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THE HINDU

NIFT-TEA Institute looks for developing appliance to dye ‘cotton fabrics’ without water

NIFT-TEA Knitwear Fashion Institute here is looking forward to develop a gadget for dyeing ‘cotton fabrics’ without using water and also draft a curriculum on agro textiles.

These technological innovations were planned as part of the collaborative projects which the NIFT-TEA Institute will take up with Synthetic and Arts Silk Mills Research (SASMIRA).

It should be noted that the NIFT-TEA Institute, promoted by Tirupur garment exporters, and SASMIRA signed a Memorandum of Understanding recently to promote development of new products, research activities and information exchange on new technologies.

The two bodies would also be involved in joint consultancy in the area of eco labelling besides helping Tirupur knitwear industry to make gigantic strides in the production of technical textiles and sourcing information regarding textiles used in the field of agriculture.

On the advanced appliance that has been planned to be developed for dyeing ‘cotton fabrics’, R. R. Shrinivasan, chairman of Academic Committee in NIFT-TEA Institute who signed the MoU with SASMIRA, told *The Hindu* that it would be similar on the lines of a machine which SASMIRA had already developed for dyeing polyesters.

“The equipment which SASMIRA developed for dyeing polyester fabrics used liquefied carbon dioxide instead of water,” he pointed out.

The NIFT-TEA Institute will be further acting as a hub for developing new technologies using peculiar microbes to reduce the duration of effluent treatment in the dyeing segment.

“At present, it takes almost 72 hours for the effluent to come out through the pre-treatment stage. We plan to reduce the duration to 12 hours,” said Mr. Shrinivasan.

The curriculum which the NIFT-TEA Institute and the Centre of Excellence for Agrotextiles under SASMIRA plan to be developed would be later suggested for introduction in universities and institutes.

Fertigation method proves fruitful for raising banana



K. Ramaswamy, Dean, Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute, Kumulur, showing efficient use of fertigation at a demonstration plot.— Photo: A. Muralitharan

Only 60 per cent of water, 75 per cent of fertilizer used

Fertigation, a combination of drip irrigation and application of fertilizers, introduced at the Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University at Kumulur near here to irrigate banana crop, has started showing results.

The experiment has been taken up on ‘Elarasi’ banana variety, which is raised by a limited number of farmers in the district as it requires labour-intensive care throughout its duration of about a year. “The growth of the banana plants, raised about a couple of months ago, has been quite normal. Not only that, there has been a marked quality growth,” said Dean K. Ramaswamy. A majority of

farmers tend to use a huge quantum of water when it comes to banana in general and 'Elarasi' in particular. "But, our experiment aims to show that is not required in delta region," he said, showing the stout growth of the plants at the fields on the institute premises.

Over-irrigation in banana often led to wastage of water, leaching of nutrients and problems caused by weeds. Drip irrigation, through uniform and direct application of water at root zones, eliminated the problem, he said. There should be neither short nor excess irrigation for banana, he said, explaining the actual daily water requirement for banana at various levels. "It requires just four litres during the initial period and about 16 litres when the plant is fully-grown," he added.

A team of scientists and research scholars had been keeping a close monitoring of the growth of plants and the moisture level of soil. "We supply water and fertilizer through drip irrigation technique as and when required.

The duration of supply is closely monitored so that not even a drop of excess water is used." said K. Arunadevi, Assistant Professor, Soil and Water Conservation Engineering.

Monitoring of the moisture content ensured the speedy and quality growth of plants. Further, the growth was found to be uniform in all the plants, she added.

Mr. Ramaswamy said that the cost of cultivation had been reduced on various fronts. Only 60 per cent of water used under conventional irrigation system was utilised under the new system. Only 75 per cent of fertilizer used under conventional method was used with minimum labour and high-nutrient supply.

The crop would be harvested by the beginning of next year. Farmers would be exposed to the technique in the course of time, the Dean added.

Improve technology to benefit dairy farmers: NDDB chief



FOR farmers:National Dairy Development Board chairmanT. Nandakumar addressing students and faculty of Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University at Pookode in Wayanad district on Monday.

National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) chairman T. Nandakumar, has said that dairy farming in the country needs to be improved with technology so that farmers can benefit. He said dairy farming needs to be viewed not in terms of volume of milk produced, but in terms of income generated for farmers.

Addressing students and faculty of Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU) at Pookode in the district on Monday after signing a Memorandum of Understanding between KVASU and NDDB, Mr. Nandakumar said that the primary focus of co-operatives should be in building transparency and trust with farmers.

“Climate change affects not only production, price, lactation period, disease, inter calving period but overall return from dairying,” Mr. Nandakumar said adding that the NDDB was implementing a pioneering project to support small holder dairy system with mobile app in the country to reduce cost of production. “Market trends, food safety and genetics are some of the emerging sectors in dairying,” he said adding that genomics need to be addressed in the changing context to improve production and productivity.

In the changing scenario students need to aspire for developing technologies which can address the challenges being faced by dairy farmers, he added.

Mr. Nandakumar inaugurated an Agriculture Research Information system of the College of Veterinary and Animal sciences (CVAS), Pookode, and distributed the Best Teacher awards to Dr. Senthil Murugan, Dr. Shynu and Dr. Sujarani, Assistant Professors, CVAS, on the occasion.

Dr. Joseph Mathew, Registrar ,KVASU, presided over the function.

Dr. T.P. Sethumadhavan, Director of Entrepreneurship and Dr. K. Vijayakumar, Dean, CVAS, spoke.

Incentivise organic farming: Minister

Revenue Minister E.Chandrasekharan has called for policy initiatives to ensure that farmers receive incentives and remunerative price for organic produce. Speaking after inaugurating the vegetable garden established at his official residence here on Monday, he expressed the hope that all households in the State would produce enough vegetables for their consumption this Onam season. The excess produce, he said, could be routed to the network of eco shops set up by the government.

Officials from the Agriculture Department were present on the occasion.

‘Feed the future’ programme launched

The Union Agriculture Ministry and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) on Monday launched the second phase of the “Feed the Future” India triangular training programme here, in a bid to bring specialised agriculture training to 1,500 agricultural professionals across Africa and Asia.

U.S. Ambassador Richard R. Verma and Agriculture Secretary S.K. Pattanayak launched the programme together at the national agriculture science complex. The programme builds upon five decades of joint work utilising science and technology to bring innovative solutions to the challenges facing farmers.

