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THE  HINDU

## IMD to issue block-level forecasts soon



*Met department initiative to warn farmers about anomalous weather*

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) will begin to issue weather forecasts at the block level later this year, Laxman Rathore, Director General, IMD, told *The Hindu*.

Through this farmers could be warned, three to five days ahead, of potentially anomalous weather in their localities that could threaten their crops. The IMD currently issues such short-term forecasts in 100 districts across States and so-called agro-climatic zones. These are contiguous districts that are known to have similar weather conditions.

On an average, 8-10 blocks make up each of India's 688 districts but often the weather can vary quite significantly within a district, to the extent, that farmers need different types of forecast even if say 40 km apart.

“The skill of our [weather] models for block-level forecasts needs to improve but we expect it to be able to give usable forecasts by next financial year,” Mr. Rathore said. The skill of a model refers to how accurately it predicts the weather.

“At the agro-climate zone level, the models have a skill of 80% but at the block levels it hovers around 60%,” he said.

The IMD generally relied on a bank of statistical data, collected over two centuries, to prepare its weather forecast. However with complaints and concerns over its accuracy — such as in predicting droughts — it has started to rely on so-called numerical weather models.

These rely on the processing power of super-computers but, according to those who work with them, they are yet to become reliable enough to consistently simulate monsoon and Indian climate conditions. “We still have to go a long way in improving the models at the district level,” said Madhavan Rajeevan, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences. The IMD reports to this Ministry.


Mr. Rathore, however, clarified that the IMD would be employing ensemble models for their forecasts, a kind of a halfway house between statistical and dynamic techniques.

The IMD’s initiative comes even as a study by the National Council for Applied and Economic Research (NCAER) found that India has posted an improved agriculture-performance in rain-fed farming with a sizeable number of farmers attributing a 25% rise in their net income to improved meteorological advisory services.

On the other hand, the report notes that nearly 75% of Indian farmers lacked reliable access to these services.

India saw consecutive droughts in 2014 and 2015, a rare event said to be at least partly due to climate change. This in turn is said to induce changes in the monsoon that also makes local weather even more unpredictable.

**REINING IN WEATHER'S ANOMALY**



IMD forecasts at the block-level will lower the risk that anomalous weather causes small farmers

- ◉ A study says India posted higher farm output and almost a 25% rise in net income of farmers due to improved meteorological advisory services
- ◉ An official said block-level forecasts needed to improve
- ◉ Nearly 75% of Indian farmers lacked reliable access to improved meteorological advisory

**We still have to go a long way in improving the models at the district level**  
 MADHAVAN RAJEEVAN, SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF EARTH SCIENCES

## ‘Livestock protection vital to boost farmers’ economy’

Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh on Thursday said agriculture and livestock have seen a gradual growth in the last few decades, but both farmers and consumers are yet to derive its full benefits.

Addressing the first annual convocation of Lala Lajpat Rai University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences in Hisar, Mr. Singh said protection and promotion to livestock are important factors to drive farmers’ economy and the country.

He said the Centre was emphasising on new research and development works through National Gokul Mission and National Livestock Policy.

### Balanced development

“Mechanisation is essential for the development of agricultural field and importance of livestock cannot be denied in this perspective. If it is developed in a balanced way, it will be beneficial for both farmers and agronomic field,” he said.

He said under the National Livestock Policy, the government is promoting to increase animal strength so that environment-related balance may be maintained along with the continuity of livelihood of the people related to livestock.

“Importance of livestock related products has increased due to the enhancement of income, urbanisation, altered lifestyle and food preservation resources,” he added.

*Agriculture and livestock have seen a gradual growth, but farmers are yet to derive benefits*

### **NABARD projects Odisha’s credit potential at over Rs.58,880 crore**

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) on Thursday projected overall credit potential of Odisha at Rs.58,882.39 crore for priority sectors during the year 2016-17 – a jump of 23.3 per cent over last year.

The bank had made a credit projection of Rs.47,756.44 crore during 2015-16.

“The aggregation of the district-wise potential linked credit plan (PLPs) for 2006-17 projects a credit flow of Rs.58,882.39 crore for the State indicating an increase of 23.3 per cent over the last year. Out of total credit potential for the State under total priority sector, Rs.32,207.90 crore has been assessed under agriculture,” announced NABARD Chief General Manager S. K. Kale, addressing the State Credit Seminar 2016-17.

“Credit potential under agriculture constitutes 54.7 per cent of total priority sector. Out of total credit of Rs. 32,207.90 crore estimated under agriculture, Rs.29,710.95 crore (92.2 per cent is under farm credit), which comprises of both crop loans and term loans for agriculture and allied activities,” he said.

Focusing on 2015 drought in Odisha, the NABARD has suggested measures which have potential for providing perennial risk heading and coping mechanism. The bank recommends formation of producer organisations by taking small and marginal farmers for better marketing of produces, amendment of tenancy act for financing share croppers and popularisation of lift irrigation projects for mitigating crop failure.

Inaugurating the credit seminar, Chief Secretary A. P. Padhi expressed concern over low credit to GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) ratio in the State.

“While economists want 100 per cent credit to GSDP ratio, the same is ridiculously low at 10 in Odisha compared to 40 per cent in Maharashtra. The credit to GSDP ratio in Kandhamal district is as low as 2 per cent. There is huge scope for lending especially in agriculture sectors. Bankers must have to lend and make the State grow,” said Mr. Padhi.

The Chief Secretary also came down on slow progress on financial inclusion. “We had set a target to make banking service available in all gram panchayats within four year time last year. But a recent review revealed the achievement at 10 per cent. What kind of financial inclusion we are talking about when a person travel 25 km to just to access his bank account,” he observed.

Development Commissioner R. Balakrishnan and Regional Director of Reserve Bank of India P. K. Jena also spoke on the occasion.

*Recommends several steps for better marketing of farm produce, mitigating crop failure*

### **Conference on biotechnology begins**

The three-day international conference being conducted by KU Department of Biotechnology on ‘Emerging Biotechnologies’ began on a grand note in the Senate Hall of the varsity here on Thursday.

M.G.K. Jones, Director of State Agriculture Biotechnology Centre (SABC), Western Germany, the chief guest, said the growing impact of biotechnology in all spheres has resulted in the active and focused pursuit of innovative applications for improving the quality of life. Translation of research into results for human welfare is the prime objective of biotechnology, he added.

It is widely applied in agriculture next to pharmaceuticals. Food security could only be achieved through biotechnology. In agriculture, it is used for biosecurity, crop protection, post harvest storage, crop production, healthy eco-systems, and adapting to climatic variation, he said and cited the example of increased production of cotton by using BT variety. There is apprehension that GM food varieties are harmful, which has no veracity, he said.

## **Home science association conference begins**

The three-day 31st biennial conference of the Home Science Association of India began at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, here on Thursday.

Dharwad Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Sushma Godbole, who inaugurated the conference, said that universities and government departments should work in tandem to take technology to the rural masses.

Home Science Association of India president Uma Joshi said that science should be integrated with social needs and home science was a subject which contributed a lot towards improving the lot of the rural communities through their outreach activities.

### **Technologies**

Vice-Chancellor D.P. Biradar said that the university was focussing on developing technologies that benefited various communities.

The varsity had supplied microbial culture for composting in farm pits in 60 villages which would aid Swachh Bharat campaign and provide manure to farmers' fields.

Rural Home Science College Dean Shailaja Naik, Sureka Sankangowdar and Pushpa Bharathi were present.

Nearly, 250 delegates are attending the conference from 19 States representing 55 universities.

*'Varsities and government departments should take technology to the rural masses'*

## **Sugarcane growers seek clearance of dues**

*Growers' association plans to hold rally outside Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru*





Deputy Commissioner N. Jayaram handing over a cheque for Rs.2.53 lakh to the widow of sugarcane grower Vitthal Arabhavi in Belagavi on Thursday. Karnataka State Sugarcane Growers Association president Kurubur Shanthkumar is seen. —PHOTO: P.K. BADIGER

Sugarcane growers are planning to hold a rally outside the Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru seeking clearance of sugarcane dues worth Rs. 4,500 crore.

Kurubur Shanthkumar, president of the Karnataka State Sugarcane Growers Association, said that they would organise a ‘Vidhana Soudha Chalo’ agitation if the government did not clear the dues within 20 days.

