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# THE HINDU

## Casuarina rules the fields



Making a choice: Women agricultural labourers clearing the weeds in the casuarina fields at Narthamalai in Pudukottai district. Earlier, sugarcane was cultivated in these lands.— Photo: A.Muralitharan

A section of sugarcane growers in Tiruchi and Pudukottai districts have been switching over to casuarina this season due to various reasons.

Delayed payment by sugar factories, rise in wages for agricultural labourers for cane cutting, and spiralling rise in the cultivation cost of sugarcane have forced a large number of traditional sugarcane growers in these districts to switch over to raising casuarina trees.

According to a progressive farmer of Narthamalai, S. M. Pannerselvam, who had switched over to casuarina from sugarcane on his four acres of field, it was quite difficult to meet the expenses for raising sugarcane. He was cultivating sugarcane for the past two-and-a-half decades but the delay in the disbursement of the State Advised Price by the factories had caused him a serious loss.

On the other hand, the casuarina crop, though labour-intensive in the initial two or three years, would fetch him adequate profit. “Pinning my hopes on higher

profitability with less labour and limited irrigation facility, I have raised casuarina trees in my field,” he said. He said he had bought 22,000 saplings of casuarina from Peerungalur and planted them in his fields.

Agriculture Department officials of Pudukottai concede the fact that there has been a fall in the area of sugarcane cultivation in the district. Also, the area under casuarina crop has been registering an increase. The area under sugarcane cultivation has come down by about 1,000 hectares against the normal of 8,050 hectares in the district. A study has been taken up in the Kundrandarkovil and Pudukottai blocks where the shift was widespread, the sources told *The Hindu* on Friday. Officials of Agriculture Department in Tiruchi district said that the delay in disbursement of procurement price by a few sugar factories in the central region has forced the cane growers to switch to casuarina. The clearing of grass and weeds in the initial period required intensive labour in casuarina in the initial couple of years. Depletion of groundwater table was another factor responsible for the shift in some parts of Tiruchi district, the sources told *The Hindu* on Friday.

### **Research centres to focus on nitrogen efficient cereal varieties**

A team of researchers from India and the United Kingdom have joined hands to develop new nitrogen efficient cereal crop varieties which will reduce greenhouse emissions and make farming profitable and sustainable.

With a promised funding of £10 million through the U.K.-based Newton Bhabha Fund and Biotechnology and Biological Research Council, and the Department of Biotechnology, four new virtual joint centres will be set up to optimise the use of nitrogen in cereal crops for higher yields and less environmental pollution.

### **Investment**

The centres comprising multiple research organisations will be established in India and the U.K. and each centre will receive a co-investment of £ 2.5 million for taking up research and development.

According to a release issued by the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi Arid Tropics on Friday, the partnership is aimed at exploring natural

variations of cereals and basic research in model plants to deliver new varieties of cereals with enhanced nitrogen efficiency.

### **Functioning**

The centres included ICRISAT, the National Institute of Plant Genome Research in India and Cambridge-India Network for Translational Research in Nitrogen (CINTRIN), in U.K. and agri-IT specialist Kisanhub.

These centres would closely work with the Department of Plant Sciences and Sainsbury Laboratory, University of Cambridge and Punjab Agriculture University

The initiative will build established research links between National Institute of Agricultural Botany, University of Cambridge and research institutes in India. Exchanges in personnel between India and the UK via CINTRIN will enhance the skills of the next generation of plant technologists and provide a standard for building capacity in fundamental plant sciences and translation into germplasm and agronomic outputs in both in India and the U.K., the release added.

### **Action plan to promote organic farming in Uttara Kannada**

A Rs.1.2-crore action plan would be submitted to the State government on Saturday for the promotion of organic farming in Uttara Kannada district, Vishweshwar Bhat, president, District Organic Agriculturists Associations' Union, said in a release on Friday.

He said that there were 2,863 members from 25 organic cultivators in the district and organic products were grown on 2,500 hectares.

The action plan included cultivation, processing, storage and marketing of cashew, pepper, cocoa, mango, jackfruit and other crops and setting up of a cashew processing unit at Kumta, fruit pulp processing units at Sirsi and Kumta, and a coconut processing unit at Honnavar, the release said.

There is a plan to set up an office for the purpose at the Agricultural Produce Market Committee yard in Sirsi. It has also been decided to release organic products of Uttara Kannada under a single brand name, the release added.

## **Fish, vegetables grow cheek by jowl**

*Aquaponics, a new farming method, is gaining much acceptance*



With more health-conscious families going for their own vegetable production, aquaponics, a new farming method, is becoming popular.

Aquaponics combines aquaculture (raising of edible fish) with hydroponics (raising plants in water). Edible fish are grown in a tank. Their poop enriches the water with nutrients. This water is pumped into gravel beds with edible plants rooted in them. As the water flows through the gravel beds, the plants' roots and the bacteria that grow on the gravel take nutrients from the water. This nourishes the plants and cleans the water. The clean water then flows back into the fish tank. "To find the feasibility of raising various types of vegetables in aquaponics, studies have been conducted at Hi-Tech Research and Training Unit, (HTR-TU), Kerala Agricultural University, Vellanikkara," said P. Suseela, Associate Professor, HTR&TU.

Here crops like salad cucumber, tomato, yard long bean, cabbage, cauliflower, mint, lettuce and palak have been raised successfully. "It doesn't need acres of land. The space required for aquaponics is much less than a traditional garden. After the system is set up the maintenance cost is comparatively less. In this system, we will get healthy, fresh organic food and fresh fish. Water and nutrient delivery to the plants is completely automated." Water need of aquaponics is less than 10% of traditional farming and pest attack is less. Plants grow twice faster, she said.

## **ICRISAT team visits agriculture fields in Adilabad**

A team of scientists from the International Crop Research Institute for Semi Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) on Friday visited agriculture fields in the agency area of Adilabad district where the Vanabandhu Kalyan Yojana (VKY) scheme is being implemented. The scientists studied all aspects related to red gram cultivation under the scheme. The team visited Sakada, Choupanguda, Kolam Jhari and Kolamguda in Kerameri mandal where farmers are cultivating crops under VKY. The scientists interacted with them to learn about raising crops.

## **Training programme**

A free one-day training programme on 'Integrated nutrient management in sunflower, sesame and castor cultivation' will be held at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra on the Veterinary College and Research Institute premises on July 19.

A release from N. Akila, Senior Scientist and Head, said that the training would focus on testing of soil and water, taking samples and integrated nutrient management. Farmers, members of self-help groups, youth and interested persons can participate in the programme. Interested should register themselves for participating in the training before July 18. For registration, visit the KVK in person or register through phone: 04286-266345 and 266650.