New opportunities

“By harnessing the expertise and innovation of our two great countries, we are unlocking new opportunities to address global development challenges, bringing us closer to our shared objective of eliminating global poverty and hunger,” said Mr. Verma.

The programme is expected to enable India and the U.S. to share these farming techniques worldwide, helping countries in Africa and Asia revolutionise their agriculture practices and ultimately, improve global nutrition levels.

Notably, led by the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management-MANAGE, the programme will train agricultural professionals from 17 countries in Africa and Asia on specialised farming practices such as agricultural marketing, dairy management, food processing and ways to prevent post-harvest losses.

The first phase trained more than 200 professionals from Kenya, Liberia and Malawi, and they are now implementing the new farming methods to increase farm productivity and income. India and the U.S. are expanding the programme with the second phase launch to reach hundreds of professionals and in turn thousands of smallholder farmers.

Centre, USAID start specialised training for 1,500 agricultural professionals across Africa and Asia

Essential mobile app for farmers launched

Farmers could now get weather updates, expert advisories, inputs position and market rates for their produce – all with a tap of a button, thanks to ‘Kisan Suvidha’, a new mobile app launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

A group of 52 progressing farmers from across the district stood dumbfounded when the Agriculture Department officials explained them the advantages and salient features of the app with the help of power point presentation at their office here on Monday.

Agriculture Officer P. Selvam said, “The app has a simple interface and provides five critical parameters – weather, input dealers, plant protection and expert advisories.”

KAU gets tech boost for plant disease control



The Advanced research centre for plant disease diagnosis to be inaugurated at the College of Agriculture on Wednesday.

The Kerala Agricultural University is equipping itself with the latest tools for the fight against plant diseases which lead to crop loss and distress for farmers.

The Advanced Research Centre for Plant Disease Diagnosis established by the university at the College of Agriculture, Vellayani, harnesses modern technologies for early detection and management of plant diseases caused by pathogens, pests, and nutrient deficiencies.

The facility

The Rs.1.75-crore facility to be inaugurated on Wednesday is equipped with a tissue culture laboratory for the production of disease-free planting materials and a cryptogamic herbarium of diseased crop specimens for easy reference.

It will function as a referral quarantine unit authorised to inspect and certify the use of imported planting materials. The centre will also produce antiserum for plant pathogens of major crops.

“Early and accurate diagnosis and pathogen surveillance are necessary to predict the outbreak of plant diseases and allow time for development and application of mitigation strategies,” says K.Umamaheswaran, Professor, Plant Pathology, College of Agriculture.

He said the centre was envisaged as a facility to safeguard crops in the State from new diseases and pests.

It would offer consultancy and advisory services for farmers, technicians, and field-level officers of the Agriculture Department.

Diseased samples of plant materials received from farmers and various agencies would be analysed for plant pathogens in the state-of-the-art laboratory and specific control measures recommended for managing the disease.

Scientists specialised in plant pathology, entomology, agricultural microbiology, nematology, soil science, agronomy, horticulture, and agricultural extension were associated with the project.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is scheduled to inaugurate the centre at a function to be held at the college on Wednesday.

[Minister promises aid for coconut farmers](#)Agriculture Minister V.S. Sunil Kumar has promised all efforts on the part of the State government to address the concerns of coconut farmers at Nadapuram who recently faced hardships with the destruction of several coconut trees in the adverse climate and infestation of various diseases.

After visiting some of the worst-hit coconut groves on Monday, the Minister said steps would be taken to clear all the infested trees with a special government aid to reduce the chances of further spread of the disease. The current compensation amount of Rs.700 per tree would be increased to Rs.1,000, he added.

Organic pesticides

He directed officials from the Agriculture Department to check the possibility of supplying essential organic pesticides to farmers to combat the disease in the region. The department would give high-yielding coconut saplings to replace the disease-hit trees.

E.K. Vijayan, MLA, who drew the Minister's attention to the issue and requested him to visit the groves, said the farmers' concerns would be duly addressed by the government with a suitable compensation package.

“The Minister has given us a solid assurance on the same and the details of the package would be finalised in discussions with the scientists and officials from the Agriculture Department,” he said.

Agriculture Department Secretary Raju Narayana Swami, Director Asok Kumar and scientists from the Kerala Agriculture University were present during the visit of the Minister.

□ *Infested trees to be*

replaced with high-yielding saplings

□ *Compensation of Rs.700 per tree to be increased to Rs.1,000*

“Conserve endangered marine flora and fauna”



Collector M. Ravikumar addressing a workshop in Thoothukudi on Monday.—
Photo: N. Rajesh.

Fishermen should be aware of conserving endangered marine flora and fauna and improving fishery resources, said Collector M. Ravikumar here on Monday.

They should also be aware of the importance of fighting global warming, he said, after launching a project on ‘Management and rehabilitation of coastal habitats and biodiversity for climate change adaptation and sustainable

livelihood in Gulf of Mannar,' organised by the Department of Environment at a cost of Rs. 24.74 crore.

The Collector appealed to the people to grow trees, which could reduce pollution by absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen. During the last one year, 3.40 lakh saplings raised from 18 nurseries here were planted along roads and other locations in Thoothukudi district.

The saplings were planted by workers under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Chief General Manager, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), S. Nagoor Ali Jinnah said this project would give a solid foundation for fishermen. Coral reef, which proved to be a haven for spawning fishes, would be rehabilitated under this project. Coral reef should not be disturbed, he said.

Referring to a study, he said about 10 per cent of corals had suffered bleaching and seawater temperature rose to 10 per cent from three per cent.

Coral and seagrass rehabilitation would enhance live coral cover and seagrass beds, provide a habitat for fishes and other diverse species and improve adaptation measure to climate change impacts.

Earlier, Additional Director, Department of Environment, M. Jayanthi, who welcomed the gathering, said this was the first project in Coastal Area Management under National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change.

Viswakudi tank gets water, farmers raise double crop



BOON FOR FARMERS: A view of the Viswakudi tank near Perambalur; (right) a farmer showing 'karunai kizhangu' (elephant yam) crop he has raised on his field. — Photos: A. Muralitharan



It has been ensuring irrigation to 1,449.41 acres in Veppanthattai block

Water table in a cluster of villages in and around Viswakudi in Annamangalam village panchayat in Veppanthattai block in the district has got stabilised following storage of water at the newly-built tank.

