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THE HINDU

Committee to consider increasing MSP for pulses

To contain the spiralling prices of pulses, the Union government on Monday decided to establish a committee to consider increasing the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and the bonus for pulses, a move that could promote pulses farming.

A high-powered committee, chaired by Finance Minister Arun Jaitely, met here to review the availability of pulses and their prices. Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan and Urban Development Minister M. Venkaiah Naidu were present.

It was decided to set up the committee headed by Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian, and it would consider a reasonable increase in the MSP for pulses and bonus for farmers for growing the crops. The committee will submit a report within two weeks.

Mr. Paswan told reporters after the meeting that the government also decided to increase the buffer stock of pulses to 20 lakh tonnes from the current eight lakh tonnes.

“Besides, we have decided to explore the possibility of agreements with all pulses-producing countries. We have already signed an agreement with Mozambique for importing tur. We are in talks with Canada and Myanmar to find a long-term solution to shortage.”

At the meeting, serious concerns were expressed over the prices of chana dal. The committee felt that the States should take strict action to ensure its availability at reasonable prices because there is good production.

“I once again appeal to all the States to lift pulses from us. We have procured pulses,” Mr. Paswan said. The Centre was giving tur at Rs.66 and urad at Rs.82 to the States for retail distribution at not more than Rs.120 a kg.

‘Prices will come down’

Quoting a report of the Agriculture Ministry, Mr. Paswan said the domestic production of pulses was likely to touch 20 million tonnes this year, as against a

little over 17 million tonnes during 2015-16. “Pulse prices will start cooling in 2-3 months as the gap between demand and supply narrows,” he said.

Whitefly attacks cotton crop again

Detected in Punjab’s Abohar region; experts are trying to prevent damage

Whitefly pest has again attacked the cotton crop in Punjab, posing a threat to the Kharif crop even as the opposition Congress lambasted the SAD-BJP combine for its “failure” in preventing the pest attack.

The attack of whitefly on cotton crop, which is now in the flowering stage, is visible in about 15 villages of Khuian Sarwar block of Abohar in Fazilka district.

“Whitefly has attacked cotton crop in several fields of about 15 villages of Khuian Sarwar block in Abohar,” an official of Punjab Agriculture department said on Monday.

With farm experts trying their best to prevent any damage to crop, growers have been advised to spray recommended chemicals to save the crop from whitefly which attacks cotton leaves.

“As the economic threshold limit in the current whitefly attack is more the six per leaf, farmers have been asked to spray recommended chemicals to kill the pest,” the official said, adding the stage of using ‘neem-based bio-pesticides’ is over and it was necessary to use chemical based insecticides.

Insecticides

Officials said farmers are being given demonstrations and advised what kind of insecticides to be used on cotton field to save crop.

Notably, whitefly attack had caused widespread damage to Bt cotton varieties in Punjab and Haryana last year.

In Punjab, 1.36 lakh hectares out of total 4.50 lakh hectares of cotton acreage was ravaged by whitefly attack last season and the output had dropped by 40 per cent due to large scale pest attack.

This time the whitefly attack was spotted on cotton crop which was planted near orchards in Abohar which is known for Kinnow fruit.

“This time, the attack was visible on crops sown near orchards as fruit crop provided conducive conditions to allow the pest to spread its attack,” official said.

Notably, because of fear of whitefly attack, cotton area in Punjab saw one of the biggest decline in current season as crop area under this Kharif crop shrunk to 2.56 lakh hectares as against 4.50 lakh hectares last season.

Lashing out at SAD—BJP government, Punjab Congress spokesperson and MLA from Abohar Sunil Jakhar said, “The whitefly attack, the second year in a row, has exposed the tall claims of Parkash Singh Badal led government on taking measures to protect cotton crop from whitefly which had caused severe damage to crop last year.”

“I have seen in my area that whitefly has damaged cotton in several villages in Abohar and now the farmers’ input cost will go up,” Mr Jakhar said.

On Sunday, Punjab Additional Chief Secretary N. S. Kalsi visited several villages in Abohar and inspected crop affected by whitefly.

Training programmes

In the current Kharif season, massive training programmes were conducted in cotton growing areas of Punjab, persuading growers to timely sow recommended varieties of crop, along with other steps to prevent massive crop damage.

Besides, the State had even hired trained 500 youths who possessed farm knowledge for educating growers through training camps to protect their crop from pests including whitefly. - PTI

Opposition Congress lambasted the SAD-BJP combine for its “failure” in preventing the pest attack

Now, beekeeping being popularised to increase yield



BEES TO THE TRICK:At the State Seed Farm at Tirukadaiyur in Nagapattinam district.— Photo: M. Srinath

The Agriculture Department has urged farmers raising coconut and mango crop to take to rearing of bees so as to increase pollination and thus productivity.

“Honey bees play a major role in pollination which directly increases yield in any crop. Hence, we have been promoting rearing of bees in coconut or mango groves,” said J. Sekar, Joint Director of Agriculture.

He cited the success of pollination rate in gingly crop at the Agriculture Department’s State Seed Farm at Tirukadaiyur where ‘TVM 6’ is being cultivated. Bees are attracted towards white-coloured flowers. Further, the ball-shaped gingly flowers facilitate easy and smooth entry for the flies for sucking nectar. The bees, in that process, promote pollination in the crop.

“The usual per hectare yield of this gingly with a duration of 85 to 90 days is 700 kg but it may raise up to 875 kg, partly because of increased pollination,” he said.

The huge presence of bees in and around Tirukadaiyur in general and the State Seed Farm in particular has contributed to the increased pollination rate.

As pollination process was more important for mangoes and coconuts for registering higher yield, the farmers will be exposed to the advantages of this phenomenon at the State Seed Farm.

