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THE HINDU

ICAR meeting on June 24, 25

The ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (ICAR-NAARM) will be hosting the XXIII Meeting of the ICAR Regional Committee-II (RCMII) from June 24 to 25 at its campus in Hyderabad. The RCMII is held once in two years.

The present meeting will discuss and review the current status of agricultural research, agricultural education and extension in West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The Committee provides a forum for liaison and coordination among the institutes of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, State Agricultural Universities and State Departments of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries. The participants include Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education and Director-General, ICAR, Members of the ICAR Governing Body/Society, Deputy Directors-General of the ICAR, Secretaries and Directors from the State Departments, Vice-Chancellors of SAUs, Directors of the institutes of the ICAR and Scientists.

Eco-shop to procure, sell organic products

An Eco-shop will start functioning at the Krishi Bhavan at Kudappanakkunnu as part of the Krishi Vikas Yojana project of the Agriculture Department and the city Corporation. The shop will procure, sell and auction organic products certified by Kerala Agricultural University. The products will be available at government regulated rates.

In addition, procurement of coconuts will be done through Kerafed. The project executed by a task force, aims at transforming Kudappanakkunnu into the organic hub of the city. The shop also will have a seed bank and agriculture banking counter.

Agriculture Minister V.S. Sunil Kumar will inaugurate the Eco-shop at 10.30 a.m. on Thursday.

FPOs soon to make farming remunerative

Chief Minister releases second instalment under debt waiver scheme



Farmer-friendly: Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu interacting with a farmer at a programme in Ongole on Wednesday. —Photo: Kommuri Srinivas

The State government will facilitate formation of farmer producer organisations (FPO) to help farmers get remunerative price for their produce, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has said.

He was addressing peasants here on Wednesday after distributing debt relief certificates to mark the release of the second instalment of Rs. 3,500 crore under the debt waiver scheme, benefiting 36.39 lakh farmers in the State.

The Chief Minister said that the government would encourage the FPOs to adopt best agronomic practices to get the best price for their produce by collaborating with overseas firms.

Responding to the peasants' pleas to help them wriggle out of the unfavourable market conditions, which pushed them into a debt trap, the Chief Minister explained at length the efforts of the government to make farming profitable.

While hailing the government's bold initiative to implement the loan waiver scheme, farmer after farmer, during a brief interaction, said that it was the unpredictable market conditions that put paid to their hopes of getting decent returns.

Smart technology

The Chief Minister exhorted the farmers to compulsorily enrol themselves under the improvised Prime Minister's Fasal Bima Yojana, which assured early settlement of claims using smart technology in case of crop loss.

Multi-cropping and farm-related activities like cattle rearing, poultry management, and pisciculture would alone ensure better returns, he said. 'E-crop,' under which every piece of land was being geo-tagged, would enable scientific management of land and crop, he said, adding that henceforth farmers need not take the risk of visiting their fields at odd times to switch on their pump-sets as all conventional pump-sets would soon be replaced with energy-efficient smart agriculture pump-sets, which could be operated remotely.

Sea port

Amid loud cheers, he said that the longstanding demand for Ramayapatnam sea port would materialise soon.

Other facilities that would also come up soon are National Investment and Manufacturing Zone, University of Mines and Mineral Sciences, and Indian Institute of Information Technology. Agriculture Minister P. Pulla Rao, Transport Minister Sidda Raghava Rao, and Social Welfare Minister R. Kishore Babu were among those who spoke.

Waiver for Krishna district

Machilipatnam Staff Reporter writes: The government released Rs. 232 crore for Krishna district to waive crop loan in the second phase. District Joint Director of Agriculture U. Narasimha Rao said that crop loan of the eligible 2.96 lakh farmers would be waived. These farmers are required to submit documents to get their loan waived between June 22 and 30.

Record price for cotton at Jammikunta

The crop sold at Rs. 6,020 per quintal against the minimum support price of Rs. 4,100

Farmers who had stored cotton to sell during this kharif and take up cultivation with the earnings, are reaping riches with the crop bagging a record price at Jammikunta agricultural market yard in the district on Wednesday.