## **Green house farmers seek subsidy for polyfilms**

The high velocity winds during the Tamil month of Aadi bring no cheer to the horticulture farmers of Hosur. As the winds howl over, poly films – some older than 5 years – hang precariously over the green house structures lending little value to the flowers and vegetables that they are meant to nurture beneath.

For the small and marginal farmers who are into polyhouse cultivation of flowers and vegetables, lack of subsidy for polyfilms under any government scheme has often resulted in shutting down of green house units.

As many as 700 acres of green house units are run by small and marginal farmers in Hosur, says Bala Siva Prasad, president, Hosur Small Farmers Association.

Over the years, about 150 green house units have shut down for lack of funds to replace the polyfilms. The life of polyfilm for greenhouse is roughly up to 3

years and stretchable up to 5 years. The cost of replacement of polyfilm an acre is Rs. 6 lakh. Subsidy for horticulture is given both under National Horticulture Board and the National Horticulture Mission. The subsidy granted by the Board of up to Rs. 25 lakh is largely availed themselves by big growers. The subsidy under the Mission of up to Rs.18 lakhs, is for small growers.



This subsidy is not for cold storage/pre-cooling unit or polyfilm for greenhouses. “I have made six applications under various schemes, including the NHB, and NHM. Each application process could cost about Rs. 22,000. But, no farmer has received subsidy for pre-cooling units,” says Siva Prasad.

The trouble is with the ‘nomenclature,’ says an official source. While there is subsidy for setting up of greenhouse structure, there is no provision for setting up of new polyfilms as it comes under the category of ‘repair.’ There is no ‘repair’ subsidy under NHM, even when the farmers are in dire need of subsidy to replace the sheets, says the source.

However, the government has just sanctioned nine pre-cooling units for Krishnagiri district, says the source.

## Popularise digital technology among farmers: Union Minister Radha Mohan



Minister Radha Mohan Singh.

Farm scientists should be digital savvy and should also popularise it among the farming community as Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) plays a great role in knowledge dissemination and in economic gains, said Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh here on Friday.

Addressing scientists and trainees of Indian Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR) undergoing 104 foundation course for Agriculture Research Service at the ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), he pointed out that under the 'National Agriculture Market', common eMarket platforms would be set up in 585 regulated markets across the country enabling the farmers to sell their produce through e-marketing.

Already web-based 'Farmers Portal' and mobile based 'mKisan' SMS portal along with two mobile Apps ('Kisan Suvidha' & 'Pusa Krishi') have been launched to farmers equipped with mobile and internet connectivity. Information is also being disseminated through the 'Kissan Call Center' and 'DD Kisan Channel'.

Mr. Singh called for standardising regulatory measures such as IPR, farmers' rights, bio-safety and Phyto-sanitary issues to promote rational sharing of techniques, technologies, products and knowledge to improve linkages between institutions and with the private sector.

Pointing out that agriculture and allied sectors contribute 18 per cent to the Gross Value Added (earlier known as GDP), he said foodgrain production of about 260 million with availability of quality seed and associated services to farmers was possible due to efforts from ICAR institutions and agricultural universities.

Since 1951, food grains production increased by five times, horticultural crops by 9.5 times, fish by 12.5 times, milk by 7.8 times, and eggs by 39 times. Several steps were initiated to promote sustainable development to improve agriculture and increase farmers' welfare such as 2.85 million hectares to be brought under irrigation, Rs. 2,87,000 crore (\$42.1 billion) grant-in-aid to gram panchayats and municipalities and 100 per cent village electrification targeted by 2018.

The minister said steps have been initiated to improve soil fertility on a sustainable basis through the soil health card scheme and support to the organic farming scheme 'Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana', access to irrigation through 'Pradhan Mantri Gram Sinchai Yojana', efficiency through 'Per Drop More Crop', etc. Besides, 'Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana' was launched to cover risk to farmers from climatic vagaries.

### **Darjeeling growers seek halt to Nepal tea imports**

*Almost all the region's estates posted losses*





Nepal factor: The industry wants the government to amend the Indo-Nepal FTA, due for renewal in 2017.— FILE PHOTO: AFP

Imports of ‘deceptively similar-looking’ teas from neighbouring Nepal are threatening Darjeeling’s tea industry and growers have urged the Centre to take steps to stop low-cost imports.

The commodity imported under the Indo-Nepal Free Trade Agreement is sold in the domestic market affecting both demand and the price of Darjeeling tea, which is reeling under the impact of climate change and high labour costs.

“Teas, imported from our neighbouring country under the agreement are sold to unsuspecting Indian customers in the retail markets,” chairman of the Darjeeling Tea Association Sheo Shankar Bagaria said. “These teas were low-priced as tea is cultivated mostly in the unorganised sector and wages are 50 per cent lower.”

### **Losses**

Almost all the 87 tea estates in Darjeeling reported losses during the last fiscal year, Mr. Bagaria said.

The industry wants the government to amend the Indo-Nepal Free Trade Agreement (due for renewal in 2017) to block the import of orthodox teas. Imports from Nepal stood at 10.5 million kg in 2013-14, accounting for half of total imports as per latest official statistics.

Tea Board officials said that several measures are being put in place to combat this. Mr Bagaria made an appeal to the President Pranab Mukherjee at DTA’s annual general meeting in Darjeeling to curb imports. Tea and tourism act as the backbone of the economy in this region and the estates employ 60,000 workers on a permanent basis and 40,000 seasonally. The plantation area houses more than four lakh people, which is about half the hill population, Mr. Bagaria said.

### **Falling output**

Declining crop is another source of concern for the industry. From 14 million kg in 1991, output fell to 8.7 million kg in 2015.

Pressure from overseas buyers has forced the tea-garden owners to shun the use of chemicals and adopt organic farming. About 54 per cent of the crop is now organic. But the absence of chemical plant boosters and the ageing tea-bushes (some almost 100 years old) also result in a lower crop.

However, it is climate change, which is affecting the fortunes of the Darjeeling tea industry the most.

Unpredictable weather has affected production for the last five years, Kalyan Basu DTA Secretary general said. This year, production of the first-flush teas, cropped between February and April and among the priciest, was affected due to drought-like conditions. This was followed by unprecedented rains, which affected the April-June crop. The second flush teas too are much sought after by importers.

### **Climate change**

“Climate has become chaotic,” said A.N. Singh, managing director of Goodricke. The former Chairman of Indian Tea Association admitted that at least two of Goodricke’s five gardens are making massive losses (about Rs.4 crore annually). Mr. Bagaria said that this year crop was 35 per cent lower and another year of losses was being anticipated by the companies. The 87 gardens are controlled by 30-odd owners. Only some are listed companies.