Agricultural extension centres for three places

Work on construction of Integrated Agriculture Extension Centres has been taken up at three centres in the district, each at an estimate of about Rs.1.50 crore contributed by the Rural Infrastructure Development Programme of the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development and National Agriculture Development Programme.

The centres will have an integrated approach for distribution of seeds, agricultural implements and fertilizer to farmers.

These agricultural implements were distributed by various departments at their offices or godowns located at different places in the taluk but the integrated complex would facilitate smooth and expeditious stocking and distribution.

Hence, officials of Agriculture, Horticulture, Agricultural Marketing and Agri Business would be available at this campus.

Need for indigenous cattle conservation stressed



Ongole bull

Former principal scientist of the National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources D.K. Sadana, on Monday, stressed on the significance of such a policy at national-level focussed on conservation of indigenous cattle.

The National Livestock Policy, 2103, and other State-level policies only pay attention to the promotion of HF (Holstein Friesian) and Jersey breeds, as their focus is on milk production alone. However, there is a need to look at cattle not only as dairy source, but also as indigenous animals habituated to their local environments, and contributing to soil and human health, Dr. Sadana said in his keynote address at the workshop on 'Need for Indigenous Cattle Breeding Policy'.

D. Venkateswarlu, Director, Department of Animal Husbandry, Telangana, noted that the number of pure indigenous cattle was very low, as the Ongole breed had been inseminated by HF/Jersey breeds.

Appreciating Brazil for its conservation of indigenous cattle, Dr. Sadana assured that the Telangana government would initiate a tie-up with the Brazilian organisations for cattle conservation, and make attempts to register the native breed of 'Thoorpu' bull from Mahabubnagar district.

Jose Otavio Lemos, an expert from Brazil, made a presentation on the conservation of bulls, and said it is high time that India had taken up cattle conservation seriously, by maintaining documentation of the parentage and characteristics across the generations. Without this, even the best of the conservation efforts would remain futile, he said.

He showed the photographs of individual Ongole bulls bred in Brazil, which had earned sale value running into crores of rupees.

The workshop consisted of policy dialogue sessions on three themes, namely, cattle diversity for sustainable agriculture, economic models and avenues, and technology and research.

It was jointly organised by the NGO 'Ankush', and the Department of Animal Husbandry, Andhra Pradesh.

Later in the day, hosting a luncheon for the delegates of different countries who arrived for participation in the 'Bull Show', Speaker of Andhra Pradesh

Legislative Assembly, Kodela Sivaprasada Rao, expressed desire for sustained cooperation between India and Brazil for improved results in dairy and animal husbandry.

He sought the semen of 'Zebu' bull from Brazil for breeding of high quality cattle here.

Horticulture scheme to be launched today

The integrated horticulture development scheme of the Agriculture Department will be launched at a function to be held here on Tuesday.

Agriculture Minister V.S. Sunil Kumar is scheduled to inaugurate the scheme at St. Mary's High School at Pattom. — Special Correspondent

Periyar dam level rises by one foot

Water level in Periyar dam on Monday reached 117.1 feet, an increase of one foot in the last 24 hours, bringing cheers to farmers in Cumbum valley and making panchayat officials heave a sigh of relief over drinking water management.

However, PWD officials restricted the discharge to 100 cusecs to meet the drinking water needs and improve storage in the dam. Inflow to the dam was 1,977 cusecs, and storage 2,105 mcft.

The officials have recommended release of water for irrigation of the first crop in the double-crop area in Cumbum valley. They have been expediting the work on laying concrete floor in one of the 17 supply channels in Chinnamanur and Uthamapalyam to avoid wastage. Intermittent showers disrupted the work. Water could be released only after completion of the work.

Panel under CEA to suggest ways to curb pulse prices

While increasing the size of the buffer stock of pulses to 20 lakh tonnes from the existing 8 lakh tonnes, the government decided to explore avenues for imports from more pulse-growing nations on a government-to-government basis.



Consumer Price Index-based inflation increased at 5.76 per cent in May due to costlier food items.

The government has decided to form a panel under the finance ministry's chief economic adviser Arvind Subramanian to study and suggest ways to contain rising prices of pulses, Minister of Food and Public Distribution Ram Vilas Paswan said on Monday.

“The government has decided to set up a committee under the chief economic adviser to frame a long-term policy on pulses, which will look into various options, including MSP (minimum support price) and bonus. The committee will look into the issue of subsidising farmers who wish to grow pulses,” Paswan said.

The committee is expected to submit its report in the next couple of weeks.

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While increasing the size of the buffer stock of pulses to 20 lakh tonnes from the existing 8 lakh tonnes, the government decided to explore avenues for imports from more pulse-growing nations on a government-to-government basis.

These decisions were taken at a meeting of a ministerial team headed by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, and attended by Paswan and Urban Development Minister M Venkaiah Naidu.

Already, the government has procured over 1.19 lakh tonnes of pulses like tur in the 2016-17 crop year (July-June), which is being given to state governments for retail distribution at a subsidised rate of Rs 120 per kg. Paswan urged states to lift pulses from the central government.

These decisions come after consumer prices of pulses rose a massive 31.57 per cent in May, with per kg price touching Rs 200, while wholesale prices of pulses increased 35.56 per cent in the same month. Consumer Price Index-based inflation increased at 5.76 per cent in May due to costlier food items.

The committee led by Subramanian will re-examine the MSP and bonus being given to pulse growers at present and frame an appropriate policy to promote cultivation of lentils in India, he said.

“In my sense, production bonus is more fruitful as compared to MSP,” Paswan said. The government has already announced a sharp increase in MSP of kharif pulses for the 2016-17 crop year.

To address domestic shortage through imports, the minister added that the government has decided to talk to other pulse-growing countries like Canada for long-term import of lentils on a government-to-government basis.

India has already signed an agreement with African nation Mozambique for import of tur dal up to 2 lakh tonnes in next five years. It is negotiating with Myanmar.