The cotton crop was sold at Rs. 6,020 per quintal against the minimum support price of Rs. 4,100 at Jammikunta market. On Tuesday, the crop was sold at Rs. 5,850 per quintal at the same market.

However, there was only a few arrivals into the market between 700 and 900 quintals a day due to low production.

Traders and officials attributed increase in price of cotton to increase in demand for the crop in both domestic and international markets.

Besides, there has been a huge demand for cotton seed for preparation of cotton oil. The cotton seed price has increased from Rs. 1,900 per quintal to Rs. 2,800 per quintal.

The price of cotton has also increased owing to low production following drought conditions in the district.

A few farmers had stored their produce in their house to sell during kharif and take up fresh cultivation of other crops with the earnings after selling cotton.

On the other hand, a majority of big traders, who store the product in godowns after purchasing it in the peak season at a lesser price than MSP, are now reaping riches by selling the same at a much higher price in the market.

An official said that when the crop arrives into the market, cotton gets no MSP due to glut in production.

Now, when there is no production, the traders are benefitting by cashing in on the demand for the crop in the domestic market, he said and added that the high price for cotton would continue till the arrival of the next crop in October.

Sowing operations in full swing in Kalaburagi



good beginning:Kalaburagi district has received a rainfall of 149.3 mm from June 1 to 20as against a normal rainfall of 71.2 mm.— PHOTO: Arun Kulkarni

Widespread rain after the onset of the South West monsoon in the drought-affected district has helped farmers to begin sowing operations, which is being done at a brisk phase.

According to the details available, sowing has been completed in a record 26 per cent of the targeted area for the khariff season till now.

Official sources said here that farmers had completed sowing operations in 1,46,578 hectares as against the target of 5.69 lakh hectares fixed for the khariff season. In Chincholi taluk, farmers have completed sowing operations in 50 per cent of the targeted area.

According to the official figures available, farmers have completed sowing of red gram, the main crop of the farmers of the district, in 94,960 hectares of the targeted area of 3.62 lakh hectares. Similarly, farmers have completed sowing of short-duration cash crops of green gram and black gram in 13,224 hectares and 9,875 hectares respectively. The target fixed for green gram coverage was 35,100 hectares and 25,000 hectares for black gram.

Sources said that with the present phase of brisk sowing the area under red gram, green gram and black gram is likely to increase by manifolds and exceed the targets this year.

Another crop which is increasingly becoming popular among farmers is soya bean.

As against the target of 15,000 hectares fixed this year by the Agriculture Department for soya bean, farmers have completed sowing of the crop in 6,970 hectares.

Sowing of sugarcane is also progressing at a brisk phase in the district. Fifty three per cent of the targeted area has come under cultivation.

In Afzalpur taluk, 31 per cent of the targeted area under khariff cultivation has been covered already, followed by 29 per cent in Aland, 26 per cent in Chitapur, 23 per cent in Sedam, 15 per cent in Jewargi and 13 per cent in Kalaburagi taluk.

Sources said that all the seven taluks have recorded good rainfall from the beginning of the monsoon season. According to the rainfall data from June 1 to 20, the district has recorded 110 per cent more rainfall than normal.

As against a normal rainfall of 71.2 mm, the district has received 149.3 mm.

While Afzalpur taluk recorded a rainfall of 120.5 mm rainfall in the same period against 68 mm, Aland recorded 147 mm against 67.5 mm rainfall.

Chincholi recorded 169.6 mm rainfall against 83.6 mm, Chitapur recorded 186.1 mm against the normal rainfall of 63.7 mm, and Kalaburagi saw 167.4 mm rainfall against the normal 75.2 mm. Jewargi recorded a rainfall of 145.2 mm against the normal 39 mm and Sedam received 146.3 mm against the normal 60.6 mm.

Water level in Mettur rising

For the first time in the last few months, the inflow into Mettur Dam crossed the 1,000 cusecs mark, raising hopes of delta farmers and government machinery.

With the southwest monsoon intensifying in the catchment areas of River Cauvery in Karnataka, the Public Works Department authorities here are confident of Mettur Dam getting increased inflow in the days to come. The inflow into the dam that stood at 124 cusecs on Monday, rose to 622 cusecs on Tuesday.