Climate change is also affecting the quality of tea and although the brew still retains its unique muscatel flavour, prices have been low in the export and domestic market. Industry officials said wages (constituting 60 per cent of the total product cost) were high and the industry was also witnessing a labour shortage. The tea workers were migrating to other sectors, they said.

### **Scientists find evidence of new Stone Age farmers**

Scientists say a previously unknown group of Stone Age farmers may have introduced agriculture to South Asia, challenging earlier theories that attributed the spread of farming to a different population.

Previous research held that a single group of hunter-gatherers developed agriculture in the Middle East some 10,000 years ago and then migrated to Europe, Asia and Africa, where they gradually replaced or mixed with the local

population. But scientists who analysed ancient human remains found in the Zagros mountains of present-day Iran say they belonged to a completely separate people who appear to have taken up farming around the same time as their cousins further west in Anatolia, now Turkey.

“There was this idea that there’d been one group of genius inventors who developed agriculture,” said Joachim Burger, one of the authors of the study published online in the journal *Science*. “Now we can see there were genetically diverse groups.”

Scientists from Europe, the United States and Iran who examined the DNA of 9,000 to 10,000-year-old bone fragments discovered in a cave near Eslamabad, 600 kilometres southwest of the Iranian capital of Tehran, found they belonged to a man with black hair, brown eyes and dark skin.

### **Cereal diet**

Intriguingly, the man’s diet included cereals, a sign that he had learned how to cultivate crops, said Fereidoun Biglari of National Museum of Iran, who was also involved in the study.

Along with three other ancient genomes from the Zagros mountains, researchers were able to piece together a picture of a population whose closest modern relatives can be found in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and among members of Iran’s Zoroastrian religious community, Mr. Biglari said. — AP

### **State to switch over to PM Crop Insurance Scheme: Jayalalithaa**

*Says it will be beneficial for farmers despite additional financial burden*



**BETTER TERMS:** Under the new crop insurance scheme, the calculation of loss will be more accurate and farmers will get the right compensation. —FILE PHOTO

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa on Friday announced that a new crop insurance scheme — Pradan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana — will be implemented in the State as it will be more beneficial to farmers.

Till now, the State government was paying about Rs.40 crore per annum as subsidy towards the premium but it will have to spend Rs.500 crore in subsidy while switching over to the Prime Minister Crop Insurance Scheme, Ms. Jayalalithaa said in a statement here.

### **Financial burden**

Even if the number of farmers covered under the insurance remains the same, the State will have additional financial burden and the government willingly takes it up as the scheme will be beneficial to farmers, Ms. Jayalalithaa said adding that the subsidy amount will go up when more farmers are included.

According to the new crop insurance scheme, the loss will be calculated at the village level and not at the *firka* level and therefore the calculations will be much more accurate based on which farmers will get compensation.

### **Wide coverage**

Besides, the new scheme covers a whole gamut of farming activities like prevented sowing / planting risk, standing crop (sowing to harvesting), post-harvest losses and localised calamities, she said unlike before when compensation was based only on yield.

As the indemnity level in the most affected nine districts has been increased from 60 to 70 per cent, the farmers will be able to get better compensation, she pointed out.

The premium to be paid by farmers will be two per cent of the actuarial rate during the kharif season (between April to September) and 1.5 per cent during rabi season (from October to March). The State and Centre will equally share the remaining premium amount.

The Chief Minister also said the coconut tree insurance scheme will continue to be implemented.



### **Wholesale inflation at 1.6 per cent in May on costly food items**

WPI inflation in vegetables shot up by 16.91 per cent last month. While, inflation print for cereals stood at 6.32 per cent.



Costlier vegetables, pulses and sugar pushed WPI-based inflation for the third straight month, raising the pitch for the Reserve Bank to reduce rates in its August policy meet.

The wholesale inflation for June accelerated to 1.62 per cent from 0.79 per cent in May, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The rise in the wholesale price index (WPI) was driven largely by inflation in the food articles segment.

Costlier vegetables, pulses and sugar pushed WPI-based inflation for the third straight month, raising the pitch for the Reserve Bank to reduce rates in its August policy meet.

This comes on the back of retail inflation for the month accelerating marginally to 5.77 per cent. The wholesale price index-based inflation, reflecting the annual rate of price rise, stood at (-)2.13 per cent in June 2015.

WPI inflation in vegetables shot up by 16.91 per cent last month. While, inflation print for cereals stood at 6.32 per cent.

Potato, a daily consumable among Indian households, turned pretty expensive during the month as buyers had to shell out 64.48 per cent more than a year ago. Among others, the rate of price rise in pulses was at 26.61 per cent, sugar 26.09 per cent and that for fruits the inflation during the month rose by 5.97 per cent. Overall food inflation was at 8.18 per cent.

An elevated wholesale inflation in June follows spike in retail inflation, announced on Tuesday, that hit a 22-month high of 5.77 per cent during the month.

But, onion, minerals, fuel and power, and petrol became pocket friendly as prices declined by 28.60 per cent, 20.75 per cent, 3.62 per cent and 8.74 per cent, respectively.

Among manufactured articles, the wholesale inflation print read at 1.17 per cent in June and that for edible oils it firmed up by 3.42 per cent.

“A jump of 37.4 per cent in cereals inflation between May and June is a cause of worry. Although monsoon is expected to be above normal this year but some delay in its reaching in many parts of country delayed the sowing kharif crop,” he said. “RBI would not be in a position to address the demand and supply in India when CPI is at high level, therefore now the economy of India is in need of strong actions from government to address the structural issues of demand and supply,” industry body Assocham said. *With PTI*

## **Skill development can tap agriculture sector potential: Maharashtra CM**

At present, 70,000 students are undertaking skill development training, and includes 22,000 girls



Maharashtra Chief minister Devendra Fadnavis. (Express Archive)

Skill development training can promote economically self-reliant entrepreneurs and beat unemployment through job creation in diverse sectors, including agriculture and industries, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Friday interacting with ITI students.

On a day that marked the World Youth Skill Development Day, the chief minister fielded a wide range of questions from students across 32 centres in Vidarbha, North Maharashtra, Western Maharashtra, Konkan, Marathwada. The students from Butibori, Nashik, Palghar, Achalpur and Pune raised questions related to skill development and ITI.

“Skill development training transformed into human resources will play a significant role in ending unemployment and lead to growth in diverse sectors,” Fadnavis said.

He said, “Skill development in the agriculture sector alone is vast and multi-faceted but has remained unexplored.” Apart from farming, there are linkages of farm produce with the food processing industry and agro-infrastructure, complete with value chains to promote markets, he said.

Strength of skill development lies in its potential to bring out the latent talent in every youth through a little training.