The minister also expressed confidence that the pulse prices will start cooling in the next 2-3 months as domestic production is estimated to be higher at 20 million tonnes this year, as against a little over 17 mt in 2015-16.

“According to the Agriculture Ministry’s report, pulse output is expected to go up to 20 million tonnes this year from 17 million tonnes. The gap in supply-demand will come down. Price would ease in the next 2-3 months,” Paswan hoped.

The Centre has taken several steps, including imposition of stock limits on traders to check hoarding to contain pulses’ prices. Paswan said that except for chana, there has not been a rise in prices of other pulses over the last two months.

“The committee expressed concern over prices of chana dal and in spite of good production, prices are on the higher side. It was of the opinion that the state government should take strict action to ensure availability at reasonable prices.”

Indian economy likely to grow 7.9% this fiscal, but monsoon key: Crisil

As per the rating agency Crisil's latest report, GDP is expected to grow by 7.9 per cent in 2016-17 as against 7.6 per cent in the previous fiscal if "monsoon is normal and global situation does not deteriorate from here".



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Indian economy is likely to grow at 7.9 per cent in the current fiscal provided the country receives normal monsoon as it will boost agriculture growth and lift rural demand, says a report.

As per the rating agency Crisil's latest report, GDP is expected to grow by 7.9 per cent in 2016-17 as against 7.6 per cent in the previous fiscal if "monsoon is normal and global situation does not deteriorate from here".

"If the rains are normal, it would give agriculture a one-time growth kick, particularly given the low-base effect of the two previous years... that should lift sagging rural demand and by extension, overall GDP growth," it said.

Accordingly, the rating agency expects the Reserve Bank of India to continue its accommodative monetary stance and cut the repo rate by another 25 bps this fiscal.

Noting that the economy's modest recovery has been shaped by "good luck" on crude oil and commodities, Crisil said the medium-term outlook will be shaped by progress on initiatives such as cleaning up of bank balancesheets and successful implementation of the goods and services tax (GST).

Besides, financial inclusion through initiatives like Jan Dhan and digitisation, among others, will also potentially have a transformative impact on the economy's growth, it added.

On the employment front, Crisil Chief Economist Dharmakirti Joshi noted that the government needs to bring in about 6,000 jobs a month, but it is falling short of the target.

As per the report, addressing core physical infrastructure issues such as seamless availability of electricity, creation of road network and social aspects like health and education are crucial to sustaining growth.

“The current fiscal, therefore, will be closely watched for more reforms and relentless implementation of executive and policy actions already announced,” the report said.

According to Crisil, India's ranking on ease of doing business and competitiveness is expected to rise in 2016, given the government's reforms initiatives.

However, it observed that steps to raise efficiency in goods and labour markets, health, education as well as technological readiness are found to be lacking.

Exports of seven agricultural commodities fall in May on weak global rates

In all, seven out of 13 main agriculture products that are closely monitored by the Commerce Ministry, were in the negative zone.



Industry experts expressed hope that the global commodity prices would gradually firm up, which would help in pushing up agriculture exports.

Exports of several agricultural products, including tea, coffee, rice and cashew declined in May due to fall in global commodity prices.

Cereals, oil meals and dairy & poultry products too recorded negative growth during the month.

In all, seven out of 13 main agriculture products that are closely monitored by the Commerce Ministry, were in the negative zone.

However, industry experts expressed hope that the global commodity prices would gradually firm up, which would help in pushing up agriculture exports.

“Prices of agri-produce would start firming up. It would help in pushing up agri exports,” said Ajay Sahai, DG & CEO of Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO).

During the month, exports of tea, coffee, rice and other cereals declined by 2 per cent, 15.68 per cent, 18 per cent and 53.75 per cent respectively, according to the official data.

Other products which reported negative growth include cashew (- 14 per cent), oil meals (- 69.74 per cent) and meat, dairy & poultry products (- 17 per cent).

Decline in these exports is a key factor for slow growth in India's overall merchandise exports. Agri-products account for over 10 per cent of the country's total exports.

Exports fell for the 18th month in a row in May, though marginally by 0.79 per cent to USD 22.17 billion as several non-oil sectors such as engineering and gems and jewellery saw a rise in outward shipments.

Sectors which grew at a healthy rate in May include tobacco (31.29 per cent), spices (11.36 per cent), oil seeds (7.64 per cent), fruits and vegetables (1.53 per cent) and marine products (11.39 per cent).

hindustantimes

Veggie retail prices up by 60%, may rise further



On Monday, the prices of all vegetables in the retail market were up by 40%-100%, compared to last week. (File)

With traders of the agricultural produce market committee (APMC) in Vashi threatening to continue with their agitation till Wednesday, the prices of vegetables and fruits, which are up by 60%, may rise further.

Traders are protesting against the amendment to the APMC act, which allows farmers to sell their produce through outlets other than the APMCs.

While onion and potato traders were on agitation on Monday, wholesale dealers of vegetables and fruits, too, have threatened to join the agitation.

Ignoring the opposition from traders, the state government promulgated the ordinance on July 5, after the governor's nod, without waiting for the start of the monsoon session from July 18. An ordinance is equivalent to an Act, when the state Assembly is not in session, but has to be approved by the legislature within six weeks of reassembly of the legislature.

On Monday, the prices of all vegetables in the retail market were up by 40%-100%, compared to last week. Green peas which were available for Rs140 a kg till last week, were sold at to Rs240-280 a kg, while the rate of cauliflower rose to Rs160 a kg, from Rs80-Rs120 a kg. The wholesale prices, however, haven't changed much.

“We are not opposing the amendment, but we want similar freedom for free trade. There should be no regulation at all,” said Sanjay Pinglay, vegetable and onion trader at the market.