It was during last monsoon that the tank realised water to its full capacity of 34 feet. Presently, the level stands at 18 feet. The length of the embankment wall is 665 metres and it has a capacity to store 30.67 million cubic feet of water.

Public Works Department has been taking steps to supply water through its channels to a cumulative length of about 2.5 km. The tank ensures irrigation to 1,449.41 acres, including its priority command area of 421.41 acres of the Vengalam ayacutdars, who have been the conventional beneficiaries of the Kallar for several centuries. This apart, another 2,169 acres of dry land would be irrigated indirectly, including 169 acres through wells.

According to farmers, the storage at the tank has come as a boon for an appreciable rise in water level in their wells. A cross-section of farmers at the foot of the tank said that their borewells were up to the brim, thanks to the storage in the tank. They said that the water level at Arasalur, Viswakudi, Muhamadupattinam, Pillaiyarpalayam, Pooncholai, Poompuhar, Thondamanthurai and Vengalam had stabilised. The farmers said that they were raising double crop for the first time. They had been raising elephant yam, indicating that the irrigation facility was quite adequate in their fields. Another batch of farmers said that they had raised turmeric and onion simultaneously.

Dairy farming to be promoted: Minister



WHITE REVOLUTION: Minister for Forests and Animal Husbandry K. Raju visiting the Wayanad Dairy of the Milma in Kalpetta on Monday.

Minister for Forests and Animal Husbandry K. Raju has said that the government would adopt steps to ensure sustainable income to the dairy farmers in the State.

Speaking after inaugurating the valedictory function of the silver jubilee celebrations of the Malabar Regional Co-operative Milk Producers' Union (MRCMPU) of the Milma here on Monday, Mr. Raju said that cattle insurance in dairy sector would be expanded, with government contributing a portion of the insurance premium. Round-the-clock service of veterinary doctors would be provided free of cost and financial assistance would be provided to dairy farmers to purchase cows , Mr.Raju said.

The Minister opened the butter, paneer and export ghee packing units of the Milma on the occasion.

While interacting with people's representatives and leaders of farmer organisations in the district at a meeting Mr.Raju said that it was the responsibility of the government to provide protection to the life and property of public from wildlife attacks.

4 tmcft of Godavari water realised in Krishna delta, says Uma



Irrigation Minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao addressing a press conference in Vijayawada on Monday.— Photo: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar

Thirteen pumps of the Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Scheme are pumping 4,500 cusecs of the Godavari water from July 13 and till date 4 tmcft of the Godavari water was released into the Krishna river and it is being used for the Krishna delta, Minister for Water Resources Devineni Umamaheswara Rao said here on Monday.

Addressing a press conference, the Minister said that the State received 230.4 mm of rainfall this season against the normal rainfall of 219.3 mm, an excess of 5.1 per cent.

While the normal sowing area in the kharif season was 40,95,854 hectares, farmers had sown crop in 15,90,352 hectares by July 20 and by this time it would have crossed 17 lakh hectares, that was, 39 per cent more than the normal area covered till date, the Minister said.

The water levels in different reservoirs of the Krishna too were better with Almatti, Narayanapur and Jurala becoming almost full. Srisailam was receiving 31,692 cusecs, but there was a cushion of 187.52 tmcft that needed to be filled. Even Pulichintala was receiving an inflow of nearly 1,000 cusecs and the reservoir had 2.64 tmcft compared to the 2.58 tmcft to the corresponding date last year.

Progress in the Veligonda tunnel one and two phases and Polavaram was as per schedule. With the increase of levels in the reservoirs, water could be supplied to the drought-prone Rayalaseema also, the Minister said, but it was unfortunate that YSRC leaders were trying to 'sling mud and throw stones' on the Telugu Desam government. While some leaders of the party were trying to create legal hurdles to the Galeru-Nagari project, the party MLAs met the Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh and submitted a representation demanding that the water level at the Srisailam Reservoir be built up to 874 ft., he said.

The YSRC leaders were also trying to create obstacles for the Polavaram project that was being executed by some of the best companies in the world, he said.

Genetic secrets of 88 bony fishes revealed

Plate 5



Meganthias filiferus



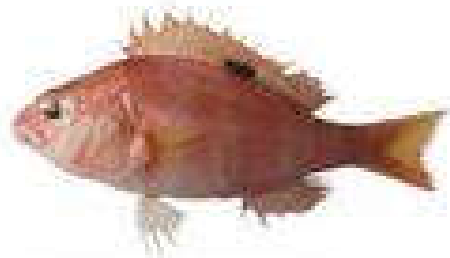
Neobythites steaticus



Neoscopepus microchir



Odontanthias perumali



Parascolopsis aspinosa



Psenopsis cyanea

The DNA bar coding of these species may also bring changes in the nomenclature of a few species.

The researchers had earlier prepared the genetic database of 32 species, especially elasmobranchs or cartilaginous fishes

Now, more is known to science about the life of fishes that thrive in the ocean depths as a group of marine researchers have prepared the genetic fingerprints of 88 species of fishes.

The researchers had earlier prepared the genetic database of 32 species, especially elasmobranchs or cartilaginous fishes which included sharks, rays and sakes.

This time, the researchers from the National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources, Kochi centre and the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kochi, focused more on bony fishes thus taking the total number of deep-sea fishes whose genetic characters have been decoded to 120 species.

“The deep-sea fishes are the ones that live at ocean depths of more than 200 metres. There is astonishing diversity of marine life at these depths. The species also exhibit diverse adaptation techniques in the deep-sea habitat. The DNA bar coding would open the doors for the scientists to understand the secrets of life,” explained K.K. Bineesh, one of the lead researchers of the project. Mr. Bineesh is also a member of the IUCN Shark Specialist Group. According to him, despite the rich diversity and opening of new fishing grounds for targeted resources, little has been done in the fish taxonomy front. Precise identification of the species is vital for sustainable management of fishery resources, said Mr. Bineesh explaining the socio-economic relevance of the DNA bar coding.

The research team, led by A. Gopalakrishnan, Director, CMFRI, had N. G. K. Pillai, E. M. Abdussamad, and K.V Akhilesh of the CMFRI and V.S Basheer and K.K. Bineesh of the Bureau as its members.