At present, 70,000 students are undertaking skill development training, and includes 22,000 girls.

At the launch of the new facility of virtual and digital classrooms, Fadnavis said, “The upgraded technology for knowledge-sharing would be extended to all ITIs across the state.”

“My government’s effort is to provide the best skill development through training that bridges the rural-urban divide. The status of academics and infrastructure should be equivalent in urban Mumbai and a remote village in Gadchiroli.”

According to Fadnavis, “Skill development is going to be a game changer and provide level playing field to students.”

He also announced an initiative to make these classrooms and course content 3D-enabled and the use of simulator to train the youth.

The chief minister acknowledged the role of The Tata Trusts, Wadhvani Firms and Valuable Group in virtual and digital classroom, both for technology and content support.

In an earnest appeal to students across the state, he said, “I urge the youth to master the apprenticeship of your passion and jobs will come in plenty.”

The Mudra Yojna tie-up with skill development will evolve new job dynamics. Maharashtra has taken the lead in Mudra Yojna where loans upto Rs 10 lakh can be availed of without any guarantee, Fadnavis said.



There is a special drive, “Skill Sakhi”, to economically empower women. The innovative schemes in skill development, along with the eco-system, is a concerted attempt to play the role of facilitator and catalyst, said Fadnavis.

“I appeal to my young friends to realise the potential and power of skill development and jobs will knock at your doors,” Fadnavis said, voicing optimism.

# THE HINDU BusinessLine

## Kharif sowing surpasses last year’s acreage on good rains

<b>CATCHING UP</b>		(In lakh hectares)
<b>Crop</b>	<b>Area sown in</b>	
	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2015-16</b>
<b>Rice</b>	<b>123.93</b>	<b>122.99</b>
<b>Pulses</b>	<b>71.07</b>	<b>51.12</b>
<b>Coarse Cereals</b>	<b>105.98</b>	<b>101.45</b>
<b>Oilseeds</b>	<b>130.12</b>	<b>127.13</b>
<b>Sugarcane</b>	<b>45.78</b>	<b>44.8</b>
<b>Jute &amp; Mesta</b>	<b>7.47</b>	<b>7.67</b>
<b>Cotton</b>	<b>75.41</b>	<b>93.22</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>559.76</b>	<b>548.38</b>



Agriculture Ministry expects record harvest this year

With the monsoon covering the entire country this week, sowing of kharif crops till July 15, at 559.76 lakh hectares (lh), surpassed last year’s acreage of 548.38 lh as farmers planted more rice, pulses, coarse cereals, oilseeds and sugarcane.

Cotton was the only crop that witnessed a drop in acreage, at 75.41 lh in the June to July 15 period this year, compared to 93.22 lh in the same period last year. Farmers sowed less of the crop due to white fly attacks and delayed rain.

The sowing data, based on inputs provided by States, was released by the Agriculture Ministry on Friday.

The acreage under rice till July 15 was 123.93 lh compared to 122.99 lakh hectares in the same period last year, as sowing in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh improved.

Sowing of pulses during this period, at 71.07 lh, was markedly more than the 51.12 lh of area sown in the comparable period last year. Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan were primarily responsible for the increase in sowing of pulses.

The acreage under oilseeds till July 15 was 130.12 lh (127.13 lh). Sugarcane acreage also improved, albeit marginally, to 45.78 lh (44.80 lh).

Jute acreage was almost at the same level at 7.47 lh (7.67 lh).

### **Record harvest ahead**

According to the Agriculture Ministry, the country is moving towards a record kharif harvest with the South-West monsoon expected to be above normal.

The cumulative rainfall so far in the monsoon season stood at 301.3 mm for the June 1 to July 15 period, about 1 per cent higher than the normal of 298.9 mm for the period.

A total of 31 meteorological sub-divisions, accounting for 86 per cent of the geographical area of the country, have received normal-to-excess rains, whereas only five sub-divisions received deficient rains for the period.

Among the sub-divisions that received deficient rains are Gujarat, Saurashtra, Kutch, Bihar, Assam & Meghalaya and NMMT (Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura). The pick-up in rains across the country has also resulted in an improvement of water levels in reservoirs.

## **Millers urge Centre to do away with import duty on wheat**

Concerned over the Union government's recent move to extend the 25 per cent import duty on wheat indefinitely, roller flour millers from South India have urged the Food Ministry to recommend withdrawal of the duty to the Finance Ministry to ease supplies and keep prices of the cereal in check.

Representatives of flour millers associations from states such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka met Food Secretary Vrinda Sarup recently and urged the Government to withdraw the import duty from August 1, as prices of the cereal have risen in recent months on supply concerns.

While the Agriculture Ministry has estimated wheat output at 94 million tonnes (mt), the trade estimates the crop to be lower at around 84 mt on a decline in acreage and unfavourable climatic conditions impacting the output. Also, a decline in procurement by government agencies, which at 23 mt is much lower than the targeted 30 mt, points to a lower crop output.

Millers in South India, which consumes around 5 lakh tonnes of wheat every month, depend on the high protein premium cereal from Australia for blending, to supplement the protein deficiency in the Indian wheat. "Imports will not affect stocks of domestic wheat held by FCI nor the domestic wheat prices. On the contrary they will help the roller flour mills to function smoothly and supply quality wheat products to all consumers at affordable prices," said PK Ahammad, President, Kerala Roller Flour Millers Association, in the memorandum.

As Tamil Nadu has been facing constraints in wheat supplies, millers from the State have urged the Centre to move more quantities from the North to Southern states to ensure adequate supplies.

P Gunasekaran, President, TN Flour Mills Association, also urged the government to ensure that enough stocks were made available in needy districts such as Salem, Coimbatore and Madurai to enable millers to lift the wheat freely.

Millers from the South have also urged the Food Secretary to allow dedicated movement of wheat by FCI from Madhya Pradesh to southern cities, which has been stopped recently.

Fearing dumping of wheat products in South by millers in Madhya Pradesh, who have a price advantage and easy access to supplies, Karnataka millers sought steps to ease supplies.

## **Soyabean acreage set to fall in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan**

Farmers switch to urad, gram and maize

The Soyabean Oil Producers Association (SOPA) has estimated a 3-5 per cent dip in kharif soyabean sowing to 112.173 lakh hectares (lh). The shrinkage is being attributed to a decline in the soyabean sowing in key growing States Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

As per SOPA estimates, the soyabean area in Madhya Pradesh is likely to fall by 8 per cent to 54.246 lh (59.062 lh), while that in Rajasthan may decline by about 15-20 per cent to 8.82 lh (11.047 lh).