He told presspersons here on Thursday that Rs. 3,500 crore was due for the crushing season 2015-16 and Rs. 1,000 crore was due for the 2014-15 season. The mill owners had not paid it despite agitations by growers and promises by the government. It had prompted farmers to commit suicide, Mr. Shanthkumar alleged. He criticised Minister for Cooperation H.S. Mahadev Prasad for delaying the fixing of sugarcane price, even though the Centre had announced the Fair and Remunerative Price.

“The Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh governments have announced Rs. 2,800 a tonne for sugarcane. Karnataka is not taking a decision only to protect the interests of sugar mills controlled by politicians belonging to the Congress and the BJP,” Mr. Shanthkumar said.

He said that if the government did not have funds, it should seize 20,000 tonnes of gold lying idle in temples across the country, which would fetch

Rs. 50 billion crore. That could be invested for boosting agriculture and farmers' income, Mr. Shanthkumar said.

Earlier, he handed over a cheque for Rs. 2.53 lakh through Deputy Commissioner N. Jayaram to the bereaved family of Vitthal Arabhavi of Kankanwadi of Raibag taluk, a sugarcane grower who committed suicide at a protest site in front of the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha when the winter session of the legislature was being held in Belagavi on November 26, 2013. The amount, contributed by the farmers of Shivamogga district, was handed over to the widow and two sons of the deceased farmer.

### **Decentralised seed units mooted**



District Collector Kesavendrakumar visits a stall that has on display a rare collection of gene bank of various crops at the Wayanad Seed fest- 2016, at Puthurvayal in Wayanad district, on Thursday.

: K.P Laladas, Secretary, Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB), said here on Thursday that establishing decentralised seed production units at the grama panchayat level was the need of the hour to conserve agro biodiversity of the state.

Addressing the opening session of the Wayanad community seed fest at Community Argo-Biodiversity Centre of the M. S. Swaminathan Research



foundation (MSSRF) at Puthurvayal, Dr. Laladas said that seed production had been a service by the traditional farmers to society and now it was time for the local self-governments to take over this responsibility.

The KSBB had requested the State government to make necessary amendments in the Panchayat Raj Act to constitute standing committees for Environment and Biodiversity in three-tier local bodies, he said.

District panchayat president T Ushakumari inaugurated the programme. The fest, being organised by Wayanad District Tribal Development Action Council, Seed Care, a collective of traditional rice farmers, Kerala State Biodiversity Board, and NABARD, is aimed at making Wayanad a role model for other states in conserving traditional seed varieties and thus complimenting the biodiversity conservation efforts.

As many as 25 stalls had been put up at the venue to showcase the rare collection of gene bank of various crops. The organisers have also arranged facilities to the farmers to exchange their traditional seeds of various crops. 'Seed, Soil, Food-Rights and Responsibilities' is the slogan of the fest.

Farmers from all grama panchayats in the district and neighbouring districts of Tamil Nadu will exhibit and exchange their varied seed varieties in the three-day fest. Various programmes, including seminars, a photo exhibition and an agriculture-based film festival, would also be held.

### **Call to tap potential of floriculture**

: An international symposium on succulents and other ornamental plants, which concluded at the Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS), Ambalavayal, on Wednesday, stressed the need to formulate policies to promote floriculture in the district to ensure sustainable income to the farming community. The four-day symposium was organised jointly by the International Society for Horticulture Science (ISHS), Belgium, and the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) in connection with Pooppoli-2016, an international flower show being organised by the KAU on the RARS premises.

Addressing the concluding session, Sisir Kumar Mitra, chairman, ISHS, said commercial flowers had a huge demand in the international market and the sub-tropical climate in the high ranges, like Wayanad, was quite suitable to

the industry. Collective ventures headed by progressive farmers can “make floriculture a promising occupation and it would ensure sustainable income from the sector, Dr. Mitra said adding that the system had proved “to be a huge success in remote villages in a small State like Sikkim where more than 70 per cent of rural women were ensured employment round the year in the booming orchid industry. Dr. Mitra said the same result could be achieved in Wayanad by tapping the unexplored potential of floriculture industry.

Tim Briercliffe, secretary-general, International Association of Horticulture Producers (AIPH), said there was a huge marketing network for all commercially important cut flowers throughout the world. There was a possibility to activate the production and export of floriculture products from the country through the AIPH network, he added. Delivering the keynote address, A.K. Singh, Managing Director, National Horticultural Board, assured all support of his organisation to launch commercial floriculture in the hill district.

### **Marine fisheries census in three coastal districts in State from Monday**

A month-long nation-wide marine fisheries census, covering the three coastal districts of the State, will begin on February 1.

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), a research body under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR-CMFRI), will conduct the census.

The Union government conducts the marine fisheries census once in every five years.

The last census was conducted in 2010.

According to the CMFRI, the census would be conducted in 360 marine fishing villages in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada districts.

In all, 220 enumerators will be on duty in the three districts.

The census exercises will include collecting information about marine fishermen families, fishing craft and gears, social and educational profile and demographic features of marine fishing villages.

Across the country, about 3,000 enumerators will visit 11 lakh fishermen families spread across 4,250 marine fishing villages located in 73 districts to collect the details. The entire process will be monitored and supervised by 220 officials posted at 26 centres.

The island regions of Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep will be enumerated under the supervision of Fishery Survey of India.

The data would be analysed by the scientists of the institute to develop a comprehensive census database, which will be helpful in facilitating formulation of fisheries-related plans and policies in the marine sector.

The census will end on March 1. The total expenditure is estimated at Rs. 3.8 crore.

### **CMFRI research facilities open for public view**

Students of schools and colleges and the public can visit Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute's Thoothukudi Research Centre here on February 3 as part of the Founding Day celebrations.

Speaking to reporters here on Thursday, Principal Scientist of CMFRI P.P. Manoj Kumar said Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), is the premier nodal research organisation conducting research on various aspects of Marine Fisheries in India. CMFRI, with its headquarters at Kochi, has seven research centres and three regional centres and a Krishi Vigyan Kendra situated along the country's east and west coast catering to the needs of all the maritime States of India in the marine fisheries sector.

The Thoothukudi Research Centre of ICAR – CMFRI, situated near Roche Park on South Beach Road is conducting researches in various aspects such as fishery resource assessment, environmental monitoring, bio diversity and socio economic studies of fisherfolks of this coast.

The institute is also known for its contribution towards development of various molluscan fisheries technologies, seed production of sea cucumber over these years.

## On Founding Day

“To cite a few are Bi-valve Seed Production technology, pearl culture technology, farming of edible oysters, technology development on marine ornamental gastropods and tissue culture. TRC of CMFRI throws open its research laboratories and other facilities to the public every year on the occasion of its Founding Day, February 3, 1947. This year also the Centre would be kept open for school and college students and the public on February 3 between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. with break for lunch between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.,” Dr. Manoj Kumar said.

Corporation Commissioner Poongodi Arumaikkan will formally inaugurate the ‘Open House.’ There will also be continuous video shows on select topics of marine fisheries in the auditorium.

## Marine fisheries census from February 1

*3,000 enumerators trained by CMFRI officials to visit 11 lakh fishermen families to collect details*



P.P.Manojkumar, Scientist in-charge of CMFRI, addressing the training programme on National Marine Fisheries Census- 2016 in Thoothukudi on Thursday.— Photo: N. Rajesh

After a gap of 6 years, the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, a research body under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR-CMFRI), will begin a month-long National Marine Fisheries Census - 2016 from February 1 in all maritime States and two Union Territories of the country.

Speaking to reporters here on Thursday, Principal Scientist of CMFRI P.P. Manoj Kumar said the island regions of Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep would be enumerated under the supervision of Fishery Survey of India.

The marine fisheries census would be conducted for a duration of 30 days from February 1.

The exercise includes collecting information about marine fishermen families, fishing crafts and gears, social and educational profile and demographic features of marine fishing villages.

This exercise, funded by Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (DAHDF) of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India is being coordinated by the staff of regional, research, field centres and headquarters of ICAR - CMFRI located along the maritime coast of the country.

About 3,000 enumerators trained by ICAR-CMFRI officials will visit 11 lakh fishermen families spread across 4,250 marine fishing villages located in 73 districts to collect details. The entire process would be monitored and supervised by around 220 officials of ICAR - CMFRI posted at the 26 centres.

“The enumerators will be given schedules formatted to collect details pertaining to social, educational, fishing infrastructure aspects of marine fisher families. The schedules are devised to collect information pertaining to each household on the above said details alongside specific fishing occupation particulars such as fishing, processing, handling, marketing and value addition,” Dr. Manoj Kumar said.

The schedules used at household level have been translated into eight regional languages. Apart from the schedules, the personnel involved have been provided an instruction booklet to clarify various heads under which details are being collected.