Consumers want the state to take all stakeholders such as farmers and consumer cooperatives into confidence instead of bowing down to the pressure. “The traders will oppose the decision as it hurts their interests. To ensure smooth implementation, the government should consult farmers and consumers group and come up with innovative ways,” said Shirish Deshpande, chairman, Mumbai Grahak Panchayat (MGP).

To ensure citizens don't get inconvenienced, the government has mobilised some goods from Nashik, which will enter the city by Wednesday.

“We are working on alternative channels to sell farmers’ produce in Mumbai. If the amendment is withdrawn, it will affect consumers and farmers in the long term. Currently, the market is controlled by 200-300 traders.

This amendment will get more traders such as farmer-producer, consumer cooperatives, self-help groups and direct marketing agencies into the business,” said Deshpande.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Maharashtra mandis on strike as fruits, vegetables go out of APMC ambit



Vashi APMC market downed its shutters on Monday protesting the State government’s ordinance

Trading in fruits and vegetables across most of the markets controlled by the Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMC) in Maharashtra was closed on Monday. The traders are protesting a recent ordinance issued by the State Government, which has removed vegetables and fruits from the scope of the APMC.

Until the ordinance was issued, farmers had to sell most of the produce to the traders who were issued licenses by the APMC. The old APMC Act mandated farmers to sell the produce in the APMC run market yards. Over and above selling the produce to the designated traders, the farmer had to pay APMC cess, taxes, and commissions.

Now the farmers can sell their produce openly outside the APMC markets.

Jaydutt Holkar, Chairman of APMC market Lasalgaon, told *BusinessLine* that the traders did not participate in the onion auctions on Monday. Consequently there was no sale of the produce. The market is known for its onions and if the strike continues then onions crop could take a hit as heavy monsoons could damage the crop, impacting the prices, he said.

Price implications

The APMC-controlled Lasalgaon market in Nashik in Northern Maharashtra sets the prices of onions across the country.

It must also be kept in mind that, under the Act, the compulsion on the part of the farmers to sell in the APMC markets led to a big difference between the prices at which the farmers sold the goods to the traders and the final price at which it was bought by the end customer.

Balasaheb Bende, former Director of the APMC market at Vashi, Navi Mumbai, said that the ordinance had unshackled the farmer but the traders operating in the market are still bound by various rules and regulations under the Act. They should also be removed so that there is a level playing field in the market, he said.

The APMC market in Latur city in the Marathwada region was the exception as the market's governing committee had chosen to keep trading open for farmers to sell their produce.

Lalit Shah, Chairman of the committee, said that at the end of the trading hours 10 lakh revenue was achieved. Fruits and vegetables being perishable items, a majority of traders chose to support the farmers by buying their goods.

The market operations lasted over four hours and farmers even managed to get prices 30 per cent higher, he said.

Value-added products to help boost arecanut potential

The rise of the young population in India provides an opportunity for stakeholders in the arecanut sector to explore the potential of value-added arecanut products, according to Vigneshwara Varmudy, agro-economist and professor of economics from Dakshina Kannada.

Speaking on ‘challenges before the arecanut sector’ at a function to celebrate ‘Campco (Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative) formation day’ in Mangaluru on Monday, Varmudy said that the country’s arecanut production, which was around 1 lakh tonnes during the 70s, has gone up to around 8 lakh tonnes per annum now.

In the meantime, there has been a considerable increase in the percentage of youths. They constitute around 65 per cent of the population in the country. Most of these people do not prefer arecanut in its raw form. They prefer consuming it in the form of value-added products.

To counter misconceptions about arecanut and to boost the production of value-added products, it is essential for all the stakeholders to highlight the medicinal values of arecanut, he said. Varmudy felt that domestic rules and international agreements sometimes pose other challenges to the arecanut sector.

To counter this, it is essential for the participants in the sector to provide proper information on the production figures of the commodity and the number of people dependent on it.

A proper documentation of the commodity from production till marketing and consumption will help tackle such issues, he said.

Stating that a lot of research has been done on production of the commodity, he urged the arecanut market participants to focus on research and development activities in marketing also.

The former Managing Director of Campco, AS Bhat, spoke on the origin and development of Campco from 1973 to 2016. Campco was registered on July 11, 1973.

From this year, the cooperative has decided to celebrate July 11 as ‘Campco Formation Day’.

SR Satishchandra, Campco president, and Suresh Bhandary, MD of the cooperative, spoke on the occasion.

Cotton acreage declines on poor sowing in Maharashtra, Telangana



Agricultural labourers busy on a cotton field near Pittampally village in Nalgonda district, Telangana.

Delay in monsoon's arrival blamed but good rains could reduce the deficit

Poor cotton sowing in Maharashtra and Telangana — two of the major cotton producing States in the country — is largely responsible for the sharp drop in cotton acreage this kharif season, but the government and some experts say that with better rains there is still time for some of the deficit to be bridged.

While part of the decline in acreage could be attributed to farmers looking for more lucrative options such as rice, pulses, maize or sugarcane this year, the larger factor for the fall could be the delayed monsoon in the region and its slow progress.

“The rains have not progressed in the manner they normally do, especially in regions in Vidarbha and Marathwada where a lot of acreage normally happens. But there is still a window till about July 15. Depending on how monsoon progresses, acreage may increase,” said VN Saroja from Agriwatch.

In this year’s kharif season (June onwards), cotton sowing has witnessed a major deceleration with total acreage till July 7 at 67.88 lakh hectares compared to 87.83 lakh hectares (lh).

Maharashtra and Telangana alone accounted for a deficit of 15.5 lh of the total deficit of 20 lh.

While there is a fall in cotton sowing to 2.5 lh in Punjab, where the crop was destroyed by whiteflies last year, the deficit is relatively low at 2 lh.

A distinct shift

In Haryana, another State hit by the pests last year, cotton sowing at 4.98 lh is only slightly lower than that in the same period last year.

However, there is a distinct shift from Bt cotton, the genetically modified variety that attracted white flies, to non-Bt cotton.