### **Crop shift**

SOPA attributed the decline to a crop shift to urad and maize. “In Madhya Pradesh, between 5 and 30 per cent soyabean area has been converted to urad, maize, red gram, sorghum and paddy due to relatively poor productivity of the oilseed during previous three years for various reasons,” said a SOPA release.

“Although no field survey was conducted in other soyabean growing States, information has been gathered through government and trade sources. In Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat and rest of India, it has been reported that area under soybean may increase by about 10 per cent over last year,” SOPA said.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra, the second largest grower after Madhya Pradesh, is likely to see an increase of 6 per cent in soyabean acreage. But in the Vidarbha

region, acreage is likely to fall by 10-20 per cent as farmers chose urad, moong and maize.

### **Aggregator platform for farmers, buyers launched**

In an effort to cut costs of taking produce from farm to table and consolidate data on the availability and prices of farm produce, Pune-based MyVishwa Technologies has launched Farmers Org, an aggregator portal for farmers, wholesalers, retailers and customers.

This portal will facilitate farmers to calculate the requirements of potential buyers, and respond accordingly. Available also as an Android and an iOS app, the initiative helps farmers post their search for potential buyers, and customers post their buying lists to potential sellers.

Mandar Joglekar, founder-Director MyVishwa Technologies, said stakeholders, including wholesalers, retailers and farmers, have to fill up a form detailing their location, available agri produce, the respective quantities and pricing. This is not an e-commerce site as there will be no transaction or delivery process thereafter, Joglekar says, clarifying that the idea is to establish a direct link between the buyer and the seller and prune down the costly stretch from farm to fork.

To simplify things further, the form is available in 10 languages, including Marathi and Hindi. “The tech-savvy next generation of farmers is sure to find it convenient. A week since its launch, about 100 farmers have registered so far,” he said, adding, “We will reach out to all districts in Maharashtra in the first phase through seminars and training sessions.”

### **Govt crackdown restrains pulses**

The Centre’s renewed move against hoarders and stockists to rein in spiralling prices have once again dragged prices of majority of pulse seeds in Indore mandis with prices of chana, tur and moong today declining by 200 a quintal each.

Chana (kanta) declined by 200 to 8,300-50 a quintal. Chana (desi) ruled at 8,250. Tur (Maharashtra) declined to 8,800, while tur (Madhya Pradesh) ruled at 8,000. Moong (bold) went for 5,200-5,600, while moong (medium) declined to 5,000.

Mong dal ruled steady with moong dal (medium) at 6,200-6,400, moong dal (bold) 6,700-7,300, while moong mongar was at 6,800-7,000. Urad (bold) fetched 10,200-500, while urad (medium) declined to 9,000-9,300 (down 300).

Urad dal (medium) was at 12,200-800, urad dal (bold) at 12,900-13,000, while urad mongar was at 14,800-15,300. Masur (bold) fetched 6,150 (down 100 from last week), while masur (Madhya Pradesh) ruled at 5,800.

### **American chicken legs may soon be walking into Indian stores**



Govt eases import norms after US threatens WTO action

India has made changes in its rules for import of poultry to bring them in conformity with a World Trade Organization (WTO) ruling after the US threatened to levy sanctions.

This may pave the way for import of American chicken legs, which could be offered to Indian consumers at prices that are much lower than rates for local poultry, spelling trouble for over four lakh local poultry farmers.

“It has to be seen now whether the US expresses satisfaction with the new notification and withdraws its request for WTO authorisation to retaliate against India,” a government official told *BusinessLine*. “If not, it could also drag the country to the compliance panel for making changes in the notification,”

Per India’s new notification, published by the Department of Animal Husbandry, avian influenza and the areas affected by it will henceforth be defined on the basis of the definitions provided in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

The OIE is an international standard-setting body on animal health that is recognised by the WTO. Its definition of avian influenza is based on high-pathogen bacteria (highly infectious) and not low-pathogen as earlier defined by India.

### **Fineprint scrutiny**

The US will examine whether the new notification gives its industry clear access to India’s market or if it needs to be defined better. “It if feels the notification needs to be refined, it could take the case to the compliance panel. New Delhi would then get a very short time to make changes or face action,” said a Delhi-based WTO expert.

Since the new notification does not specify what exactly the standards are, there is a possibility that the US could ask for clarity.

Domestic breeders, who produce an estimated 3.5 million tonnes of chicken every year, fear that cheap chicken legs from the US could eat up at least 40 per cent of their market share.

Earlier this month, the US had threatened to impose retaliatory economic sanctions against India if it did not abide by the WTO's verdict.

Last year, the WTO had ruled against India's ban on poultry imports, which aimed to protect the country from low pathogen avian influenza (bird flu), upholding a US claim that the restriction did not have any scientific justification. India was given time till mid-June this year to bring its import rules in line with international standards.

### **Pepper continues to stay firm**



Spot pepper continued to stay firm on Friday on moderate demand amid tight availability. Good domestic demand was visible as industry and end-users were covering. Rajkumari type 600 GL with 13 per cent moisture was traded at 715 a kg, normal High Range pepper at 710.

Pulpally and Bathery (Wayanad) material was sold at 705, while pepper from the plains was traded at 700, market sources told *BusinessLine*.

On the terminal market, 11 tonnes were traded at prices ranging between 700 and 715. Spot prices moved up by 100 a quintal to 69,600 (ungarbled) and 72,600 (garbled). July, August and September contracts on the IPSTA stayed



steady at 72,000, 71,000 and 69,000. Export prices were at \$11,000 a tonne c&f for Europe and \$11,250 for the US.



# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Farmers trained in drip irrigation



Precision Farming Development Centre (PFDC), in collaboration with PAU's department of soil and water engineering, organized a five-day training programme on drip irrigation, fertigation and protected cultivation, which concluded on Friday.

In all, 37 farmers from Punjab attended the programme, This programme is conducted on the request of farmers and so far, 24 such training programmes have been conducted.

PFDC principal investigator Dr Rakesh Sharda said the programme was quite popular among farmers. "During the programme, farmers were educated about various aspects of drip irrigation and fertigation. Experts delved on different concepts of drip irrigation," he said.

Experts also shed light on the scope of protected cultivation, construction of protected cultivation structures, soil-less cultivation, construction of poly net and shade net houses, management of greenhouse, cultivation of vegetables and flowers, post-harvest management of greenhouse produce, and type of assistance available through National Horticulture Mission for integrated development of horticulture, he said.

### **Now, an app to help farmers sell their produce**



Days after wholesalers of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs) went on strike, a city-based firm has launched a mobile app and website that will enable a more transparent platform for farmers to sell their produce.

MyVishwa Technologies launched the Farmers Org app and website FarmersOrg.in on Friday. The platform will aggregate all the listings of farmers, wholesalers, retailers, and customers based on buying and selling lists, along with their direct contacts. Using this, they can find out who has what produce for sale and what price they expect to pay/get to buy/sell the same.