Another set of schedules have been devised to collect information pertaining to infrastructure facilities in fishing villages and other fish harvesting and processing facilities available in various coastal districts.



The ICAR-CMFRI authorities had already conducted training programmes for supervisors and prospective enumerators at various locations along the coastline.

### **Help in policymaking**

The data would be analysed by the scientists of ICAR - CMFRI to develop a comprehensive census database, which would be helpful in facilitating formulation of fisheries related plans and policies in the marine sector, Dr. Manoj Kumar said.

### **Nod for setting up marketing and agri business depts**

Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Thursday gave his nod to setting up 'Marketing and Agri Business' department under the Punjab Mandi Board for providing necessary back-up support to the farmers of the State to ensure marketing of their produce.

"Badal has felt that though the hard working and resilient farmers of the state have consistently enhanced the production of food grains, vegetables and fruits, honey and others but there was a complete lack of proper marketing mechanism for their produce.

"Therefore, he had asked the Additional Chief Secretary (Development) to immediately constitute 'Marketing and Agri Business' department under the Punjab Mandi Board for providing necessary support to the farmers of the state to ensure marketing of their produce," a spokesman of the Chief Minister's Office said. - PTI

### **Banks asked to extend working hours in rural branches**

In the wake of widespread drought and rural distress, the State government has told bankers to have their rural branches open early in the mornings to late in the evenings for providing credit services to small and marginal farmers. Customers are finding it difficult to visit banks during office hours as they have to go to their fields at that time.

"Small and marginal farmers go to the fields when banks are open. And, they close when farmers return from work. I request you to change your working hours to ensure credit services to the poor," Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner Latha Krishna Rao said, while

sharing her thoughts at the State credit seminar organised by NABARD here on Thursday.

Banks function from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Besides other holidays, banks now remain open five days a week on the second and fourth weeks of every month. “You may like it [more holidays]. But, small and marginal farmers are not there when you open your offices,” Ms. Rao said.

She urged them to respond to the seasonal vagaries and lend to consumption expenditure of farmers, particularly of dryland. “We need to introspect and see how the credit flow to rural areas is utilised.”

The NABARD has estimated a credit potential of Rs.1,44,693.94 crore under the priority sector in Karnataka for 2016-17, an increase of 34 per cent over the credit potential for 2015-16.

M.I. Ganagi, CGM, NABARD, made a presentation on NABARD’s perception on the development of the State.

*Normal office hours, from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. don’t suit small and marginal farmers*  
*Latha Krishna Rao,*

*Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner*  
*Rs. 57,708.32 cr. assessed for crop production, maintenance and marketing*  
*Rs.19,759.30 cr. for agriculture term loans; Rs. 5,239.71 cr. for agriculture infrastructure*

*Rs. 4,367.07 cr. for ancillary activities; Rs. 20,259.77 cr. for MSME*  
*Rs. 9,571 cr. for export credit; Rs. 6,611.61 cr. for education;*

*Rs.10,396.78 cr. for housing; Rs. 885.55 cr. for renewable energy*  
*Rs.1,842.35 cr. for social infrastructure; Rs.8,052.48 cr. for other sectors*

### **Release of water from dam ordered**

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa has ordered the release of water from Tirumurthy Dam in Tirupur district for irrigation from Friday (January 29).

Following representations from farmers in the districts, water would be released through Parambikulam Main Canal, Udumalpet Canal and High Level Canal.

It would benefit over 94,521 acres of land in Tirupur and Coimbatore districts, Ms. Jayalalithaa said in a statement .

### **First farm fresh outlet in Katpadi taluk a hit**

*Witnesses an average sales of Rs. 16,000 to Rs. 18,000 every day*

The district's first farm fresh outlet at Gandhi Nagar, Katpadi taluk, has been witnessing average sales of Rs. 16,000 to Rs. 18,000 everyday, according to the officials. It was inaugurated by the Chief Minister via video conferencing on January 11.

Most of the vegetables were being procured from farmers here, while vegetables such as carrot and beans were being bought from Hosur.

Officials said the response for the outlet has been good as the vegetables were sold at a cheaper price when compared to Nethaji market, local shops and 'uzhavar sandhai.'

Collector R. Nanthagopal inspected the outlet on Wednesday to check for proper supply of vegetables, quality and cost of vegetables. Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies S. Thiruguna Iyyapadurai was present.

### **Cattle show**

The second edition of *Kongu Naatu Kaalnadai Thiruvizha* (Kongu Nadu Cattle Show) will begin at Samathur, near Pollachi, on Friday. The three-day event that will go on till Sunday is organised by The Vanavarayar Foundation.

The highlight of the event will be the exhibition and competitions for Kangayam breed bulls, cows and calves on Saturday. Competitions are separately organised for the Kangayam Mayalai (white), Sevalai (brown), Kari (black) and Vadi Kalai (bullock cart) bulls in various age categories. An exhibition of indigenous breeds and competitions for rams, equine best male and female and buffaloes will be organised on the final day. Prizes will be given to the best horse, buffalo, goat and rooster.

## ‘Utilise State’s initiatives’



Collector K. Veera Raghava Rao looking at an exhibit at Madurai Medical College in the city on Thursday.— Photo: S. James

*The event will mainly focus on Mission Indradhanush, Digital India, Skill India and initiatives for women empowerment and entrepreneurship.*

Launching the three-day public information campaign organised by the Press Information Bureau (PIB) here on Thursday, Collector K. Veera Raghava Rao urged the youngsters to make use of the Central government initiatives such as ‘Digital India’ and ‘Skill India’ as opportunities were abound now.

Pointing out how technologies had shrunk the world, Mr. Rao said that any information or opportunity available in any corner of the world could be known through Internet. “Digital India is about making technologies like Internet easily available to everyone and bringing governance closer to people. The State government has also given laptops to students. Use such initiatives constructively,” he said.

Earlier, Mr. Rao visited the stalls set up as part of the campaign at the Madurai Medical College by State and Central government departments explaining various initiatives.

The three-day event will mainly focus on Mission Indradhanush, Digital India, Skill India and initiatives for women empowerment and entrepreneurship.

Special focus was given on the first day of the campaign to Mission Indradhanush, launched in December 2014 by the Union government to improve full immunisation coverage of children below two years of age.

The authorities explained that of the 201 high focus districts chosen from 28 States, eight were from Tamil Nadu (Coimbatore, Kancheepuram, Tiruvallur, Tiruchi, Madurai, Tirunelveli, Vellore and Virudhunagar).



### **Protecting the coconut tree, ground upwards**

An explanation of how a highly-valued horticultural species does not need anti-felling laws but protection from sweeping changes in land use.



The Goa government's move to allow felling of coconut trees without permission has fuelled a debate on, among other issues, the correct definition of 'tree'. Dictionaries describe a tree as a perennial woody plant whose branches spring from and are supported by a trunk. There is no standard legal definition as different courts of law worldwide have used various yardsticks — girth, height, girth at a certain height etc.

Coconut (*Cocos nucifera*) belongs to the *Arecaceae* (palm) family. We know palms do not grow branches. But a plant does not need to qualify as a 'tree' to be legally protected. A number of medicinal or aromatic herbs figure on the IUCN Red list of endangered species and are duly protected.



In India, every state government draws up a list of the plant species they want to protect outside forest areas. Typically, a species is picked based on its abundance and commercial value. Rare species which are in high demand, such as red sandalwood, are naturally listed. On the other hand, felling of fast-growing timber species — eucalyptus, for instance — is usually allowed as a short-period crop. Horticultural species such as mango or coconut are valued for their cyclical returns and there is no incentive for a farmer to cut a fruit-bearing tree. And when old, diseased or barren trees are removed, they usually make room for the next generation of a species. That is why one needs no permission to fell coconut trees in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha — the coastal states that contribute to over 90% of India's coconut production. West Bengal is an exception; felling of any tree requires permission in the state. In 2012, the Environment Ministry's report on Felling and Transit Regulations for Tree Species Grown on Non-forest/Private Land said that there "is a case for full exemption from regulatory regime...in all states of such... species with very sporadic distribution in forests but grown by farmers on large scale."