As a result of DNA fingerprinting, scientists discovered 10 new marine deep-sea fish species from the depths of the Arabian Sea. The new species that were identified belong to families such as Synodontidae, Notacanthidae, Polymixiidae, Chaunacidae, Argentinidae and Myctophidae.

The DNA bar coding of these species may also bring changes in the nomenclature of a few species known to the science for long. The names of

deep-sea fishes will have to be changed and many synonymised species will be getting their names back in the process.

A new species of *Chaunax multilepis* was described on the basis of 13 specimens. The species was given the name *multilepis* considering the many type of scales found on its body.

The first *Chaunax* species (*Chaunax pictus*) was recorded in India more than a century ago. However, the species was later believed to be restricted to the Atlantic waters. In 1909, a second species, *Chaunax apus*, was collected from the Bay of Bengal. The latest discovery of *Chaunax* species was in 2013, when six species were collected from the Indian Ocean, noted the researchers.



Rains support RBI rate cut, may douse agflation: BoA-ML

According to the global financial services major, normal rains are pushing up sowing and river waters would douse agricultural inflation (agflation) going forward.

The Reserve Bank is expected to cut key interest rate by 25 basis points at its policy review meet next month if prices of pulses fall and help push down agflation, a BoA-ML report said today, even as it sees overall retail inflation in July to touch 6 per cent.

According to the global financial services major, normal rains are pushing up sowing and river waters would douse agricultural inflation (agflation) going forward.

“We continue to expect the RBI to cut 25 bps on August 9 if good rains push up pulses cropping and dampen pulses price inflation,” said the Bank of America-Merrill Lynch report.

It said however that retail inflation, based on Consumer Price Index, is seen at 6 per cent – higher than the RBI’s 5 per cent in March 2017 target – because of a poor summer rabi crop.

“As monetary policy should surely be forward looking, we expect the RBI to factor in the fact that a good monsoon would damp pulses prices,” it said, adding that food prices are peaking off.

Monsoon rainfall is running at 100 per cent of normal so far, much better than last year’s 86 per cent and sowing has picked up to 103.3 per cent of last year.

Pulses cropping has jumped to 39.4 per cent above 2015 levels so far. Moreover, rains have also pumped up river waters to 4.6 per cent above their 10-year average from below 20 per cent, the report said.

BoA-ML has cut March 2017 CPI inflation estimates to 5.1 per cent from 5.7 per cent on good rains. The June Core CPI inflation has actually slipped to 4.8 per cent with high rates hurting growth and constricting pricing power.

Meanwhile, the wholesale inflation accelerated for the third straight month in June hitting 1.62 per cent on costlier food and manufactured items.

The hardening of the Wholesale Price Index follows an uptick in retail inflation, which hit a 22-month high of 5.77 per cent in June.

In the June policy review meet, RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan kept interest rates intact, citing rising inflationary pressure, but hinted at a reduction later this year if good monsoon helps ease inflation.

Upside risks to inflation prevails; July CPI to be in 5.7-5.9 per cent

The RBI is likely to maintain status quo in the monetary policy meeting scheduled in August and most probably defer any decision to change the repo rates.



CPI inflation is likely to be in the range of 5.7-5.9 per cent in July, says a report.

Upside risks to price rise still prevails, largely owing to increasing international commodity prices and implementation of the seventh pay commission awards, while CPI inflation is likely to be in the range of 5.7-5.9 per cent in July, says a report.

“Structural issues in the inflation dynamics continue to prevail as rural CPI inflation on average remains above the urban CPI inflation,” Dun & Bradstreet India Lead Economist Arun Singh said.

According to D&B, the progress of monsoon in the subsequent two months and its spread will determine the course for cultivation of crops and their availability and thus food inflation in the coming fiscal.

“While news about development of La Nina phenomenon brings some cheer, food inflation at 23-month high raises concern about its ripple effect on the larger inflation trajectory,” Singh said.

The RBI, on the other hand, is likely to maintain status quo in the monetary policy meeting scheduled in August and most probably defer any decision to change the repo rates till the impact of monsoon over the course for cultivation of crops and their availability has been realised completely, he added.

In the June policy review meet, RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan kept interest rates intact, citing rising inflationary pressure, but hinted at a reduction later this year if good monsoon helps ease inflation.

D&B expects the WPI inflation to be in the range of 1.8-2 per cent and CPI inflation to be in the range of 5.7-5.9 per cent during July this year.

The wholesale inflation accelerated for the third straight month in June hitting 1.62 per cent on costlier food and manufactured items.

The hardening of the WPI index followed an uptick in retail inflation, which hit a 22-month high of 5.77 per cent in June.

Singh further noted that “the government’s continued commitment to reforms to steer the economy has uplifted optimism amongst the corporate sector.

The passage of the GST Bill in Parliament, which will establish the regime of a common market in India, will further boost the confidence amongst domestic and foreign business community about the prospect of India’s high growth.

Coffee production likely to fall 8 per cent this fiscal year: Govt

The main buyers of Indian coffee are Italy, Russian Federation, Germany, Belgium and Turkey which account for over 50 per cent of coffee exports from India.



“It has been estimated that there is a likelihood of decline in coffee production in 2016-17 by 8 per cent compared to that in 2015-16 due to lack of timely rains and high temperature during the crucial flowering stage,” Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told the Lok Sabha.

Domestic coffee production is likely to decline by eight per cent in the current fiscal mainly due to lack of timely rains, government said on July 25.

“It has been estimated that there is a likelihood of decline in coffee production in 2016-17 by 8 per cent compared to that in 2015-16 due to lack of timely rains and high temperature during the crucial flowering stage,”

Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told the Lok Sabha.

Coffee Board is providing focused support for water augmentation and extension activities to coffee growers.

Besides, coffee growers are given compensation for crop losses due to erratic rainfall under the Rainfall Insurance Scheme for Coffee, she said.

The main buyers of Indian coffee are Italy, Russian Federation, Germany, Belgium and Turkey which account for over 50 per cent of coffee exports from India.

During Question Hour, she also said the Coffee Exporters Association have represented before the Department of Commerce for adding green coffee beans to the exempted list in the proposed Goods and Services Tax (GST).

“The matter is under consideration,” she noted.

Regarding the proposal to repeal the Coffee Act, 1942, the Minister said it is “no longer serving the purpose”.

