of fruits.

The state is also second only to Maharashtra in sapota production. Karnataka also has delicacies like Nanjangud banana, Konnur guava, Bagalkot grapes and Tubagere jackfruits of Doddaballapur for its fame.

While Prof NC Narase Gowda from the department of horticulture, University of Agricultural Sciences, appreciates the efforts of farmers and the horticulture department, he points out a lot needs to be done to achieve sustainability in the long term. "Today we are focusing more on mango and banana. Fruits like mango suffer when there is not enough rainfall, like it happened a few years ago. We should encourage farmers by providing

proper market for "minor fruits" such as halasu (jackfruit), nerale (jamun), seethaphala (custard apple), belada hannu (wood apple) etc., which would also add va riety to the fruit produc tion. It is also important to maintain variety even among the family of major fruits being produced like mango and banana," he added.

Parashivamurthy said they are in the process of institutionalizing fruit production and export by working with farmers' organisation and bringing in private public partnership model. "We have also established an integrated horticulture development cell. Our idea is to bring down the role of middlemen and get the maximum out of the produce," he added.

With inputs from Sushilendra Naik (Vijayapura, Bagalkot), Satish Pagad (Belagavi), G Rajendra (Kodagu), Mouneshwar Sonnad (Kalaburagi) and R Uday Kumar (Mysuru)

## **VIJAYAPURA A GRAPE & LEMON TWIST**

Vijayapura is like Bagalkot when it comes to horticulture crops, exporting grapes to Bangladesh, Thailand, Sweden and Saudi Arabia. It also has Acid lime, which is sent to Nepal, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Santosh Inamadar, deputy director of the horticulture department, said, "Under the comprehensive horticulture area development scheme, Rs 4 crore has been sanctioned to Vijayapura district considering the high yield production of grapes."

Lemon is a traditional horticulture crop here. Indi taluk accounts for 60% of lemon produced in the district. Lemon is grown across 6,600 hectares with 4,500 hectares situated in Indi.

## **BELAGAVI MANGO IS THE KING**

In close range to the famed alphonso of Maharastra's Ratnagiri, Belagavi also has its own alphonso. Despite unseasonal rain, mango production in the district crossed 66.34 lakh tonnes last year.

Though Bennison and Mallika varieties are also grown in the district, about 95% of plantations are of alphonso. Mango plantations are spread over 5,386 hectares, mostly in Belagavi, Bailhongal and Khanapur taluks, which contribute 80% of the district's production. Other taluks like Athani, Raibag

and Chikkodi grow grapes.

Vijayakumar Akki, assistant director of horticulture department, said semi arid climatic conditions help mango plantation.

KODAGU ORANGE IS THE BEST BET

Though to fruits like banana and pineapple and having the potential for growing Litchi, Rambutan, avocoda and Durian strawberry, Kodagu, experts say, is best suited for oranges. The growers are, however, interested in sapota, but the foot disease has caused hindrances.

Assistant director for horticulture Pramod says the Coorg Mandarin (orange) is cultivated on 1,835.76 hectares and the average production is 45,876 tonnes.

Enjoying a natural advantage for growing diverse basket of fruits, 1, 20,306 hectares (72%) of the total 1, 69,922 hectares of the net area sown plantation in Kodagu constitute horticulture.

KALABURAGI RED BANANA TERRITORY

Having already got the Geographical Indicator tag a few years ago, the Red-Banana is Kalaburagi's favourite fruit, which, experts say, is unique given its nutrition that helps children in "overall development".

It is grown in Kamalapur and a few other villages, about 30 km from Kalaburgi.

These villages are best suited as they have the best clay soil. "Red-Banana is grown in nearly 100 acres, with an average annual production of 1,500 tonnes. The fruit is also a big hit in Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru. The district also grows Grain Nain (G9) Banana on 500 hectares, which produces nearly 10,000 tonnes. Grapes is grown as a seasonal fruit on 200 hectares.

MYSURU RASABALE'S THE NAME

Coming from Nanjanagudu taluk's Devarasanahalli, the unique `Nanjangud Rasbale' banana has a great demand. Now grown in multiple places of the district, including Mysuru, Hunsur, HD Kote, the fruit is popular because of

its sweetness and smooth texture. Compared to other varieties, this banana is quite expensive and costs at least Rs 5 each.

The cultivation has dwindled over the years due to the difficulty in nurturing and growing that plants that are prone to diseases. Shivalingappa, senior assistant director, horticulture department, said, "It's grown on around 22 acres now. Nearly 1,000 plants are grown in an acre and one can't expect more than 8 kg banana from a plant."

## BAGALKOT AN EXPORTING DISTRICT

This is an exporting district. Famous for its horticulture crops, Bagalkot grows pomegranate, grape, sapota and banana. While the grape is exported to Bangladesh, Thailand, Sweden and Saudi Arabia, sapota is sent to Singapore and Qatar and Banana is exported to Nepal, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The main reason for the good quality is the calcareous soils and the dry climate during fruit ripening (suitable for quality production).

According to Horticulture Science University extension director Dr A B Patil, the erstwhile Vijayapura district is known as the Horticultural district of Karnataka and is said to be like California of the US.

In Haryana, only 46 farmers booked for stubble-burning in 12 yrs

Chandigarh: The Haryana government has booked only 46 farmers for burning paddy and wheat straw in over 12 years. The state had imposed a ban on burning crop residue on September 17, 2003.

Of the 46 cases filed by Haryana Pollution Control Board (HPCB), 24 farmers have been convicted and sentenced/ fined by the special environment courts, while 22 cases are still pending, Haryana chief secretary informed the high court. The chief secretary also informed the HC that the

state government was in the process of initiating trial proceedings against four farmers who were caught flouting the ban recently.

On November 26, the HC had issued notices to the chief secretaries of Punjab and Haryana to explain why contempt proceedings should not be initiated against them for failing to implement the high court's suggestions in controlling paddy straw burning.

Listing several steps taken by the state government to control stubble-burning, the official also claimed that the government is providing 40% subsidy to farmers for purchasing farm equipment.

The state government informed the high court that it has provided farm machinery - including 23,598 zero till seed-cum-fertiliser drills, 28,360 rotavators, 8,280 reaper binders and 18 happy seeders - to farmers on subsidy. The machines are also provided on rent. The state government informed the court that two bio-mass power projects had been set up in Mahendergarh and Bhiwani districts for management of straw.

The contempt petition had been filed by H C Arora, alleging that the chief secretary had wilfully violated the court's directions issued on April 16, 2012, instructing the state government to take appropriate measures to end the harmful practice of straw burning