Species like guava, coconut, cashewnut, citrus and areca nut were named on the horticultural list recommended for exemption. However, enabling the farmer to decide how best to manage her orchard or plantation is not the only approach. Philippines, a country producing more coconuts than India, legislated its Coconut Preservation Act of 1995, which prohibits felling of any coconut tree not "60 years old" unless it is diseased, weak or economically non-productive. The law, however, allows felling of trees when the agricultural land devoted to coconut production is converted into an industrial, commercial or residential area. And therein lies the catch. As long as a plot is earmarked and used for agriculture, a farmer is unlikely to get rid of her coconut trees that yield fruits every year and bring money. Even if she sells off her orchard, the trees are likely to be safe as long as the new owner cannot put the land to non-agricultural use. The equation changes with a change in land use. Even the most productive coconut grove cannot be as profitable as a mega factory or a housing estate.

In Goa, more than the government's move to do away with permission for felling coconut trees, the timing and the circumstances of the move make it controversial. In August 2014, the state government passed the Goa Investment Promotion Act, 2014. Section 7 (3) of the Act says that once an area is notified for investment promotion, the provisions of the Regional Plan, the Outline Development Plan, all other acts of local bodies, and the

land revenue code “shall cease to apply” to the notified area. Under this Act, the Goa government notified 12 hectares of agricultural land — a coconut orchard — for industrial use on December 21, 2015. The trees stand in the way of a Rs 140-crore distillery and brewery project. There is every chance that more and more orchards will make way for factories, housings or highways with similar change in land use in the near future. It is perhaps inevitable in a largely green state like Goa that certain natural areas will have to be sacrificed to accommodate development.

By 2014, the Goa Industrial Development Corporation (Goa IDC) had already set up more than 20 industrial estates which house more than 1,600 operating industrial units over a utilised area of 1,000 hectares. Much of Goa is anyway made of laterite that lends the redness to its soil. Without exhausting such relatively unproductive areas, pushing industry to lush agricultural zones by changing land use is what makes Goa’s coconut move dangerous for the species and the Goan way of life. Otherwise, an average Goan would be thanking the government for letting her decide how to manage her coconut trees.

### **Now, GADVASU freezing semen of privately owned ‘prized’ bulls**

University hopes measure will improve overall dairy cattle breeding in Punjab.

In a first-of-its-kind step, designed to help dairy farmers across Punjab, the Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU) has begun freezing the semen of “prized and high-quality” bulls owned by private farmers. According to Vice-Chancellor Dr A S Nanda, the move will ensure high-quality germ plasm of bulls for dairy farmers and would thus improve overall breeding in Punjab.

Under the project, the university has already frozen over 3,000 doses of semen of bulls whose offspring have broken records in milk yields and are completely disease-free. Officials said more dairy farm owners are now contacting them to be part of the project and hoped that the semen can be further sold to other farmers, thus creating a chain.

Till now, semen straws prepared from bulls owned by the animal husbandry department and GADVASU were sold to farmers. They were also supplied

to government veterinary hospitals, where vets would impregnate cows in private farms. Farmers were also dependent on natural mating. With this facility, however, university officials said that farmers would be able to use semen straws of their own bulls or even sell it to other farmers.

GADVASU sells semen from its own farms at the cost of Rs 100 per straw (for progeny of tested bulls, whose breeding background and offspring performance record are available) and Rs 30 for non-proven bulls. (whose records are unavailable). The Punjab government owns two semen banks at Ropar and Nabha, where straws from its own bulls are supplied.

“We will now move door-to-door to collect the semen. This is to spread the good quality germplasm in state. Through natural insemination, a bull can impregnate only one animal at once but if we freeze the semen using liquid nitrogen, it produces 200 doses from a one-time collection. We want high-quality semen to be accessible to all farmers. After freezing it, we give it to the bull’s owner who can further give it to farmers or use it in his own farm,” V-C Nanda said.

The university said it is taking all steps to ensure that the semen belongs to only those bulls that are completely disease-free. “If a buffalo breaks certain milk yield record, we freeze the semen of the bull which produced it. The owners have a record of the breeding background. The semen is also tested for communicable diseases and quality. If all is found okay, then a two-member team visits the farm and freezes the semen,” said Prakash Singh Brar, director of the university’s livestock farm.

Each visit of a GADVASU scientist will cost an owner Rs 5,000 to have the bull semen frozen. “We are working on a no-profit, no-loss basis. Generally such prized bulls are very less. The idea is to store their semen for a lifetime so that more high-quality animals are reproduced. It is open for both indigenous, exotic and cross-breeds,” Brar added.

“We were concentrating on cross breeding which no doubt increased the yield of milk but has degraded quality of milk. Freezing semen of farmers’ own bulls is an excellent step which will help them to reproduce highly rewarding offspring as semen will be tried and tested. In villages it is a common practise that if a farmer owns a prized bull, other farmers pay him Rs 100-200 to mate their cows/buffaloes with it. But with semen storage,

they will get higher profits,” said Jagdeep Singh, president, Dairy Welfare Association, Punjab.

### **‘Pineapple city’: Reaping bitter harvest as prices crash**

Production glut makes a once-profitable crop a losing proposition.



Pineapple being grown as an inter-crop with rubber. (Source: Shaju Philip)  
For farmers in India’s “pineapple city”, the last one-and-a-half years have been a period they won’t fondly cherish.

Prices of first-grade pineapple fruit are today ruling at Rs 10-13 per kg at the farm-gate, compared to Rs 20/kg levels in mid-2014. The impact of it has been huge for Vazhakulam, a predominantly Syrian Catholic-populated town about an hour’s drive from Kochi on the Muvattupuzha-Thodupuzha road that is the country’s largest market for the fleshy tropical fruit

Vazhakulam pineapple was granted ‘geographical indication’ status in September 2009. That tag has, however, proved to be of little use in the current scenario, where realisations do not cover even estimated production costs of Rs 17-20 per kg.

Baby John, president of the Vazhakulam Pineapple Growers Association, attributes the price crash to the roughly 30 per cent increase in production in 2015. “Many farmers took to cultivating pineapple after 2013, when prices averaged Rs 25/kg and even touched Rs 45 for a few days. The glut we are seeing is mainly a result of those prices. Demand, too, has fallen especially since the end of the Ramzan fasting season after July,” he notes.

Alex Joseph, a prominent Vazhakulam trader, believes that the price drop also has to do with the increased availability of other fruits for table consumption, particularly oranges and bananas. Their turning cheaper in 2015-16 has also dragged down pineapple rates through the simple substitution effect. And since farmers cannot hold on to their crop or delay harvesting beyond a point, they are being forced to sell the fruit at the prevailing market prices.

The lack of processing capacity within the state, despite the availability of pineapples round the year, has only made matters worse.

Apart from the few small-scale units in and around Vazhakulam that supply pulp from low-grade pineapples to processed food makers, there is only the Nadukkara Agro Processing Company near Muvattupuzha. Set up about 17 years ago under a European Union-funded Kerala Horticulture Development Programme (KHDP), it was originally promoted as a producer company of registered farmers for making pineapple juice and fruit drinks under the 'Jive' brand. In April 2013, it was fully taken over by the Kerala government after failure to repay a working capital loan owed to KHDP.

Baby John, who was a director in the company when it was floated, is critical of the state government's decision. While the unit has a capacity to process 70 tonnes of fruit per day, it could hardly do 200 tonnes in the whole of 2015. "When it was a farmers-owned company, we had processed 3,000 tonnes in three months. Today, nobody wants to supply pineapples to the unit because they are not sure of receiving payment," he claims.

Right now, Vazhakulam's growers are virtually at the mercy of outside buyers. In November-December, a few pulp and juice concentrate makers outside Kerala purchased around 7,000 tonnes of Vazhakulam pineapples.

"Had they not bought, prices would have further nosedived," adds John. Pineapple is grown mainly as an inter-crop with rubber trees that have a 6-7 years of gestation before they are ready for tapping. Pineapple cultivation is typically taken up during the first three years of planting rubber, after which the tree canopy renders any inter-cropping infeasible.

The expansion in pineapple area was coterminous with the boom in rubber in Kerala over the last decade. Although the rubber juggernaut was halted following the price plunge from 2013, it did not particularly affect pineapple



cultivation. Many rubber farmers simply cleared their plantations and gave out the vacated tracts on lease for growing pineapples at Rs 50,000 per acre.

But these calculations have taken a hit, with pineapple realisations also plummeting. “Vazhakkulam has flourished on the back of this single crop. But if this situation persists, we will be forced to sharply reduce pineapple cultivation area,” says P C Thomas, a local grower.

Pineapple is presently grown in about 35,000 acres in Kerala, with annual production of 3.5 lakh tonnes. While cultivation has spread beyond Vazhakulam — whose people pioneered commercial farming of the Mauritius variety as an inter-crop in rubber plantations over three decades back — the town has retained its position as the centre of Kerala’s pineapple trade.