“Over the years, the role of Coffee Board has changed and many provisions of the existing Act have become redundant, especially after abolition of Coffee Pooling System in 1996,” she said.

Sitharaman said it has been proposed to repeal the law which was enacted more than 70 years back and enact a new legislation — Coffee Bill, 2016.

The suggestions received on the Bill were “regarding the control of coffee industry, definition of coffee and coffee estate, cognisance of offence under the Act etc which are being examined,” she noted.

Replying to a supplementary, Sitharaman said of the total coffee growing areas in the world, only 2 per cent is in India but it produces 4 per cent of world’s total coffee production and 90 per cent of Indian coffee is exported.

She said even though multi-national coffee chains have set up shops in India, they do buy coffee locally.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Centre may withdraw Coffee Act, draft new legislation



The suggestions received on the Bill were “regarding control of the coffee industry, definition of coffee and coffee estate, cognisance of offences under the Act,

Output seen down 8% due to delay in rains

The Union government is considering withdrawal of the Coffee Act, 1942, as it is “no longer serving the purpose,” Minister for State (Independent Charge) of Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman said in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

She was replying to a supplementary question during Question Hour on the role of the Coffee Board, especially with regard to small growers, and why it was headless for the past two years.

“Over the years, the role of the Coffee Board has changed and many provisions of the existing Act have become redundant, especially after abolition of the Coffee Pooling System in 1996,” she said, adding that it had been proposed to repeal the Act, which was enacted more than 70 years back, and enact a new Coffee Bill, 2016.

The suggestions received on the Bill were “regarding control of the coffee industry, definition of coffee and coffee estate, cognisance of offences under the Act, etc, which are being examined,” she added.

Output decline

In reply to a question from Prathap Simha from Coorg, the Minister said domestic coffee production was likely to fall this year.

“It has been estimated that there is a likelihood of decline in coffee production in 2016-17 by 8 per cent compared with 2015-16 due to lack of timely rains and high temperature during the crucial flowering stage,” Sitharaman said.

Asked whether the government would mandate international coffee chains in India to source domestic coffee, Sitharaman said the country was home to 2 per cent of the world’s coffee-growing area, but produced 4 per cent of global production and had a share of 5 per cent of world coffee exports, worth over 5,000 crore a year.

So, even though international coffee chains have set up shops in India, they buy coffee locally, she said.

The main buyers of Indian coffee are Italy, the Russian Federation, Germany, Belgium and Turkey, which account for over 50 per cent of coffee exports from India, she added.

Duncan tea gardens

On another question by the Trinamool Congress's Saugata Roy, who wanted to know how many closed tea gardens belonging to the Duncan group in West Bengal had been taken over by the Centre "as promised four months ago," Sitharaman said the government had moved to take over some tea gardens, but there was litigation by the Duncan group.

The Minister said the process to identify new agencies to take over the managements of these tea gardens was on, in consultation with the State government.

Govt urged to set up revolving fund for coconut, arecanut

The Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha has urged the State government to set up revolving funds to tackle crisis in arecanut and coconut crops.

Addressing presspersons in Mangaluru on Monday, Badagalapura Nagendra, general secretary of the sangha, said that the revolving funds should help intervene in the market when the prices of agriculture commodities crash.

MSP sought

He said that the government should announce a minimum support price of 25,000 a tonne for coconut, 15,000 a tonne for copra and 35,000 a tonne for arecanut.

Ravikirana Punacha, president of the Dakshina Kannada district unit of the sangha, said the government should announce a minimum support price of 16,000 a tonne for rubber grown in the State.

Farmers' suicide

Expressing concern over the farmers' suicide in various parts of the country, Nagendra said that around 1,300 farmers have committed suicide in Karnataka alone since April.

Though the UPA government constituted Swaminathan committee to look into the causes of farmers' suicide, it did not implement the recommendations of the committee.

The NDA government, which promised to implement the recommendations during Lok Sabha elections, is also not interested in implementing them, he said.

Diversion of farmland

The Centre should at least implement the recommendation related to the prices of the agriculture commodities, he added. Nagendra said that the establishment of Agriculture Price Commission in Karnataka has not helped the farmers.

There is an increase in the use of farmland for non-farm activities in the country. To stop this, there is an urgent need to bring an Act to protect farmlands, he added.

India, US to train African, Asian nations in farm techniques

India, in collaboration with the US, will provide specialised agricultural training jointly to seventeen countries in Africa and Asia to help reduce malnutrition rates and improve food and nutritional security.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Agriculture Ministry in India launched the second phase of the 'feed the future India triangular training program' on Monday that will provide specialised agriculture training to 1,500 professionals across Africa and Asia.

The participating countries include Afghanistan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Mongolia, Vietnam, Kenya, Malawi, Liberia, Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Tanzania, Sudan and Botswana.

The first phase of the programme, funded by USAID and jointly implemented by India's National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management, provided training in three countries — Kenya, Liberia and Malawi.

“The impact assessments carried out for the first phase of the programme generated positive feed-back. The US is, thus, expanding it to seventeen more countries. Our participation in the programme displays our soft power,” said Agriculture Secretary Shobhana K Pattanayak addressing the media on the sidelines of the launch.

Pattanayak said that India had moved from being a food-deficit country in the 1960s to a food surplus economy and many African countries and some developing countries of Asia looked at it or inspiration and transfer of technology.

“By harnessing the expertise and innovation of our two great countries, we are unlocking new opportunities to address global development challenges, bringing us closer to our shared objective of eliminating global poverty and hunger,” said the US Ambassador to India Richard Verma at the launch.

The program will train agricultural professionals in Africa and Asia on specialised farming practices such as agricultural marketing, dairy management, he added.

Specific subject areas to be covered under the programme will be identified and appropriate course content will be developed following capacity gap and skilled HR demand analysis of stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation of national food security, according to the Agriculture Ministry.

These may include private agro-businesses, public service providers and policy makers, for profit and not for profit non-governmental organisations, professional associations, and farmers groups.

Sugar prices surge on tight supplies



Sugar prices have gained 1,000 a tonne to 35,000 in July on the back of a supply deficit in the market due to export of 1.6 million tonnes (mt) and an 11 per cent decline in domestic sugar production to 25.2 mt in the sugar season ending September.