In fact, in the entire country, acreage under non-Bt cotton has more than doubled to 11.41 lh till July 7, 2016 from 5.45 lh in the same period last year, while acreage under Bt has declined.

In Gujarat, the second largest grower of the fibre after Maharashtra, sowing till July 7 was at 20.91 lh — the same level as the corresponding period last year.

In Telangana, the fall in acreage to 8.33 lakh till the first week of July from 12.83 lakh in the same period last year, could partly be due to the State government encouraging cotton farmers, battered by drought in the last two years, to shift to other crops.

“Some farmers in the region earlier growing cotton are showing preference for soyabean, maize and redgram,” an official in the Agriculture Ministry said.

However, with monsoon playing catch-up in July in most of the country (Telangana received 22 per cent surplus rains), the government is hopeful of better acreage.

Agriculture Secretary SK Pattanayak said at an event last week that good rains in several States was boosting sowing operations and planting of most kharif crops, including cotton, was likely to improve in the coming weeks.

Monsoon will cover entire country by Wednesday: Met

The monsoon has been stuck over a small arc linking Gujarat and West Rajasthan over the past few days as it waits to run through the last outpost to establish coverage over mainland India.

The India Meteorological Department says it will take two more days for it to accomplish this significant milestone.

Rain in Rajasthan

Heavy rain has been reported over west Rajasthan and adjoining Gujarat as the footprint of a wet spell reached out from Madhya Pradesh.

The rains are forecast to sustain over Central and adjoining North-West India for the next few days given the presence of helpful atmospheric systems (low-pressure areas and other circulations).

These include the low-pressure area over North-East Madhya Pradesh and upper air cyclonic circulations over South-West Madhya Pradesh and Odisha-Jharkhand.

Completing the ensemble is the land-based trough extending from North-West Rajasthan to East-Central Bay of Bengal through north Chhattisgarh and Odisha.

Weak phase

As for Tuesday, the Met has forecast heavy to very heavy rain over at a few places over Gujarat; isolated places over east Rajasthan and west Madhya Pradesh; heavy at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, west Rajasthan, east Madhya Pradesh, Saurashtra and Kutch.

An almost similar forecast is valid for the period for the next four days until Friday, following which the rains are forecast to confine themselves increasingly to the northern and north-eastern parts of the country.

Projections by the Met Department itself suggest that this scenario will emerge from July 16 to 25 with rains drying up gradually from Peninsular, Central and West India.

This has all the trappings of an emerging weak phase, which the monsoon invariably runs into after a productive spell.

Spot pepper moves up

Spot pepper prices on Monday moved up on tight availability amid good demand. No sellers were ready to part with their produce at prices below 705 a kg, market sources said. In Chennai, Sri Lankan 520-525 GL pepper being offered at 675- 690 a kg. Both are available in Delhi at 650-675 a kg, they said. On the terminal market 7.5 tonnes from the high ranges were sold at 705 a kg. Spot prices moved up by 100 a quintal to close at 69,100 (ungarbled) and 72,100 (garbled) a quintal. July, August and September contracts on the IPSTA stayed steady at 72,000, 71,000 and 69,000 a quintal. Export prices

were at \$10,900 a tonne c&f for Europe and \$11,150 a tonne c&f for US. *G K Nair*

Prices dip at Coonoor tea sale

Nearly 82 per cent of 15.96 lakh kg offered in Sale No: 27 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction was sold in the third pan-India e-auction. The average prices dropped to 96.80 a kg from last week's 97.68. The Broken Pekoe of Homedale Estate, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the Leaf auction as also the entire CTC market when Vora Sons bought it for 185 a kg. In the Dust Tea auction, Darmona Estate's Super Fine Dust, auctioned by Paramount Tea Marketing, topped at 182, closely followed by Darmona Estate's Super Red Dust at 181. In the orthodox market, Kodanad topped at 251 a kg followed by Chamraj 235, Kairbetta 210 and Havukal 205. *PS SUNDAR*

Turmeric pales on slack demand

Only 2,500 bags of turmeric arrived for sale at Erode markets on Monday due to poor upcountry demand. "Further, the growers bring only medium and low quality turmeric. The traders who have orders from North India are buying only Salem Hybrid and local hybrid turmeric. Only low hybrid turmeric is arriving for sale and all the 300 bags were sold," said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association. The price of the quality turmeric finger and root varieties were improved by 50-100 a quintal. Of the total arrival, 70 per cent stocks were sold. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the finger variety went for 7,543-9,001 a quintal; the root variety 7,306-8,039. Of the arrival of 726 bags, 367 were sold. *Our Correspondent*

Mixed trend in edible oils

Imported palmolein and soya oil increased by 1 and 4 per 10 kg each, while indigenous edible oils ruled unchanged on back of limited demand. Liberty was quoting palmolein at 538, super palmolein at 570, soyabean refined oil 630. Ruchi's rates: soyabean refined 621. At Rajkot, groundnut oil *telia* tin was up at 2,130 (2,110) and loose (10 kg) at 1,375 (1,350). BCE spot rates (/10 kg): groundnut oil 1,380 (1,380), soya ref. 621 (617), sunflower exp. ref. 655 (655),

sunflower ref. 725 (725), rapeseed ref. 900 (900), rapeseed exp. ref. 870 (870), cottonseed ref. 705 (708) and palmolein 535 (534). *Our Correspondent*

Business Standard

Centre forms panel on pulses crisis, expands buffer stock

Importers accuse domestic traders of pushing up prices



To provide a long-term solution to India's pulses crisis, the Centre on Monday constituted a high-powered panel under Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian to revisit the minimum support price (MSP) and bonus mechanism, while at the same expanded the buffer stock by 1.2 million tonnes on hopes of a good harvest this year.

The committee would submit its report in the next two weeks.