A farmer growing pineapple can harvest about three crops over three-and-a-half years, of which the first two would yield about 12 tonnes fruit per acre and the third roughly 8 tonnes. The cost of production, if the land is owned by the farmer, is around Rs 1.50 lakh per acre for the first crop, going down to Rs 1.25 lakh and Rs 1 lakh in the subsequent crops.

Farmers say they can make decent money when fruit realisations are Rs 20 per kg or more. But the margins drop when cultivation is on leased land and go into negative when prices fall to the levels they are today.

## THE HINDU BusinessLine

### **NCDEX investors fear turmeric, coriander may join bandwagon**

Exchange halted castorseed trading on Wednesday over alleged speculation

#### **MUMBAI, JANUARY 28:**

With the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) suspending trading in castorseed futures over alleged speculation on Wednesday, the fate of other volatile commodities such as turmeric and coriander (dhaniya) hangs in balance.



The exchange suspended futures trading in all castor seed contracts at close of business on Wednesday and decided to settle outstanding positions at the daily settlement price of January 27.

NCDEX registered a turnover of ₹ 350 crore on Wednesday.

“The exchange has taken this decision to maintain market equilibrium, safeguard market integrity and in the general interest of commodities market,” said the exchange.

The average weekly price of turmeric has fallen to ₹ 8,322 a quintal on January 24 from ₹ 10,166 a quintal registered in the week ended January 3. Similarly, coriander dipped to ₹ 6,345 a quintal from ₹ 7,251 in last four weeks. Though fundamentals are weak in these commodities, traders suspect that few brokers had inside information on the impending ban.

In fact, NCDEX has drawn flak last year when coriander was quoted at ₹ 10,000 a quintal while in the spot market it was traded at about ₹ 7,000. The exchange justified the premium by claiming the quality of coriander delivered on its platform was far superior.

Navin Mathur, Associate Director, Angel Broking, said the sentiment of investors in agriculture commodity futures is affected by the sudden suspension of castor seed contract.

“The exchange should have given at least six days for investors to digest the impact of the announcement and wind up their positions,” he said.

Ajay Kumar Kedia, Director of Kedia Commodities, said the suspension would send a wrong signal to prospective global investors looking at investment in the exchange sphere.

“With the commodity market coming under the well-empowered regulator SEBI, one thought there would not be any sudden ban on agriculture commodity trading, but this was a shocker,” he said.

On the possibility of settlement crisis, a member said speculators with huge investment may find it difficult to settle their position, particularly if they have incurred loss but it will be managed because investors always keep surplus funds with their brokers.

Veeresh Hiremath, Research Analyst, Karvy Comtrade, said castorseed prices was frozen at the six per cent lower circuit of ₹ 3,051 a quintal within 15 minutes after the trade started on Wednesday and there was hardly any opportunity for small investors to exit.

(This article was published on January 28, 2016)

### **NCDEX turnover dips 26% post-castorseed ban**



#### **MUMBAI, JANUARY 28:**

Turnover on NCDEX dipped 26 per cent in the first half of the trading session to ₹ 1,864 crore on Thursday from ₹ 2,535 crore logged in the same period on Wednesday, largely due to ban on castorseed trading on Wednesday.

Castorseed was among the top traded commodity on the exchange registering a turnover of ₹ 9,460 crore in December and it was ₹ 13,142

crore in November. In January, the turnover recorded was ₹ 7,997 crore before trading was suspended on Wednesday.

The sharp drop in prices and excessive speculation despite the exchange levying stiff margins and curbing open interest led to ban on trading in the contract.

Meanwhile, the market watchdog SEBI has asked the Exchange to explain the trigger for ban in trading of castorseed futures abruptly without giving traders to square off their position or giving an opportunity for delivery of the commodity.

The exchange, on Wednesday, said the decision was taken to maintain market equilibrium, safeguard market integrity and in the general interest of commodities market.

(This article was published on January 28, 2016)

### **Rabi sowing crosses 590 lakh ha**



#### **NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28:**

The total area sown under Rabi crops as on January 28 stood at 591.51 lakh hectares (lh) – lower than 609.31 lh in the same period last year, according to preliminary reports received by the Agriculture Ministry from the States.

Till January 28, wheat was sown/transplanted on 292.52 lh (305.94 lh), while pulses were also sown on a lesser area covering 139.08 lh, against 143.01 lh last year. Coarse cereals were sown on 60.08 lh, higher than 56.76



lh in 2014-15, while the area sown under oilseeds was 77.43 lh (79.51 lh). Rice was sown on 22.41 lh, compared with 24.08 lh last year, the Ministry said in a statement.

(This article was published on January 28, 2016)

### **Cold snap ends as night temperatures rise over North**



During February, most of North-West India is expected to stay drier than normal, a forecast by South Korea's Asia-Pacific Climate Centre said

#### **THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JANUARY 28:**

Minimum (night) temperatures have improved from the recent lows in North-West India as the slightly colder regime moved to Central India during the 24 hours ending Thursday morning.

The lowest minimum temperature of 3.2 deg Celsius in the plains was, however, recorded at Najibabad in Uttar Pradesh, an India Met Department update said.

#### **Heavy snow**

Heavy rain or snow has been forecast over the western Himalayas, especially over Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, over the weekend.

The US Centre for Climate Prediction too agreed with the outlook suggesting that most of the wet weather will be confined to the hilly regions of North-West India.

Meanwhile, dense to very dense fog drifted over north Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi during the morning hours on Thursday.

The lowest visibility of 25 metres was recorded at Churu and Pilani in Rajasthan. But Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar witnessed moderate to shallow fog in the morning in what is signs of normal winter climes.

### **Extended forecast**

Forecasts put out by the Busan, South Korea-based Asia-Pacific Climate Centre, predicted contrasting weather for North-West, Central and Peninsular India for the next three months.

During February, most of North-West India is expected to stay drier than normal, the forecast said. Affected areas include Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.

In contrast, most of Central India and adjoining Peninsular India are expected to witness slightly above normal precipitation during February.

### **Varied outlook**

Affected areas include South Gujarat and adjoining Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka (except coastal region).

Coastal Karnataka, Kerala and most of Tamil Nadu may witness drier than normal conditions in February.

As for March, above normal rain is forecast to return to parts of North-West India, especially Jammu and Kashmir (the heaviest), Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, most parts of Rajasthan except its eastern parts,



Gujarat and adjoining West Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

Drier than normal regime will be spread out in March over most of Peninsular India (the driest being Coastal Karnataka and Kerala), Tamil Nadu, east Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal and Chhattisgarh.

(This article was published on January 28, 2016)

### **Govt to buy drone technology to assess crop damage**



#### **NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28:**

In a bid to settle crop insurance claims as quickly as possible, the government has decided to purchase unmanned aircraft technology ‘drone’ for assessing crop damage faster and more accurately.

The move follows a direction from Prime Minister Narendra Modi for using modern farm technologies to implement effectively the new crop insurance scheme, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana from June this year.

“We have already given an in-principle approval to Mahalanobis National Crop Forecast Centre (MNCFC) for purchase of a drone technology. An e-tender will be issued next month,” a senior Agriculture Ministry official told PTI.

Initially, the government will purchase one drone technology and would order for more after checking the feasibility, the official said.

The Ministry's plan is to purchase one drone for each State and at least 20 drones in the next five years.

The cost of one drone and its maintenance is estimated to be around ₹ 70 lakh, which the government has already allocated in the 2015-16 Budget, the official added.

Last year, the government had hired a drone for pilot test in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

At present, there is a huge delay in settlement of crop insurance claims because of manual assessment of crop loss. In the existing crop insurance schemes, some farmers have not got claims for crop loss witnessed two years ago.

The government has addressed these concerns in the new crop insurance scheme which will be rolled out from 2016 kharif (summer) season starting June.

Farmers will pay less premium and get early settlement of their claim under the new scheme.

(This article was published on January 28, 2016)

### **Tea production dips in 2015 on adverse weather**



#### **COONOOR, JANUARY 28:**

With official data now released for November 2015, it is clear that India's overall tea production in the year would be less than 2014.

“Tea Board has now announced that India’s production in November was 7.62 million kg (mkg) more than November 2014 in North India but 3.65 mkg less in South India. Based on this, our compilation shows that India’s overall production in the 11 months dropped to 1,135.15 mkg from 1,147.93 mkg in the same months of 2014,” Rajesh Gupta, compiler of *Global Tea Digest 2015* told *BusinessLine*.