The Centre has imposed an export duty of 20 per cent to curb exports and improve supply in domestic markets.

Sabyasachi Majumdar, Senior Vice-President, ICRA, said prices would remain firm for three-four quarters given that sugar production is likely to decline further to 23-24 mt in SY2017 (October-September) because of a decline in the availability of cane in Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Although the monsoon is likely to be better during the current year, he said, its impact on output is likely to be seen only in SY2018.

Further, he said, the imposition of 20 per cent export duty is unlikely to have any significant impact on prices and profitability of the sugar mills in the near term as domestic sugar realisations are higher than export realisations.

However, he added, the export duty would dampen prospects of a further rise in sugar prices by discouraging sugar companies contracting more export orders. It also demonstrates the Government's intent to restrain any price rise, he said.

Meanwhile, sugar for delivery in October on the NCDEX gained 1.15 per cent to 3,287 a quintal while the December contract inched up 1.49 per cent to 3,890.

ISMA's projections

Reacting to the futures price rise, Abinash Verma, Director-General of the Indian Sugar Mills Association, said, "There was no new trigger for the market to move up. We will have to wait and see whether the prices will sustain at these levels." According to the Agriculture Ministry, cane acreage as on July 22 stood at 45.41 lakh hectares (lh), lower than corresponding last year's 47.40 lh on reduced planting mainly in the key State of Maharashtra. Also other States such as Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh have reported a lower acreage this year. But other producing states such as Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh have reported an increase in area. ISMA has projected that the sugar output for the 2016 season starting October is expected to be 7.33 per cent lower at 232.6 lakh tonnes from 251 lakh tonnes in the previous year.

Global output may drop

In the international market, unfavourable weather conditions have hit sugar production in recent months across major suppliers, leading to expectations of a fall in output.

After almost seven years, sugar prices in the global markets moved up 10 per cent to \$530 a tonne in June from \$480 recorded in May.

The surge in prices reflects the prospects of a fall in yields in Brazil with heavy rains dampening the harvesting process.

"The global sugar demand-supply situation supports firm prices in the near-term, but going forward, political developments in Brazil, fluctuations in the dollar-real exchange rate, and the size of sugarcane crushing in Brazil, India and

Thailand are likely to be the main drivers of global sugar prices,” said Majumdar.

States facing heavy rain in Aug, Sept ‘sensitised’, says Agri Secretary

The Centre had taken note of the heavy rains projected in some parts of the country by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) in August and September and the States concerned have been sensitised.

“The IMD has not projected floods in August and September. It has projected little more than normal rain. We hope it will be localised in nature. But we are fully aware of it (the situation). Most of the governments (States) where it is expected have been fully sensitised,” said Agriculture Secretary SK Pattanayak on Monday, replying to questions on whether the government was prepared to handle more floods.

Seven people have already died in the Assam floods, while many in Arunachal Pradesh have been rendered homeless. Excess rainfalls have been wreaking havoc in West Bengal, North Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Kharif sowing going well

The Secretary said sowing of crops in the ongoing kharif season was progressing well, with more than 60 per cent of the sowing already achieved. “This year, kharif sowing so far is more than what was achieved last year,” he said.

Latest government data shows that kharif crops, such as rice, pulses, coarse grains, jute, oilseeds, sugarcane and cotton have been planted on 69.3 million hectares so far, 3.3 per cent more than the 67.1 million hectares sown in the same period last year.

Upasi urges Centre to use rubberised bitumen on roads

To increase the usage of natural rubber, United Planters Association of Southern India (Upasi) has urged the Centre to consider rubberised bitumen on roads while constructing highways.

Upasi representatives made this suggestion to Nitin Gadkari, Minister of Road Transport & Highways, when they met him at New Delhi.

According to Upasi, the use of natural rubber in road construction could play the dual roles of providing long-term stability to the roads and help farmers to improve the price earnings through increased domestic consumption at a time when their earnings have been gravely affected.

With the increased thrust given by the Government in improving road infrastructure, N.Dharmaraj, UPASI President said that there is huge potential for use of rubberised bitumen in road laying and the attempts made in the past have shown very encouraging results.

Proper blending of bitumen with rubber in a fixed proportion confers good elastic recovery of the blend and the rubberised bitumen is found to be an excellent binder for the rubble and sand. Moreover, the bitumen is proven to be unaffected by the changes in the atmospheric temperature and improve skid resistance, he said, adding that BPCL-Kochi Refineries has sufficient capacity for making rubberised bitumen.

The advantage of using rubber modified bitumen in road construction includes increase in service life of roads, improved resistance to cracks at low temperature, better resistance to fatting of bitumen under hot conditions, improved skid resistance, increased fuel economy and better grip.

Small cardamom eases as demand matches supply

Small cardamom markets were showing a steady trend last week on matching demand and supply at auctions held in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Good colour bold capsules were fetching 20 more per kg while that of inferior quality was being sold at 10-20 less, market sources said.

At today's auction held by the Cardamom Planters' Association (CPA), the average price remained by and large steady at 735.31 a kg against 734.92 the previous Monday.

Today's arrivals were at 11 tonnes and almost the entire quantity was sold. The maximum price was at 979 a kg.

Arrivals continued to show a declining trend. The material arriving at the auctions and the open markets is from the stocks held by growers and primary market dealers, they said. Upcountry buyers were covering but not actively. But, whatever material arrived was being picked up, they said.

"Exporters, however, were totally inactive probably because of the higher prices coupled with non-availability of the capsules with required specifications," PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *BusinessLine*. Exporters estimated to have bought something between 10 and 15 tonnes, he said.

Total arrivals at 12 auctions last week stood at around 417 tonnes against 452 tonnes the previous week.

Good bulk is not available now and the only availability is of medium bulk, which was being traded at 740-770 kg.

The individual auction average was vacillating between 770 and 815 last week, they said.

Total arrivals during the season up to July 23 were at around 33,634 tonnes and sales were at 32,352 tonnes. The individual auction average for the season as on July 23 stood at around 637/kg.

Prices in /kg: 8mm bold good colour 1,200; 7-8 mm 900; 6-7 mm 725-730 and below 6 mm: 630-640.

Use rubberised bitumen on roads: planters' body



To increase the usage of natural rubber, the United Planters Association of Southern India (Upasi) has urged the Centre to consider rubber bituminised roads for the future construction of national highways.