The decision to constitute the panel and increase the buffer stock was taken at a meeting of senior government ministers chaired by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan and Urban Development Minister Venkaiah Naidu also participated in the meeting.

Briefing media after the meeting, Paswan said: “The government has decided to set up a committee under the chief economic advisor to frame a long-term policy on pulses, which will look into various options, including MSP and bonus... and frame an appropriate policy to promote cultivation of lentils in India.”

He expressed the hope that pulses prices would come down in the next two to three weeks.

The Centre had earlier planned to build a buffer stock of 0.15 million tonnes, which was later expanded to 0.8 million tonnes. But, with pulses production in 2016-17 crop year expected to rise 18 per cent to 20 million tonnes, the size of the buffer has been raised.

The buffer would be maintained through domestic procurement and imports, with more emphasis on imports so as not to create a shortage in the local markets.

The meeting also decided to explore more avenues for import on a government-to-government basis and relaxed the stock-holding norms for importers for 45 days from the arrival of ships, after which the rules will kick in. After Mozambique, the Centre is also looking at entering into long-term deals for import of pulses from Canada and Myanmar.

Last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi signed a definitive agreement with Mozambique for import of 200,000 tonnes of arhar and tur on a government-to-government basis over a period of three years. The pulses would be imported at MSP-plus freight.

“In my sense, production bonus is more fruitful compared to MSP,” said Paswan.

TRACKING PULSE (MUMBAI MARKET)

Prices (₹ per kg)	Raw material price (ex-W/H)	Avg ex-mill cost	Avg retail cost	Mill to retail	% mill to retail spread
Toor Dal	90.0	125.0	184.6	59.6	47.70
Masoor Dal	60.0	70.0	123.7	53.7	76.73
Urad Dal	105.0	155.0	222.4	67.4	43.50
Chana Dal	78.0	80.0	119.7	39.7	49.61
Moong Dal	57.0	78.0	147.8	69.8	89.51

Ex-W/H: Ex-warehouse Source: Traders and importers' association

The government has already announced a sharp increase in MSP of kharif pulses for the 2016-17 crop year.

It is not clear if the government will announce more incentives for growers of pulses based on the panel's report for the ongoing kharif season, or consider doing so for the rabi season.

Already, the government has procured 1.19 million tonnes of pulses such as tur in the 2016-17 crop year (July-June), which is being given to state governments for retail distribution at a subsidised rate of Rs 120 a kg.

Meanwhile, importers have alleged that local traders and producers have been illegally hoarding pulses, while they are being blamed for artificially raising the rates. The importers also alleged the gap between ex-mill pulses prices and retail rates has widened in the past few months.

They alleged that a domestic trader has hoarded 30,000 tonnes of chana at the port and has delayed taking its delivery to push up prices.

“The chana, which was quoted at Rs 45,000 a tonne in December when the vessel arrived, is now quoting at Rs 80,000 as the traders simply did not take delivery in anticipation of a spike in rates,” the importers alleged.

Exports of 7 farm commodities fall in May on weak global rates

Cereals, oil meals and dairy & poultry products too recorded negative growth during the month



Exports of several agriculture products, including tea, coffee, rice and cashew declined in May due to fall in global commodity prices.

Cereals, oil meals and dairy & poultry products too recorded negative growth during the month.

In all, seven out of 13 main agriculture products that are closely monitored by the Commerce Ministry, were in the negative zone.

However, industry experts expressed hope that the global commodity prices would gradually firm up, which would help in pushing up agriculture exports.

"Prices of agri-produce would start firming up. It would help in pushing up agri exports," said Ajay Sahai, DG & CEO of Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO).

During the month, exports of tea, coffee, rice and other cereals declined by 2 per cent, 15.68 per cent, 18 per cent and 53.75 per cent respectively, according to the official data.

Other products which reported negative growth include cashew (- 14 per cent), oil meals (- 69.74 per cent) and meat, dairy & poultry products (- 17 per cent).

Decline in these exports is a key factor for slow growth in India's overall merchandise exports. Agri-products account for over 10 per cent of the country's total exports.

Exports fell for the 18th month in a row in May, though marginally by 0.79 per cent to \$22.17 billion as several non-oil sectors such as engineering and gems and jewellery saw a rise in outward shipments.

Sectors which grew at a healthy rate in May include tobacco (31.29 per cent), spices (11.36 per cent), oil seeds (7.64 per cent), fruits and vegetables (1.53 per cent) and marine products (11.39 per cent).

Agriculture's contribution to Odisha's GSDP declining

Odisha has a cultivated area of 61.80 lakh hectares



Though the agriculture sector provides employment and sustenance to more than 60% of Odisha's total workforce, its share in the gross state domestic product (GSDP) continues to decline, say official reports.

Besides, large tracts of agricultural land have remained uncultivated for the past several years despite the claim of the Odisha government that it is committed to the growth of the sector, which is the mainstay of the state's economy.

While the contribution of agriculture sector to the GSDP was 56.10% during 1950-51, it has decreased to 15.4% in 2014-15. It was 16.3% in 2013-14, said a report submitted by the state government to the NITI Aayog.

The report said while per capita availability of land, water and other resources in the state continue to decline, the occurrence of various biotic (insect and diseases) and abiotic stresses (flood, drought, cyclone, etc) are on the rise.

Odisha has a cultivated area of 61.80 lakh hectares.

The decline in the GDSP was despite launching of a number of social security schemes, the introduction of farm mechanisation and provision for a separate agriculture budget by the state government since 2013-14.

"About 2/3rd of the gross cropped area of the state is rain-fed and depends on monsoon. Frequent occurrences of natural calamities like flood, drought, cyclone, etc. with erratic climatic conditions are likely to have an adverse impact on the crop production system. Besides, 70% of the soils are acidic in nature resulting in less crop productivity, especially in legumes," said the report.