This drop of 12.78 mkg marked a decline of 1.11 per cent. Production fell in both North and South India due to adverse weather.

North India lost a marginal 1.16 mkg with production dropping to 922.27 mkg. Assam continued to lead the country’s production table as its production totalled 592.19 mkg and it was 2.04 mkg more than Jan-Nov 2014. West Bengal lost 4.07 mkg to produce 305.44 mkg. Production of Darjeeling tea, hailed to be ‘champagne of tea varieties’ rose marginally by 0.21 mkg to reach 8.61 mkg.

South India lost a higher volume of 11.62 mkg to produce 212.88 mkg. Here, Tamil Nadu lost 5.52 mkg to produce 152.51 mkg and Kerala 5.90 mkg to produce 54.32 mkg. Karnataka also posted a marginal fall.

This was the first year in so many years that India’s tea production had fallen over the previous years. In the recent past, the country has been posting new production record year after year.

In 2014, India produced 1,207 mkg. With only December data awaited, producers now fear that the country’s output in 2015 would be around 1,195 mkg.

(This article was published on January 28, 2016)

**GM-Free Coalition terms NITI Aayog paper as ‘pedestrian’, ‘amateurish’**

**NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28:**

Questioning certain facts, especially with regard to GM technologies, published in an occasional paper brought out by the NITI Aayog, the Coalition for a GM-Free India has written to the Aayog’s Vice-Chairman Aravind Panagariya, terming the paper as “amateurish” and “pedestrian”.

The December 16, 2015 paper, “Raising Agricultural Productivity and Making Farming Remunerative for Farmers”, based on the work of the Task Force on Agricultural Development constituted by NITI Aayog, identifies issues such as remunerative prices, legalised land leasing, adequate relief measures against natural disasters, etc to raise productivity.

These issues are “indeed relevant as well as urgent”, says the letter by the Coalition, an umbrella of various organisations and individuals, which points out that the arguments around productivity enhancement are “outdated”.

It also questions the conclusion that GM seeds are a “powerful new technology promising high productivity and lower use of fertilisers, weedicides and pesticides while being oblivious to actual evidence, including with Bt cotton in India.” “A graph on cotton yield in terms of kg per hectare is presented arguing that after Bt cotton seeds were introduced in 2002, yields rose continuously and touched a new peak of 532 kg/ha in 2013-14. The paper goes on to assert that the success in cotton has made an important contribution to the success of agriculture in general in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, without mentioning why Maharashtra has not been included in this “fair assertion”, though it is mentioned as a state with a large gain for cotton farmers in the very earlier sentence,” says the letter by Sridhar Radhakrishnan, Co-Convenor of the coalition, a copy of which has also been sent to the Prime Minister’s Office.

Another conclusion in the paper that, “Between 2001 and 2010, Bt cotton helped reduce the use of insecticides by more than fifty per cent,” has only a reference thrown in to a Press Information Bureau release accessed in April 2013, years before this Occasional Paper was ever drafted!”, it says, adding that such a paper brings “disrepute to NITI Aayog as well as academics like you (Panagariya) and Ramesh Chand who have been part of the Task Force.”

(This article was published on January 28, 2016)

### **New turmeric fetches high price**

#### **ERODE, JANUARY 28:**

The price of the old turmeric decreased while that of the new turmeric increased at Erode markets. “Though the arrival of new turmeric is very low,

the demand increased and all the 60 bags were sold for a higher price,” said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

Only 2,500 bags of turmeric arrived for sale and 1,530 were sold. The price of the root variety decreased in all the markets. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the new finger turmeric was sold at ₹ 9,314-9,527 a quintal; the root variety ₹ 8,211-9,410. The old finger variety fetched ₹ 9,289-10,109; the root variety ₹ 8,109-9,090. Of the arrival of 1,081 bags, 590 were sold.

(This article was published on January 28, 2016)

### **Mixed trend in sugar**

#### **MUMBAI, JANUARY 28:**

Fine variety sugar went for ₹ 10-15 a quintal higher at Vashi market on Thursday while *Naka* and mill tender rates remained steady with routine activities. Arrivals and local dispatches remain par as demand remain need base due to month end. Morale was steady. Freight rates were unchanged.

On Wednesday, 10-11 mills offered tenders and sold about 28,000-30,000 bags (of 100kg each) at ₹ 2,980-3,050 (2,980-3,050) for S-grade and ₹ 3,000-3,130 (3,000-3,130) for M-grade.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association’s spot rates: S-grade ₹ 3,100-3,202 (3,100-90) and M-grade ₹ 3,182-3,322 (3,182-3,302). *Naka* delivery rates: S-grade ₹ 3,080-3,150 (3,080-3,150) and M-grade ₹ 3,150-3,225 (3,150-3,225).

(This article was published on January 28, 2016)

### **Higher arrivals crush mustard**

#### **INDORE, JANUARY 28:**

Downtrend in mustard oil and seeds continued amid slack physical demand and steady rise in arrival of new crop in mandis across the country with mustard oil prices in Indore declining to ₹ 730 (down ₹ 40 from last week).

Amid slack demand and arrival of new crop, mustard oil traded low in Rajasthan at ₹ 735 (down ₹ 35). In Gujarat , mustard oil quoted lower at



₹ 730 (down ₹ 40). Mustard seeds pounded with its prices declining to ₹ 3,800 (down ₹ 150).

Raida traded low at ₹ 3,800 a quintal (down ₹ 200). Plant deliveries of old mustard seeds for Jaipur line declined to ₹ 4,150-55 a quintal (₹ 4,745-50), new mustard seeds quoted at ₹ 4,170-75 a quintal (₹ 4,771-81).

(This article was published on January 28, 2016)

### **Pepper slips on selling pressure**



#### **KOCHI, JANUARY 28:**

Pepper markets on Thursday witnessed a slip on selling pressure. Meanwhile, exchange- released pepper is also being made available in the market, sources said. On the terminal market, 55 tonnes mostly from the High Ranges were traded . Investors were buying the High Range pepper at prices ranging between ₹ 625 and ₹ 630 a kg. Spot prices declined by ₹ 200 a quintal to close at ₹ 62,200 (ungarbled) and ₹ 65,400 (garbled) a quintal. February contract on the IPSTA platform decreased by ₹ 1,000 a quintal to ₹ 63,000 while March contract remained unchanged at ₹ 61,500 a quintal. Export prices were at \$9,600 a tonne c&f for Europe and \$9,850 for the US.

(This article was published on January 28, 2016)



## Rubber skids on absence of buyers



### **KOTTAYAM, JANUARY 28:**

Spot rubber continued to rule weak on Thursday. The absence of buyers in the local trading houses kept the commodity under pressure during the day. RSS 4 surrendered to ₹ 94(₹ 95) a kg, according to traders. The grade dropped to ₹ 94.50 (₹ 95) and ₹ 91.50 (₹ 92) respectively as reported by the Rubber Board and the dealers. February futures closed at ₹ 96.39 (₹ 96.59), March at ₹ 98.50 (₹ 98.65), April at ₹ 101 (₹ 101.01), May at ₹ 103.50 (₹ 102.02) and June at ₹ 104.50 (₹ 103.04) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) improved to ₹ 86.42 (₹ 86.12) at Bangkok. February futures closed at ¥150(₹ 86.06) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber rates ₹ / kg follow: RSS-4: 94 (95); RSS-5: 90(91); Ungraded: 84 (85); ISNR 20: 84 (84) and Latex (60% drc): 80(80). *Our Correspondent*

(This article was published on January 28, 2016)

## **Business Standard**

### **Nabard pegs Odisha priority sector credit at Rs 58,000 cr in FY 17**

This is an increase of 23.3 per cent over the projection of Rs 47,756.44 crore made in 2015-16



The potential linked credit outlay for the priority sectors in [Odisha](#) is pegged at Rs 58,882.39 crore in 2016-17, an increase of 23.3 per cent over the projection of Rs 47,756.44 crore made in 2015-16.

A State Focus Paper (SFP) 2016-17, released today, presents a comprehensive picture of the credit potential estimated in various sectors of the rural economy as reflected in the Potential Linked Credit Plans (PLPs) prepared by National Bank of [Agriculture](#) and Rural Development (Nabard) for all the districts in the state.

The theme of the State Focus Paper 2016-17 is 'Accelerating the Pace of Capital Formation in Agriculture and Allied Sector'.

Out of the total credit potential of Rs 58,882.39 crore assessed for 2016-17 for the state under total priority sector, Rs 32,207.90 crore has been assessed under agriculture.