Upasi representatives made this suggestion to Nitin Gadkari, Road Transport & Highways Minister, when they met him at New Delhi.

According to Upasi, the use of natural rubber in road construction could play the dual role of providing long-term stability to roads and help farmers improve price earnings through increased domestic consumption.

With the government giving road infrastructure a thrust, N Dharmaraj, Upasi President, said that there is huge potential for use of rubberised bitumen in road laying and attempts made in the past have shown very encouraging results.

Proper blending of bitumen with rubber in a fixed proportion confers good elastic recovery of the blend and the rubberised bitumen is found to be an excellent binder for the rubble and sand.

Moreover, the bitumen is proven to be unaffected by changes in the atmospheric temperature and can improve skid resistance, he said.

The BPCL-Kochi Refinery has sufficient capacity to make rubberised bitumen, he added.

Govt may withdraw Coffee Act, come out with new Bill



The government is considering withdrawal of the Coffee Act, 1942, as it “no longer serves the purpose”, Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

The Minister was replying to a supplementary during Question Hour on the role of the Coffee Board, especially with regard to small growers, and why it was headless for the past two years.

“Over the years, the role of the Coffee Board has changed and many provisions of the existing Act have become redundant, especially after abolition of the Coffee Pooling System in 1996,” she said, adding that it had been proposed to repeal the Act which was enacted more than 70 years back and enact a new Coffee Bill, 2016.

The suggestions received on the Bill were “regarding the control of the coffee industry, definition of coffee and coffee estate, cognisance of offence under the Act, etc, which are being examined,” she added.

Output decline

In reply to a question from Prathap Simha from Coorg, the Minister said domestic coffee production was likely to fall by 8 per cent in the current fiscal, due mainly to lack of timely rains.

“It has been estimated that there is a likelihood of a decline in coffee production in 2016-17 by 8 per cent compared with 2015-16 due to lack of timely rains and high temperature during the crucial flowering stage,” Sitharaman said.

On another supplementary on whether the government would mandate international coffee chains in India to buy Indian coffee, Sitharaman said the country was home to 2 per cent of the world’s coffee growing area, but produced 4 per cent of global production and had a share of 5 per cent of world coffee exports, worth over Rs. 5,000 crore a year. So, even though international coffee chains have set up shop in India, they do buy coffee locally, she said.

The main buyers of Indian coffee are Italy, Russian Federation, Germany, Belgium and Turkey, which account for over 50 per cent of coffee exports from India, she added.

Duncan tea gardens

On another supplementary by Trinamool’s Saugata Roy who wanted to know how many closed tea gardens’ belonging to the Duncan group in West Bengal had been taken over by the Centre “as promised four months ago”, Sitharaman said the government had moved to take over some tea gardens, but there was litigation by the Duncan group. The Minister said the process to identify new agencies to take over the management of these tea gardens was on, in consultation with the state government.

Business Standard

Indian agrochemicals market to reach \$ 6.3 billion by FY20: Report

With several products going off-patent globally, Indian firms can leverage opportunities for generics, contract manufacturing & research, says a report of Tata Strategic Management and FICCI



Indian agrochemical industry, which is estimated at \$ 4.4 billion in FY15, is expected to grow at 7.5 percent annually to reach \$ 6.3 billion by FY20, with domestic demand growing at 6.5 percent per annum and export demand at 9 percent per annum, according to a report jointly presented by Tata Strategic Management Group (TSMG) and FICCI at the latter's sixth National Conference on Agrochemicals 2016 in New Delhi.

The report - titled as 'Next generation Indian agriculture: Role of crop protection solutions' - was released by Hukumdev Narayan Yadav, chairman, Standing Committee of Parliament on Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

"Agrochemicals play a critical role in ensuring food and nutrition security of the nation. With estimated 355 MMTPA (million metric tonne per annum) food

grain requirement by 2030 from current 253 MMTPA, efficient usage of crop protection products and solutions for Indian agriculture are the need of the hour. In order to realise the true potential, industry, government and regulatory bodies need to work in tandem and embrace digital technologies to further improve farmer connect,” commented Manish Panchal, senior practice head - chemicals & energy at Tata Strategic Management Group.

As per the report, the industry is dominated by insecticides accounting for 60 percent of the overall demand, followed by fungicides and herbicides contributing 18 percent and 16 percent, respectively.

The report highlights the changing food consumption patterns in India, demand patterns and future growth potential of crop protection industry in India. As per the report, there is a need of crop protection and crop enhancement solutions to overcome the challenges faced by Indian agriculture in ensuring food and nutritional security of the nation. To ensure sustainable agriculture in the country, it has also suggested adoption of the best global practices and the latest technologies which include agronomy, fertigation, seed treatment and biotechnology development.

The Indian agriculture sector is currently facing critical challenges like reduction in arable land, decreasing farm size, increasing pest attacks, low per hectare yield and a shift towards animal products consumption, all of which are leading to demand outpacing supply in the country’s food chain. Agrochemicals could play a significant role in overcoming this imbalance.

Indian crop protection market is supported by strong growth drivers. Current consumption of crop protection products in India at 0.6 kg per hectares (ha), is much lower than the world average of 3 kg per ha. This offers immense opportunities for future growth. With several products going off-patent globally, the sector is opening opportunities for generics, contract manufacturing & research for Indian players who can leverage their large scientific talent pool.

Despite the strong growth drivers, Indian agrochemicals industry faces challenges in terms of low awareness among farmers and rising sales of non-genuine products (approximately 25 percent by volume). With large number of

end users spread across the vast geography, managing availability through a distribution network is a challenge for all the major players. A collaborative approach by the industry, government & regulatory bodies is the need of the hour to realise full potential of the agrochemicals industry.

Charu Kapoor, principal - chemicals practice, TSMG, added, “The Indian crop protection industry has seen a significant slowdown in the past two years due to two consecutive years of drought and weak global demand. The monsoon this year looks promising and the industry could see improved conditions. To reduce business volatility from such macro factors and build a more resilient business model, it is imperative for companies to explore adjacencies.”

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Rajasthan seeks technology, investments to strengthen agricultural sector



Highlighting the new regulations, grants and policies of the Rajasthan state in agriculture and allied sectors, the minister of Agriculture, Prabhu Lal Saini invited farmers/industrialists to partner with Rajasthan in agri and allied sectors.