It said nearly 4 lakh hectares of cultivable land is exposed to saline inundation, 3.54 lakh to floods and 0.75 lakh hectares in the delta areas to water-logging.

Per capita availability of cultivated land is 0.15 hectare, and the average size of operational holdings is 1.04 hectare which is too less for profitable agriculture. Out of the 46.67 lakh operational holdings, the marginal and small holdings account for 91.8%, medium holdings for 8% and large holdings only for 0.2% in the state (2010-11 statistics).

"Prevalence of poor economic condition among farmers stands as a stumbling block in the way of modern crop husbandry. That too, exodus of the work force from agriculture to non-agriculture activities and the problem of absentee landlordism along with sub-optimal use of land for cultivation purposes hinders the process of agriculture development," said the report.

Of the total cultivable land of the state, irrigation potential has been developed for 29.62 lakh hectare in Kharif and 14.77 lakh hectare in Rabi season.

However, the state government said it was taking measures in this regard.

"We are taking a number of steps to increase production in the agriculture sector. While irrigation facilities are being addressed, we are providing cheap loans and subsidies for farm mechanisation," Agriculture Minister Pradeep Maharathy told *IANS*.

He said the state government has decided to bring a new land leasing bill this monsoon session to safeguard the interest of sharecroppers.

The government is also taking steps to increase production in allied sectors even though paddy cultivation continues to be the main focus.

Notably, paddy remains the highest cultivated crop while cultivation of economy crops like oilseed, pulses, sugarcane, vegetable and fiber crops is not encouraging.

The present gross cropped area under horticulture is 13.61 lakh hectares, which is about 20% of the net sown area.

Whitefly pest attacks cotton crop in Punjab

Congress lambasts the SAD-BJP alliance for its failure in preventing the pest attack



Whitefly pest has again attacked cotton crop, now in the flowering stage, in Punjab, posing a threat to the kharif crop even as the opposition Congress lambasted the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alliance for its “failure” in preventing the pest attack.

“Whitefly has attacked cotton crop in several fields of about 15 villages of Khuian Sarwar block in Abohar,” an official of Punjab Agriculture department said on Monday.

With experts trying their best to prevent any damage to crop, growers have been advised to spray recommended chemicals to save the crop from whitefly which attacks cotton leaves.

“As the economic threshold limit in the current whitefly attack is more the six per leaf, farmers have been asked to spray recommended chemicals to kill the pest,” the official said, adding the stage of using 'neem-based bio-pesticides' is over and it was necessary to use chemical based insecticides.

Officials said, farmers are being given demonstrations and advised what kind of insecticides to be used on cotton field to save crop.

Notably, whitefly attack had caused widespread damage to Bt cotton varieties in Punjab and Haryana last year.

In Punjab, 1.36 lakh hectares out of total 4.50 lakh hectares of cotton acreage was ravaged by whitefly attack last season and the output had dropped by 40 per cent due to large scale pest attack. This time the whitefly attack was spotted on cotton crop which was planted near orchards in Abohar which is known for Kinnow fruit.

“This time, the attack was visible on crops sown near orchards as fruit crop provided conducive conditions to allow the pest to spread its attack,” official said.

Notably, because of fear of whitefly attack, cotton area in Punjab saw one of the biggest decline in current season as crop area under this Kharif crop shrunk to 2.56 lakh hectares as against 4.50 lakh hectares last season.

Lashing out at the SAD-BJP government, Punjab Congress spokesperson and MLA from Abohar Sunil Jakhar said, "The whitefly attack, the second year in a row, has exposed the tall claims of Parkash Singh Badal led government on taking measures to protect cotton crop from whitefly which had caused severe damage to crop last year.

"I have seen in my area that whitefly has damaged cotton in several villages in Abohar and now the farmers' input cost will go up," Jakahr said.

On Sunday, Punjab Additional Chief Secretary N S Kalsi visited several villages in Abohar and inspected crop affected by whitefly.

In the current Kharif season, massive training programmes were conducted in cotton growing areas of Punjab, persuading growers to timely sow recommended varieties of crop, along with other steps to prevent massive crop damage.

Besides, the state had even hired trained 500 youths who possessed farm knowledge for educating growers through training camps to protect their crop from pests including whitefly.



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CM announces interest-free loan upto 5 lakh for farmers

Chhattisgarh chief minister Raman Singh on Sunday announced to provide short term interest free agriculture loan up to Rs five lakh to the farmers. He said that a drive would also be launched against unscrupulous finance and chit fund companies operating across the state.

Speaking at the 11th edition of his radio talk show, he said that the loan limit of Rs 20,000 per hectare for unirrigated and Rs 25,000 for irrigated land has been removed. He expressed the hope that both the decisions would help improve the financial condition of state's farmers.

Expressing concern over the recent incident of unscrupulous finance and chit fund companies collecting money from gullible people, the chief minister assured the people that the state government was alert and set to tackle such fake banking and chit fund companies.

He said the state has already enacted laws with provisions for strict action against fake finance companies and chit fund operators.

Under this law, no company can do business without informing Collector, he said and appealed people not to invest their money in any company without verifying its authenticity. He also asked to cross-check claims of doubling money and verify identity from Collector's office.

Exhorting youth to live up to the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, chief minister said that the state was giving special emphasis on skill development in Chhattisgarh.

State government has given legal right to youngsters to avail skill development training in trade of their choice. Under this scheme, around three lakh youngsters of Chhattisgarh have been trained in various kinds of employment-oriented activities.

Referring to the start of new academic session, Singh extended best wishes to all students, including those who will be attending school for the first time.

Children should understand that education is the biggest medium of carving out a bright future.

Students should be offered healthy environment in schools, he added.

Emphasising the need to pay attention towards quality of education, he said that this will improve system of school and build strong foundation of children.

He added that it is necessary for children to attend school regularly and parents are as responsible for attendance of their ward as their teacher.