The credit potential under the agriculture constitutes a lion's share of 54.7 per cent of the total outlay.

Out of total credit estimated under agriculture, Rs 29,710.95 crore (92.2 per cent) is under farm credit, which comprises both crop loans and term loans for agriculture and allied activities.

Besides, the credit potential under agriculture infrastructure and ancillary activities have been estimated at Rs 1,494.38 crore and Rs 1,002.57 crore respectively. Out of the total credit potential assessed under agriculture sector, about 33 per cent is under term loans.

It may be noted that erratic and deficient rains has led to severe drought in the state in 2015, affecting 1.53 million hectare of crop area in 235 blocks of 28 districts and 412 wards under 55 urban local bodies.

The credit potential for the [MSME](#) sector has been assessed at Rs 13,337.62 crore, accounting for 22.6 per cent of the total priority sector. The credit target for the commercial banks is estimated at Rs 726.54 crore to export credit, Rs 1,088.58 crore for education sector and Rs 3,932.40 crore for the housing sector.

Similarly, the credit projection of renewable energy, social infrastructure involving bank credit and others are Rs 83.09 crore, Rs 206.04 crore and Rs 7,300.21 crore respectively.

It be noted that Reserve Bank of India (RBI), during the current year, has revised the [Priority Sector](#) Lending (PSL) norms for the commercial banks. It now constitutes eight sectors - agriculture, MSME, export credit, education, housing, renewable energy, social infrastructure and others. Nabard, while preparing the district level PLPs, has taken into account the various modifications in PSL.

"An area which has special mention in the State Focus Paper is the infrastructural requirement for comprehensive development of agriculture in the State. [Nabard](#) has state government under RIDF (Rural infrastructure development fund) for providing critical rural infrastructure in areas of irrigation, connectivity, agriculture and social sector. Sanctions during the current year under RIDF to the state have reached an all time high of nearly Rs 3000 crore, with sanction of some big ticket projects and cumulative sanctions have exceeded Rs.14,900 crore", said S K Kale, Chief General Manager, Nabard at the State Credit Seminar.

The bank has also sanctioned loan assistance of Rs 1,077 crore to the state for construction of 3,725 rural godowns in PACS for the benefit of farmer members.

The short term credit support from Nabard to cooperatives in the state, which was initially sanctioned for Rs 3,200 crore for the year 2015-16, has also been increased to Rs 3900 crore in view of the drought conditions during [Kharif](#) 2015.

Speaking on the occasion, chief secretary Aditya Prasad Padhi urged upon the banks to achieve substantial increase in credit flow to agricultural sector during 2016-17.

He urged the banks to ensure 100 per cent implementation of the subsidy and incentive based schemes announced by government in agriculture and allied sectors.

"By December end the achievement is about Rs 30000 crore, 58 per cent of the last year credit plan of Rs 47,756.44 crore for 2015-16. It should exceed 80 per cent by March. The credit flow to the segments covered in state focus paper continues to be pretty low in comparison with developed states", said P K Jena, regional director, RBI.

### **93% of Indian farmers find Met forecasts reliable**

NCAER first conducted the survey in 2010 to analyse the impact and economic benefits of Grameen Krishi Mausam Sewa and Marine Fishery Advisory of IMD



While the common man still takes India Meteorological Department (IMD)'s forecasts with a pinch of salt, 93 per cent of the farmers surveyed by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) found the weather agency's agriculture-specific service reliable. And, 95 per cent think IMD has improved in the past four years.

NCAER first conducted the survey in 2010 to analyse the impact and economic benefits of Grameen Krishi Mausam Sewa and Marine Fishery Advisory of IMD. Thereafter, the survey was done in 2012 and in 2015.

The two services are meant for farmers and fisherman.

According to the latest survey, although only 11.5 million farmers out of the total 120 million farmer families receive the crop and weather advisories through SMS, if expanded, it has huge potential to improve their incomes.

The survey showed the annual economic profit of an average farmer cultivating wheat, paddy, sugarcane, cotton rose from Rs 38,463 crore in 2010 to Rs 42,000 crore in 2015, thanks to IMD's Agromet services.

Similarly, fishermen using the marine weather service reported 3-4 times increase. Besides, marine weather forecasting led to savings of Rs 36,200 crore worth of diesel a year. Around one million people are active fishermen in India.

The Agromet services are currently being disseminated through 130 field units covering 633 districts; IMD plans to scale it up to include 100 more field units.

According to officials, the expansion of field units would enable IMD to provide block-level weather forecast against the current practice of district-level weather forecast for farmers. There are around 7,000 blocks in the country.



### **Kansas State University to help Agar farmers produce soya and millet food products**

BHOPAL: Kansas State University based in United States of America to teach about 5000 farmers in Agar district, about soya and millet mixed baby food production. This will also be followed by research on difference in crops by using different old and new variety of seeds side by side.

"This will help farmers to get the new options opened up for them and gain benefit from soy crops. This baby food about which we are talking can also be used in mid day meals for students in schools here. They are so rich in

carbohydrates and protein," told Dr. Sajid Alavi, Professor, Kansas State University USA while talking to TOI.

Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare will be funding the project which will be started from February 1, this year.

Kansas State University, USA in association with Assocom, India held the Start Up F3 from Farm to Fork in Soy/ Millet Value Addition workshop at Bhopal on Thursday. The two days workshop has been organized with the help of Soy Food Promotion and Welfare Association involving experts in the area of rural mobilization crop science, farm machinery, grain storage, food technology, nutrition and partners in the government.

"Start up Rural India from Farm to Fork shows light of development in Agar District Madhya Pradesh. Central government will be funding it and lower level funding will be done by Kansas University. We are planning to get it registered as "Start up Rural India from Farm to Fork" under Indian government," added Alavi.

The primary goal of the Start Up F3 project is to raise rural incomes through improved crop yields and value addition, enhance nutritional status of children and provide an impetus to primary education. The project envisions a farmer producer organization (FPO) of upto 5,000 soybean farmers who will also grow millets using inter-cropping practices with production level intervention provided in the form of best high yielding seeds and farm mechanization especially use of mechanized planters as a start.

He added "The soybeans and millets harvested by the farmers (up to 20,000 MT total) will be sold to processors or processed by the FPO through third party manufacturers into value-added products such as de-fatted soy flour, soybean oil, and micro nutrient fortified blended foods (FBFs) comprising of millets, soybean, dried milk ingredients, oil, sugar and essential vitamins minerals. These products will be marketed by the FPO in the catchment area in and around Agar district and nearby urban population centres. Revenue generated can be reinvested into the FPO or shared by the members as decided by the voting members. Farmers in the FPO will have equal share as their spouses in the decision making and profit sharing.

Raj Kapoor, managing director of Assocom India stated that "The project has potential for developing into a major effort towards education, nutrition



and gender empowerment. The Start up F3 consortium partners will work together and in close coordination with Indian Council of Agriculture research (ICAR) in this endeavour. The project has the potentiality to develop into a major effort on gender empowerment, nutrition and education."

The university and people working on the project have tied up with the local NGO already working on issues of soy production and all the machinery will be made available through corporate social responsibilities where farmers can go and get their products made. Later the project will move towards other possible food products.

### **Agri varsity develops dryland techs for farmers**

Aurangabad: With weather aberrations impacting the performance, production and productivity of rain fed crops and sometimes even resulting in their failure, Parbhani-based Vasantrya Naik Marathwada Agricultural University (VNMKV) has developed dryland technologies to cope with the vagaries of nature.

The all-India co-ordinated research project on dryland agriculture at the university has successfully demonstrated various proven technologies such as improved varieties of crops and cropping systems, farm pond technology for rainwater harvesting and protective irrigation and farm mechanization among other methods.

"The improved drought-tolerant and short duration varieties recommended by our university of various crops such as soyabean, pigeonpea, green gram and black gram in kharif season as well as gram, safflower and rabi sorghum in rabi season have been demonstrated on the fields and resulted in higher yield even in unfavourable climatic conditions. Various stress management practices such as water spray, KNO<sub>3</sub> spray and kaolin spray were advised to farmers to survive and sustain crops during prolonged dry spells," said B V Asewar, chief scientist at VNMKV.

"For the last one decade and particularly in the past three years, the severity of climate change is being observed in the Marathwada region. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research had launched National Innovations on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) project in 2011. Through this programme, we have been focussing on demonstrating climate resilient

agriculture technologies, besides implementation of successful adaptation strategies on a sustainable basis," VNMKV authorities said.