"It will greatly reduce the cost and effort to get produce from the farm to the table. The focus will be on getting the farmers better exposed to the market

directly rather than through middlemen, and help them get the best rate. It is an aggregator and not an ecommerce platform," said MyVishwa Technologies president and CEO Mandar Joglekar.

In a week, the app has so far been downloaded by over 100 farmers in Pune, Latur and Satara where the company has been testing the platform. Joglekar also stated that the company intends to make it an integrated platform, owing to which it is already available in 10 languages, apart from English and Nepali.

"We aim to make this a nationwide platform. We will begin the first phase with enlisting at least one representative per taluka in Maharashtra, who will promote it in their respective region," Joglekar said.

### **Crop insurance scheme to cost state 500cr**



The Tamil Nadu government has announced a new crop insurance scheme for farmers by joining the Prime Minister's Crop Insurance scheme. As per this, the state government will need to spend 500 crore as its share against the 40 crore being spent for the present scheme.

"Though the government will have to shell out more money each year, it has been decided to implement the scheme as it would benefit farmers in the state," said chief minister J Jayalalithaa in a statement.

"I had promised a new crop insurance scheme in our manifesto and the state will participate in the Prime Minister's Crop Insurance Scheme by sharing the expenses along with the Centre," the chief minister said. Soon after taking charge as chief minister in May, Jayalalithaa announced waiver of cooperative credit taken by small and marginal farmers.

Under the new scheme, crop loss will be calculated at the village level instead of the block level. "Such a calculation will give the actual loss suffered by farmers and they would get better relief from insurance companies," said Jayalalithaa. In block-level assessment, a cluster-level calculation is done and some villages would be left out. This could be addressed in the new scheme, sources said.

Crop loss due to natural calamity in nine districts, including the delta districts of Nagapattinam and Tiruvarur, would be calculated based on the average agriculture production of the previous 7 years, leaving out the worst drought or flood years. The risk level has been increased to 70% so that farmers would get more money.

"Farmers will have to pay 1.5% of the total insurance premium between October and March. Farmers who cultivate between April and September will have to pay 2% of the total premium. The balance will be spent by central and state governments," said Jayalalithaa. Government sources told TOI that the state did not implement the PM's Crop Insurance Scheme early this year as the model code of conduct was in force.

## **Tamil Nadu introduces new crop insurance scheme**



The Tamil Nadu government on Friday introduced a new crop insurance scheme for farmers, thereby fulfilling yet another promise made by the party in its election manifesto.

The total expenditure for government will be Rs 500 crore against the old scheme for which the government is spending only Rs 40 crore.

"I had promised a new crop insurance scheme in our manifesto and the state will participate in the Prime Minister's Crop Insurance Scheme by sharing the expenses along with the Centre," said chief minister J Jayalalithaa in a statement.

Soon after taking charge as chief minister in May, Jayalalithaa announced waiving of cooperative loans taken by small and marginal farmers.

According to the new crop insurance scheme, instead of calculating the crop loss based on firca (block level), it will be calculated based on the village level. "Such a calculation will give the actual loss suffered by farmers and they would get better relief from insurance," said Jayalalithaa.

The crop loss due to nature would be calculated right from cultivation till harvest, said the chief minister.

Also, the farmers in nine delta districts would get indemnity level up to 70% so that they would get more money.

"Farmers will have to pay 1.5% of the total insurance premium between October and March. Farmers who cultivate between April and September will have to pay 2% of the total premium. The balance will be spent by central and state governments," said Jayalalithaa.

### **State to adopt crop diversification programme, Centre approves DPR**

The Bihar agriculture department is all set to introduce vegetable cultivation to replace tobacco farming in the three major tobacco-producing districts in pursuance of the Centre's crop diversification programme (CDP).

The Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) wing of the Bihar agriculture department has prepared the Rs 1.33 crore project for introduction of alternate vegetable cultivation under the Centre's CDP that would be implemented by the state horticulture directorate in Vaishali, Samastipur and Muzaffarpur districts. The three districts, incidentally, are also the major tobacco producing districts of the state.

To start with, the alternate vegetable cultivation would be introduced on 492 hectares of tobacco producing land in three districts - 244 hectares in Vaishali, 197 hectares in Samastipur and 51 hectares in Muzaffarpur - to wean away farmers from the practice of traditional tobacco cultivation.

Traditionally, the three districts together accounted for tobacco cultivation in 11,600 hectares of land, including 6,300 hectares in Vaishali, 4,500 hectares in Samastipur and 800 hectares in Muzaffarpur. "The plan should succeed. After the success of the initial phase of the introduction of CDP in the three major tobacco producing districts, the remaining areas of the three districts would also be covered in the later phases," said an agriculture department official.

Interestingly, the Union agriculture ministry, on May 3 this year, had intimated the Bihar agriculture department about its decision to introduce alternate crop under CDP to wean away farmers from cultivation of tobacco in the 10 major tobacco producing states, including Bihar. The remaining nine states are Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat, Telengana, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The Centre had allotted Rs 54 crore for the 10 states, including Rs 1.33 crore for Bihar.

The EKVY wing of the Bihar agriculture had submitted a detailed related project to the Union agriculture ministry, which, in turn, gave its approval on July 4.

The project envisages cultivation of two varieties of vegetables - the open field variety (OFV) and the hybrid variety. Of the 492 hectares of land in the three districts earmarked for CDP this year, the OFV vegetables would be cultivated in 292 hectares of land, wherein the each of the willing farmers would get a subsidy of Rs 22,500 per hectare of land for abandoning tobacco cultivation. Similarly, the hybrid variety would be cultivated in 200 acres of land and each farmer would get 75% of the total cost of production with a cap of Rs 33,750 as subsidy.

Overall, Rs 65.70 lakh has been allotted for the OFV vegetables and Rs 67.50 lakh for the hybrid variety.

# THE ECONOMIC TIMES

## Crop planting rises 38 per cent in one week



Rice cultivation over the past week increased by 51 per cent and is 0.76 per cent higher than previous year.

New Delhi: Planting of crops has jumped 38 per cent in the past one week as monsoon rains have significantly increased since the end of June and have covered almost the entire country, raising hopes of much higher farm production than last year and moderate prices of pulses and rice.