Talking on the sidelines of the "Gram 2016" Saini was speaking at a road show conducted in Mumbai. The forthcoming Global Rajasthan Agritech Meet-2016 or "GRAM 2016" would be held at Jaipur from November 9-11, 2016.

Focusing on technological innovations and high-yield practices in agriculture and allied sectors, the primary objective of GRAM 2016 is to ensure the economic empowerment of the farmers through accelerated yet sustainable growth in agriculture and to double farmer's income by 2022. Farmers here would be taught various new techniques to be used which would help them earn more yields. Besides, they will be educated about the methods of drip irrigation which will help them to overcome drought like situations.

During the Agritech meet the state will showcase investment opportunities in the sector involving products like pressure irrigation, solar pumps, custom hiring of farm machinery & implements, farm mechanization, agro-processing etc. The international event with representations from Netherlands, Israel, Australia and Canada will be attended by over 40,000 farmers.

This event will also feature an exhibition showcasing strengths of the Rajasthan agricultural sector, live demonstrations of latest agro technologies and equipments, B2B & B2G meetings with national and foreign partners, conference on knowledge sharing and best agri practices and a networking session between the agri industry, academia and policy makers including government officials. It will provide a common platform for bringing everyone involved in the full value chain of agricultural ecosystem - farmers, academicians, scientists, technologists, agribusiness companies and policy makers.

SBI, IOC link up to empower farmers

State Bank Of India (SBI) and Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) have tied up to implement the bank's financial inclusion programme for farmers through the oil company's Kisan Seva Kendras, an official said here on Monday.

Under the agreement, SBI will provide access to banking services for the farmers utilising the IOC's kiosks and also supplement their incomes by earning revenue on banking transactions.

The IOC has set up around 6,500 KSKs in rural and remote areas which provide various agricultural services like diesel, seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and the like to the farming community.



The new SBI-IOC initiative will help farmers avail facilities and various banking products and services like bank accounts, term deposits, recurring deposits, micro-credit, remittances, social security schemes, Aadhaar Seeding through the kiosks.

The MoU was signed by SBI's chief general manager, rural business K. M. Trivedi and IOC's general manager, retail sales Sivasis Dey in the presence of top officials like SBI National Banking Group Managing Director Rajnish Kumar and IOC's Executive Director, Retail Sales, D. K. Sharma.

SBI, which has 62,341 Customer Service Points handling over one million transactions daily in India, is already facilitating farmers to buy agriculture inputs by using the Rupay Debit Cards, thus eliminating the need to carry large amounts of cash.

GRAM '16 for economic empowerment of farmers



JAIPUR: Highlighting the new regulations, grants and policies of the state in agriculture and allied sectors, agriculture minister Prabhu Lal Saini invited farmers/industrialists to partner with Rajasthan in agri and related sectors.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Heavy rainfall and floods can cut tea production by 25%



(Representative image) Flood water has entered many tea estates and even factories where black teas are produced.

KOLKATA: India's tea production is likely to drop by nearly 20-25 per cent in July compared to last year as heavy rains and a flood like situation in Dooars and Darjeeling in North Bengal have affected tea production.

Flood water has entered many tea estates and even factories where black teas are produced. A portion of Goodricke GroupBSE -0.33 %'s Leesh river tea estate has completely been washed away.

Talking to ET, AN Singh, CEO, Goodricke Group said, "The situation is extremely worrisome in Dooars. Water has entered labourers' quarters and in some cases in factories as well.

"Over the last five days, estates in Dooars have received 40 inches of rainfall which is quite alarming. Once floodwater recedes there will be pest attack which will affect the tea leaves."

Singh added that this will definitely bring down tea production by 20-25 per cent in July alone. Dooars had produced 23.99 million kg of tea in July 2015. The total production in India was 154.37 million kg in July.

In 2015, India had produced 1208.66 million kg of tea. Dooars region annually produces 300 million kg of tea.

According to tea planters, around 30 estates are under water in Terai and Dooars.

Such sudden inundation of plantations and roads that connect these tea estates has led to halt in plucking and processing of tealeaves.

Rains have affected Darjeeling tea production as well. The July crop is expected to be lower by 50 per cent due to the heavy rains, said SS Bagaria, chairman, Darjeeling Tea Association (DTA).

In July 2015, Darjeeling had produced 1.44 million kg of tea. The 87 tea estates in Darjeeling area produces 8.5 - 9 million kg of tea annually.

SBI, IOC link up to empower farmers



SBI will provide access to banking services for the farmers utilising the IOC's kiosks and also supplement their incomes by earning revenue on banking transactions.

MUMBAI: State Bank Of IndiaBSE 0.07 % (SBI) and Indian Oil CorporationBSE 0.92 % (IOC) have tied up to implement the bank's financial inclusion programme for farmers through the oil company's Kisan Seva Kendras, an official said here on Monday.

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SBI, which has 62,341 Customer Service Points handling over one million transactions daily in India, is already facilitating farmers to buy agriculture inputs by using the Rupay Debit Cards, thus eliminating the need to carry large amounts of cash.

Government to provide benefits to small tea growers: Nirmala Sitharaman



Nirmala Sitharaman said in Lok Sabha that a proposal has been mooted to amend the Tea (Marketing) Control Order 2003 so as to define mini and micro factories.

NEW DELHI: To encourage small tea growers and give them better price for their products, the government has proposed to amend a 2003 order to define mini and micro factories and provide various benefits to them.

Minister of State for Commerce Nirmala Sitharaman said in Lok Sabha that a proposal has been mooted to amend the Tea (Marketing) Control Order 2003 so as to define mini and micro factories and exempt them from obtaining no objection certificate for manufacturing tea.

Listing out various benefits and assistance being provided to the small tea growers, Sitharaman said during Question Hour that in order to ensure better price to small tea growers, who supply tea leaves to factories, price sharing formulas have been notified for different tea growing states.

Payment of green leaf to the growers is closely monitored by the district green leaf price monitoring committees, she said.

The Tea Development and Promotion Scheme implemented by the Tea Board has a separate component for development of small tea growers.

The scheme aims at addressing the special needs of small tea growers, particularly in the area of improving production and productivity and establishing processing factories with special focus on enhancing quality.

Financial assistance of around Rs 55.56 crore has so far been extended to the small tea growers in the XII plan, she said.