Senior scientist A K Gore, agricultural engineer M S Pendke, agronomist Megha Suryawanshi, soil scientists G K Gaikwad, Sarika Narale and Manik Samindre of Dryland Agricultural Research Centre and other staff of VNMKV have been associated with efforts to implement NICRA programme and dissemination of dryland technology on the field under the guidance of vice-chancellor B Venkateswarlu.

## DECCAN Chronicle

### Apples, berries may help prevent weight gain: study

124,086 people were part of this study.



**Washington:** Eating fruits and vegetables that contain high levels of flavonoids such as apples, pears, berries and radishes may help prevent weight gain, a new study has found.

Researchers from Harvard University and the University of East Anglia (UEA) examined the association between the dietary intake of seven flavonoid subclasses and weight change in a study of 124,086 men and women based across the US over 24 years.

"We found that an increased consumption of most flavonoids were associated with weight maintenance, and even a modest weight loss. The

results were found to be consistent across men and women, and different ages," said Professor Aedin Cassidy, from UEA's Norwich Medical School.

Dietary flavonoids are natural compounds found in fruits and vegetables. These have been linked to weight loss, but most studies have looked at a particular flavonoid found in green tea, and have mostly been limited to small samples.

The study tracked participants who were part of three prospective cohort studies - the Health Professionals Follow Up Study, Nurses' Health Study, and Nurses' Health Study II.

Participants self-reported their weight, lifestyle habits, and any recently diagnosed diseases via questionnaire every two years, between 1986 and 2011. In addition, they self reported their diet every four years. Findings showed that increased consumption of flavonoid subclasses was associated with less weight gain.

The greatest association was found for anthocyanins, flavonoid polymers, and flavonols - each greater standard deviation of daily intake was associated with 0.07 to 0.10 kg less weight gained over four year intervals. Blueberries and strawberries were the main source of anthocyanins, and flavan-3-ols and their polymers were mainly derived from tea and apples. Orange juice and oranges were the main sources of flavanone and flavones, and tea and onions were the main sources of flavonols.

This is the first study to examine the associations between consumption of seven flavonoid subclasses and weight gain in a large sample size. Losing or preventing even small amounts of weight can reduce risk of diabetes, cancer, hypertension and cardiovascular disease. The results can provide guidance on which fruits and vegetables to choose for preventing weight gain, researchers said.

People may be able to maximise the health benefits of eating fruit and vegetables by choosing those with high levels of flavonoids, such as apples, pears and berries, they said.

The study was published in the journal BMJ.

## Flour millers ask government to scrap 25% import duty on wheat



Flour millers have asked the government to scrap the 25 per cent import duty on wheat from April due to worries over a fall in output in 2016-17.

PUNE: Flour millers have asked the government to scrap the 25 per cent import duty on wheat from April due to worries over a fall in output in 2016-17. The demand has come at a time when global exporters are eyeing India as a possible bulk buyer and flour millers want to plan wheat imports before the world market reacts to the country's grain requirement.

The Union government had increased the import duty on wheat to 25 per cent from 10 per cent last fiscal as it wanted to prevent imports and liquidate its own stocks. The industry expects a shortfall of 10 million tonnes in the next fiscal due to fall in acreage caused by drought conditions and high temperatures, which are not suitable for wheat crop. Millers require high protein wheat for flour used for quick service restaurants and bread manufacturers.

"Apart from the decline expected in wheat production, the estimated requirement of 61.2 million tonnes of wheat under National Food Security Act (NFSA) indicates a larger procurement target for the central pool, leaving considerably smaller market surplus for the industry to source its milling requirement," the Roller Flour Millers' Federation of India said in a letter to the ministries of food and commerce.

## **Wheat acreage down 4.4%, pulses' nearly 3% this season**



Wheat sowing has declined by 4.4 per cent in the winter season so far to 292.52 lakh hectares, while area under pulses is down by 2.74 per cent.

NEW DELHI: Wheat sowing has declined by 4.4 per cent in the winter season so far to 292.52 lakh hectares, while area under pulses is down by 2.74 per cent.

Sowing of wheat and other rabi crops has been affected due to less soil moisture following two consecutive drought years.

"As per preliminary reports received from the states, the total area sown under Rabi crops as on January 28, 2016, stands at 591.51 lakh hectares," an official statement said.

Total area sown under Rabi crops stood at 609.31 lakh hectares in the same period of the previous year.

As per the data, wheat has been sown in 292.52 lakh hectare in this Rabi season against 305.94 lakh hectare in the year-ago period. Area under coverage for rice is down to 22.41 lakh hectares from 24.08 lakh hectares.

Pulses acreage has declined to 139.08 lakh hectare so far from 143.01 lakh hectares.

However, area under coverage for pulses have increased to 60.08 lakh hectares from 56.76 lakh hectares.

In non-foodgrains category, oilseeds acreage dropped to 77.43 lakh hectare so far from 79.51 lakh hectares in the year-ago period.

Production of wheat, a major rabi crop, had declined to 90.86 million tonnes in 2014-15, from 91.50 million tonnes in the previous year due to unseasonal rains.

**Timely weather forecast to farmers led to Rs 42,000 crore profit:  
Minister for Science, Harsh Vardhan**



"Timely" weather forecast services to 11.5 million peasants resulted in economic profit worth Rs 42,000 crore during 2015, Minister for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences Harsh Vardhan said today.

NEW DELHI: "Timely" weather forecast services to 11.5 million peasants resulted in economic profit worth Rs 42,000 crore during 2015, Minister for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences Harsh Vardhan said today.

He also made a strong pitch for expanding the web of facilities to all farmers to attain estimated profit of Rs 3.20 lakh crore.



Referring to a report by National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER), which carried out a third party audit of the forecast services provided last year, he noted 11.5 million farmers were benefited by the facilities during the year and sought to increase the coverage to all, that is, 90 million peasants, in time to come.

The minister claimed fishing community too reported similar benefits last year and noted strengthening marine forecast services was high on the government's agenda.

"According to NCAER, timely forecast services to 11.5 million farmers through SMSes resulted in profit of Rs 42,000 crore (on four principal crops) in GDP in a year.

"The profit is estimated to increase up to Rs 3.20 lakh crore, if we manage to cover each of the farmers under the services. We are taking efforts for that," he told reporters here.

Stating agro-meteorological advisory services (AAS) are being provided from 130 centres across 633 districts in the country currently, Harsh Vardhan said the network will be expanded at sub-district level with the help of NGOs.

"We will provide crop-specific information to farmers. Based on such scientific information, they can decide on whether to delay sowing of a crop or sow some other crop for a shorter period, if they should use pesticides or not, what to do if heavy rainfall is predicted to occur," he said.

The minister though did not specify any deadline by when all the farmers are expected to be brought under the net of the services, saying it is an on-going process.

"When we took charge, only two million farmers were benefited by forecast services. Now, according to the report, 11.5 million farmers are being benefited. So, we will continue to witness rise in number," Vardhan said.

The minister also said similar economic benefit expected when fishermen are provided with timely forecast services in terms of potential fishing zones (PFZ) and adverse conditions.

Union Minister of State for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences Y S Chowdary also attended the briefing.

### **Government to soon buy 'Drone' technology to assess crop damage**



Initially, the government will purchase one drone technology and would order for more after checking the feasibility, the official said.

NEW DELHI: In a bid to settle crop insurance claims as quickly as possible, the government has decided to purchase unmanned aircraft technology 'Drone' for assessing crop damage faster and more accurately.

The move follows a direction from Prime Minister Narendra Modi for using modern farm technologies to implement effectively the new crop insurance scheme, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana from June this year.

"We have already given an in-principle approval to Mahalanobis National Crop Forecast Centre (MNCFC) for purchase of a drone technology. An e-tender will be issued next month," a senior Agriculture Ministry official told PTI.

Initially, the government will purchase one drone technology and would order for more after checking the feasibility, the official said.

The ministry's plan is to purchase one drone for each state and at least 20 drones in the next five years.

The cost of one drone and its maintenance is estimated to be around Rs 70 lakh, which the government has already allocated in the 2015-16 Budget, the official added.

Last year, the government had hired a drone for pilot test in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

At present, there is a huge delay in settlement of crop insurance claims because of manual assessment of crop loss. In the existing crop insurance schemes, some farmers have not got claims for crop loss witnessed two years ago.

The government has addressed these concerns in the new crop insurance scheme which will be rolled out from 2016 kharif (summer) season starting June. Farmers will pay less premium and get early settlement of their claim under the new scheme.