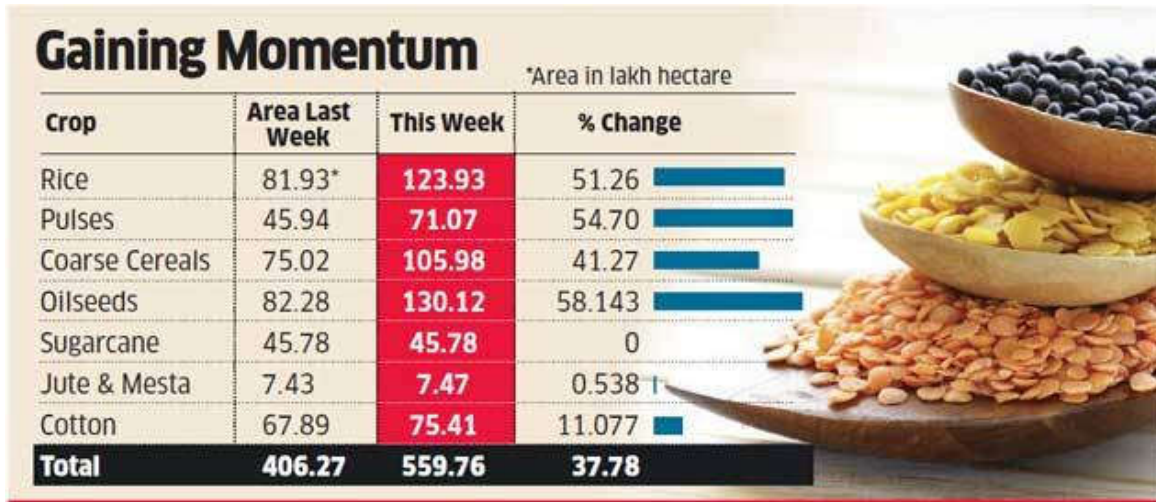
Water levels in reservoirs have also filled up to the average level, which is good for post-monsoon irrigation and hydropower generation.

The 91 reservoirs that the Central Water Commission tracks regularly as of Thursday held 45.49 billion cubic meters (bcm) of water, compared with 54.93 bcm at this time last year and 10-year average of 45.07 bcm.

Planting of oilseeds jumped 58 per cent in a week, and the area under its cultivation is now 2 per cent more than a year ago, largely due to good rains in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.



Pulses acreage jumped 55 per cent in a week, and is now 39 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 2.08 per cent higher than last year at 55.98 million hectare ..



Planting of cotton and jute was lower than last year. Rice cultivation over the past week increased by 51 per cent and is 0.76 per cent higher than previous year. North East, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have seen an increase in area under rice cultivation. Water situation in reservoirs have improved significantly.

Now only five reservoirs have negligible water. Four of these — Jayakwadi (Paithon), Bhima (Ujjani), Yeldari and Girna — are in Maharashtra and the fifth, Nagarjuna Sagar, is in Telangana-Andhra Pradesh border.

According to data from the water commission, river basins of Ganga, Godavari and Narmada hold more water than normal, while water level of Sabarmati is normal. Indus, Tapi, Mahi, Krishna, Mahanadi and Cauvery have deficient storage.

## **E-market platforms to come up across the country: Radha Mohan Singh**



The NDA government has developed web-based farmers portal and mobile-based mKisan SMS portal, besides disseminating information to farmers.

HYDERABAD: The government is taking many initiatives to educate the farmers and remains committed to set up e-platforms in 585 markets across the country, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh today said.

"The National Agriculture Market is yet another recent initiative of the government, where Common eMarket Platforms would be set up in 585 regulated markets in the country," Singh said at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research - National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (ICAR-NAARM) here.

"These digital platforms would enable farmers to sell produce through e-marketing. You, the young scientists, being digital-savvy, I would urge you to contribute to all such ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) initiatives by popularising them with the farming community," he added.

The NDA government has developed web-based farmers portal and mobile-based mKisan SMS portal, besides disseminating information to farmers through Kisan Call Centers and DD Kisan Channel, the minister said.

"Two mobile Apps (Kisan Suvidha and Pusa Krishi) have been launched for farmers," he said.

Agriculture and allied sectors contribute 18 per cent to the Gross Value Added (GVA) as the foodgrains production of about 260 million tonnes is possible with availability of technologies like quality seed and associated services to the farmers, the Minister said.

Singh also lauded the research efforts of ICAR institutions and agricultural universities across the country.

Since 1951, foodgrain production in the country has increased five times, while that of horticultural produce by 9.5 times, fish by 12.5 times, milk production 7.8 times and eggs 39 times, he said.

**Onus on states to implement Centre's pro-farmer schemes: Radha Mohan Singh**



"There is no shortage of funds. There is a need for states to spend those speedily, Radha Mohan Singh said.

**HYDERABAD:** The onus to speed up the implementation of the Centre's

several pro-farmers schemes lays with the state governments, Union Minister Radha Mohan Singh said here today.

"The Centre has launched several schemes to bring down the input cost of farming and improve productivity. Sufficient funds have been given to the state governments in this regard and they have to utilise it in a speedy manner," he said.

"Agriculture is a state subject and it is the state governments' responsibility to implement agricultural schemes. I hope the Telangana government undertakes speedy implementation of Central schemes," the Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister said.

"There is no shortage of funds. There is a need for states to spend those speedily. The speed with which the states spend the funds, we will support such states in the same manner," Singh said.

The Centre is stressing on scaling up crop production to increase farmers' income, and funds have been given to the states under 'Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana' to ensure water supply in all farmlands, he said.

"Our aim is to supply water to every field so that farm produce goes up. High yield seeds and planting material are being made available," he said, adding, to bring down the input cost in agriculture sector, the Centre has reduced fertiliser prices and urea is being coated with neem.

"To ensure that farmers get better prices for their produce, Rashtriya Mandis have been set up. Our aim is to digitally connect 585 mandis across the country through e-trading platform," Singh said.

As the weather department has forecast normal monsoon, the government is expecting record production of food grains, the minister said.

On farmers' suicides due to crop failure, he said, "Under the Modi government premium for crop insurance scheme has been brought down and the cap removed. The states need to create awareness about the scheme among farmers."

On distribution of Soil Health Cards, he said the Central government has aimed to cover every farmer under this scheme by March next year, but alleged that some states, including Telangana, is "slow" in distributing these cards.

In the last two years, the Modi government had sanctioned Rs 874 crore under National Disaster Response Fund for Telangana. Rs 1,515 crore has been allocated for 2015-2020, whereas the UPA-2 government during its tenure had released only Rs 153.6 crore, he claimed.

### **ICRISAT and NIAB, UK join hands to develop cereals that use nitrogen efficiently for higher yields**



The Cambridge-India Network for Translational Research in Nitrogen (CINTRIN), one of the four centres, is led by the National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB) in the UK. (Image Courtesy: EPA)

PUNE: A team of researchers from India and the United Kingdom have come together to develop new cereal crop varieties that use nitrogen efficiently that in turn will reduce greenhouse emissions and make farming more profitable and sustainable. The partnership will explore natural variations of cereals and basic research in model plants to deliver new varieties of cereals with enhanced nitrogen use efficiency.