Singh said that he had received a letter from a Class 7 student Apurva Dixit, a resident of village Khairbar village in Sarguja district. CM said that the girl has complained of shoulder pain due to excessive weight of schools bags.

He added that he has directed the education department to take necessary action in this direction and relieve students from the burden of heavy bags.

Emphasizing on the importance of education of girl child, chief minister said that education is the base of women empowerment. He said that there should be no discrimination between sons and daughters because education has empowered our daughters to walk shoulder to shoulder and do well in various competitions.

Singh said the state government is in the process of formulating a new youth policy, which will be first-of-its-kind in the country.

This solar-powered hand pump could be a farmer's best friend

A solar-powered hand pump developed by a teacher has simplified and reduced the costs involved in irrigation of small fields.

M Manikandan, a wiring and electrical teacher at the TVS community college in Madurai, said that this would be the good solution to many small farmers who do not have electric powered motors on their land. "It costs about Rs15,000, but I am ready to help any farmer who needs it because I want my invention to benefit farmers and the public," he said. If fitted to street taps, in water scarce areas, the solar power hand pump would save time and energy for many women.

V Murali, from Paravai who works in a private firm said that he was always passionate about having his own orchard, but his financial situation enabled him to purchase only five cents of land. He had started planting a variety of saplings on his land, and each morning watered them manually with the help of his father by catching water in buckets. But it was time consuming and laborious as the plants started growing. "I went to banks seeking loans for setting up a pump system, but was refused the same because my plot was too small and it did not have a building on it," he said.

In desperation he decided to dig a borewell and fit an electric motor and work out the finances later. It was then that he came across Manikandan who decided

to invent a solar power hand pump for him, as his plot received copious sunlight during the day.

Solar panels were fitted on two pillars along with two 12-volt batteries and a small 1 Ah motor connected to them. The handle or force rod of the hand pump is connected to the motor. The device can pump out 1,200 litres of water per hour, and 12,000 litres per day. Murali is relieved because he has now dug out channels in his plot so that when the water reaches all his plants.

His well is just 100 feet deep, for deeper wells the handle of the hand pump will have to be elongated, according to Manikandan.

He is now in the process of inventing a submersible pump which can be powered by solar power. This would be a breakthrough technology and will go a long way in saving power, he added.

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"Whitefly has attacked cotton crop in several fields of about 15 villages of Khuian Sarwar block in Abohar," an official of Punjab Agriculture department said today.

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THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Nadia district farmers see horticulture improvement under NREGA



Farmers in West Bengal's Nadia district, which shares a border with Bangladesh, are benefiting from improvement in horticulture infrastructure under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme.

Farmers in West Bengal's Nadia district, which shares a border with Bangladesh, are benefiting from improvement in horticulture infrastructure under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme.

A senior official from the state agriculture department said, "Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Nadia, stress is being given on quality production of gerbera flowers and capsicum in shed-net houses and poly-houses through horticulture. From the last financial year, Mahatma Gandhi NREGA scheme has helped construction of poly-houses in seven organic villages."

According to the official, these structures are used for off-season cultivation, nursery raising and hardening of crops. They help in improving quality of products, increasing productivity and optimising use of resources.

The official said demand for gerbera flower is huge in the world market.

In India, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, West Bengal have emerged as major floriculture centres. While West Bengal, Karnataka and Maharashtra are the leading cut-flower production states, accounting for 33.1%, 12.3% and 10.3% of the country's produce, respectively, Tamil Nadu (18 %), Andhra Pradesh (12.98%) and Karnataka (12%) are major loose flower production states.

Crop Planting Up 88 per cent in a week



Rains have picked up after a lull in the second half of June.

NEW DELHI: Planting of crops has jumped 88 per cent in the past week in step with the monsoon's surge since the end of June, raising hopes of a much higher production and moderate prices of pulses and rice. Water level in reservoirs also increased, which is good for post-monsoon irrigation and hydropower generation.

Planting of pulses jumped 131 per cent in a week, and is 26 per cent higher than last year even though this year's monsoon came late and was scanty till the middle of last month.

Overall planting is now only 6 per cent lower than last year, official data showed. Planting of coarse cereals, oilseeds and cotton was lower than last year.

Area under pulses was up sharply in Karnataka, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Haryana and several others. North East, as well as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu saw an increase in area under rice cultivation.

Water levels in 91 major reservoir was at 18 per cent of capacity, up from 15 per cent a week ago, the Central Water Commission said. The level was just over half of last year's level and two-thirds of their 10-year average.

Officials said that the deficiency was primarily due to weak June rains, which would be made up in July. "By July-end, the water situation in reservoirs will improve.

There will be no reservoir with shortage of water, considering that monsoon rains are picking up," said GS Jha, chairman of the Central Water Commission (CWC).

Rains have picked up after a lull in the second half of June. According to the India Meteorological Department, until Thursday, India got 1 per cent more rains than normal since June 1.

Rainfall in the past week was 35 per cent above normal. In the North, it was 57 per cent more. There are still six reservoirs with negligible water. Four of these -Jayakwadi (Paithon), Bhima (Ujja ni), Yeldari and Girna -are in Maharashtra. Malaprabha in Karnataka and Nagarjuna Sagar in Telangana-Andhra Pradesh are the other two.

The water commission said the western region that includes Gujarat and Maharashtra has the least amount of water with its reservoirs having water up to just 12 per cent of their total live storage capacity.

According to data from the commission, the river basins of the Ganga, Sabarmati and Narmada hold more water than normal, while in the Godavari River, it is normal.,

Indus, Mahi, Mahanadi and Cauvery have deficient storage while in the Tapi and Krishna basins, it is highly deficient.t

The Krishna River is a major source of water for the people of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Two consecutive years of poor rainfall had depleted water levels in the nation's reservoirs, which provide water for irrigation and drinking after the monsoon season.