With funding of £10 million (GBP) through the Newton Bhabha Fund, UK; Biotechnology and Biological Research Council (BBSRC), UK; and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) of the Government of India, four new Virtual Joint Centers in Agricultural Nitrogen will be created. These are delivered in partnership with BBSRC, the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and the DBT. The Centers comprise of multiple research organisations in India and the UK, with each center receiving a co-investment of approximately £2.5M.

The Cambridge-India Network for Translational Research in Nitrogen (CINTRIN), one of the four centres, is led by the National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB) in the UK and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in India. It also brings together the Department of Plant Sciences and Sainsbury laboratory, University of Cambridge, the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), the National Institute of Plant Genome Research (NIPGR), India, ADAS UK Ltd. and agri-IT specialist KisanHub.

The launch meeting of CINTRIN was held recently in Cambridge, UK, which was attended by all the partners of the consortium and a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) was signed between ICRISAT and DBT on 8 July 2016 for this research.

"The overarching aim of CINTRIN is to improve not only the income and livelihood of farmers by reducing the inputs cost, but also to save the environment by minimising the negative impacts of excessive use of fertilisers," emphasised Dr Rajeev Gupta, Principal Scientist, ICRISAT, who is leading the Indian team of CINTRIN.

"The natural variation for nitrogen use efficiency (NUE) will be studied in diverse germplasm of wheat, sorghum, pearl millet and foxtail millet. The findings will be applied to develop new breeding lines with enhanced NUE. CINTRIN will also use model plants such as Arabidopsis and Brachypodium for basic research which will be translated into crops in the future," added Dr Gupta.

NIAB Director of Genetics and Breeding Dr Alison Bentley explains: "The CINTRIN partners will translate developmental biology research into innovation in nitrogen use by Indian farmers, by connecting developmental research, crop breeding, agritechnology and extension work. This will be enhanced by easily accessible data-driven methods of technology transfer, developed by India and UK-based company, KisanHub."

"We want to promote a new understanding of the science associated with optimisation of crop nitrogen use, built on exciting discoveries in model plant species which have the potential to revolutionise the way we think about the nitrogen requirement of crops," said Dr Bentley.

Professor Ottoline Leyser, Director of The Sainsbury Laboratory at the University of Cambridge said, "We are excited to be participating in CINTRIN as this sort of collaboration is essential for our research to contribute to solving the pressing problems facing agriculture."

The initiative will build on established research links between NIAB, the University of Cambridge and research institutes in India.

Exchanges in personnel between India and the UK via CINTRIN will enhance the skills of the next generation of plant technologists and provide a standard for building capacity in fundamental plant sciences and translation into germplasm and agronomic outputs in both countries.: A team of researchers from India and the United Kingdom have come together to develop new cereal crop varieties that use nitrogen efficiently that in turn will reduce greenhouse emissions and make farming more profitable and sustainable. The partnership will explore natural variations of cereals and basic research in model plants to deliver new varieties of cereals with enhanced nitrogen use efficiency.

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### **India's soyabean acreage to decline by 3% to 5%, says SOPA**

The highest fall in acreage has been observed in Madhya Pradesh, the largest soyabean growing state.

PUNE: According to the preliminary survey of industry body Soyabean Processors Association of India (SOPA), India's Soyabean acreage could decline by about 3 per cent to 5 per cent over previous year.

The survey is based on increase or decrease over last year's actual government sowing data. About 95 per cent soybean sowing has been completed all over India.

The highest fall in acreage has been observed in Madhya Pradesh, the largest soyabean growing state. "It is estimated that the area may decrease by about 8

per cent over last year in Madhya Pradesh. In a number of districts of Madhya Pradesh, between 5 per cent to 30 per cent Soybean area has been converted to Urad, Maize, Red Gram, sorghum and paddy, due to relatively poor productivity of soybean during previous 3 years for various reasons," stated a SOPA release.



The districts where decrease has been noticed are Betul, Hoshangabad, Guna, Harda, Khandwa, Khargone, Badwani, Burhanpur, Ashoknagar, Raisen, Vidisha, Bhopal, Rajgarh, Narsinghpur, Sagar and Damoh.

Area under soyabean is expected to increase by 6 per cent in second largest producer Maharashtra. Some districts in the state are likely to see a decrease in area as farmers have shifted to pulses, while some districts may see an increase of 10 per cent to 20 per cent as cotton farmers have shifted to soyabean due to non-remunerative prices of cotton.

Soyabean acreage in Rajasthan is expected to fall by about 15 per cent to 20 per cent due to shift towards pulses.

SOPA carried out field surveys in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. However, based on the trade and government information, it expects an increase

of 10 per cent in the remaining soyabean growing areas, where it has not carried out field surveys.

The excess rainfall in Madhya Pradesh is likely to cause some damage to the soyabean crop. "Heavy rains have taken place in some districts of Madhya Pradesh, causing a flood-like situation. These weather aberrations may lead to failure of soyabean crop in those areas which have poor surface drainage and situations of re-sowing of other alternate crops may arise," stated the release.

### **As rains take a break, soybean farmers in central India expect some crop recovery**



The state has seen excess rains over the past few weeks, which had led to firming up of soya bean prices by 3-4%.

PUNE: Soya bean farmers and traders in Madhya Pradesh have expressed joy at reports that monsoon rains over central India are set to abate in the coming days.

The state has seen excess rains over the past few weeks, which had led to firming up of soya bean prices by 3-4%. Traders say some sunshine will be

good for the crop and that it will help in pulling down the prices.

Soya bean has been ruling at Rs 3,800 per tonne in the spot and future markets amid concerns that heavy showers in the country's main soya bean producing state of Madhya Pradesh will harm the crop.

Some traders had estimated the production this year to be at the last year's level, which was 4% less than the previous year. They say the area under the crop has already fallen by about 10% as many farmers have switched to pulses.

"Prices of the October and November soya bean contracts did go up due to excess rainfall in Madhya Pradesh," said Viral Shah, head of institutional business at Geofin Comtrade. "But if the rainfall is good, prices may come down to Rs 3,600 per quintal by August."

The soya bean crop is in the tender stage and its growth had stopped in the absence of sunlight and due to water logging in the fields. "The soya bean crop needs not only a break in rainfall but some good sunshine too," said Davish Jain, president at Soyabean Processors Association of India.

Cotton farmers have also been praying for a break from the rains. "Break from rains was necessary for the cotton as well. It will help farmers in doing field operations like weeding etc," said Keshav Kranthi, director at Central Institute of Cotton Research, Nagpur.