Use of arecanut as mouth freshner likely to open up new market

If the move by Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative Ltd. (CAMPCO) to export processed tender arecanut to China for making mouth freshner on a trial basis succeeds, an alternative market for arecanut will be opened up.

It will be significant for arecanut growers in view of ban on gutka in the country. Though gutka has been banned, tobacco and arecanut are available in separate sachets in the market now. Consumers mix them and chew them. The two markets for arecanut — for chewing with pan and with tobacco — remain intact.

But this scenario will change after 2020. India is a signatory to the UN Framework Convention on Tobacco Control according to which it is obligatory to phase out its cultivation by 2020. Hence when tobacco will be out of circulation, arecanut will lose one of its markets.

Sources in CAMPCO told *The Hindu* that use of tender arecanut as mouth freshner could replace the market which would be lost by the phasing out of tobacco. As China had about 20 companies manufacturing mouth freshner, there was scope for marketing quality tender arecanut.

Konkodi Padmanabha, former president of CAMPCO, and president of the Karnataka State Areca Marketing Societies' Cooperative Federation, said that

according to an estimate, India produced about seven lakh tonnes of arecanut a year. “In that, even if 20 per cent is exported for making mouth freshner, the price of arecanut in the domestic market can remain stable,” he said.

Mr. Padmanabha said that arecanut growers would have to come forward to supply processed tender arecanut of Chinese standards and make a plan on exporting it to China. The government could arrange a study tour of progressive farmers to China to enlighten them on the processing and standardisation of arecanut and to know the demand for it there.

He said that the cooperative societies dealing with arecanut could also send a team of farmers to China.

M. Suresh Bhandary, managing director, CAMPCO, said that as per the current trend, farmers will get Rs. 230 per kg of processed tender arecanut meant for export for making mouth freshner.

Designer eggs sans cholesterol concerns



Designer eggs being produced by the Kisan Jyothi Farmers Club at Vaduvanchal in Wayanad.

A group of farmers come out with designer eggs at Vaduvanchal in Wayanad

Though eggs have been considered as the complete food with most of the nutrients necessary for the body, concerns over its cholesterol content have kept many at bay.

Now, a group of farmers under the NABARD-supported Kisan Jyothi Farmers Club (KJFC) at Vaduvanchal in Wayanad have come out with designer eggs, which they claim will settle the apprehension once and for all. They say their 'Omega' brand eggs solve the riddle and set to rest doubts of the cholesterol-conscious.

"Designer eggs are those in which the content has been modified from the standard egg. The technology of designer egg involves manipulating nutrients in poultry feed and fortification of egg with micro-nutrients and vitamins," Anil Zachariah, deputy project director of ATMA, Wayanad, the certifying agency, said.

Made using scientific method

Dr. Zachariah said the eggs were produced through a scientific method adopted for nurturing the layer with right feed so that they laid high quality eggs.

"The composition of the feed leads to the desired composition of the eggs adding to its nutritive profile through enrichment in the diet, and not by use of drugs or hormones," Sreeshitha, district technology manager, ATMA said.

"Eggs laid by hens fed on a diet of greens and insects contain higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids than those produced by hens fed on corn," Dr. Sreeshitha added.

"When the project was launched under the Farm Sector Promotion Fund programme of NABARD two months ago, we distributed ten BV380 strain chicks each to 66 families in the area," N.S. Saji Kumar, assistant general manager, NABARD, said. Training and technical support were given by ATMA to the farmers, he added.

250 eggs a month for a family

"Now each family is getting an average of 250 eggs a month and we have entered into a memorandum of understanding with the WAYFARM farmer producer company to procure the designer eggs from the farmers at a price of Rs.6.50," P. Hariharan, chief coordinator of the club, said. The company would market the produce through its retail shops, he added.

P. Balachandran, general manager, NABARD, handed over the first lot of eggs to P.A Sabu, managing director of WAYFARM, at Mananthavady on Wednesday.

Farm census to be held in Alappuzha in July

The Economics and Statistics Department will undertake a census on agriculture in the district next month as part of a national programme.

Officials of the Department will collect data from households. The census will be carried out in select wards in each grama panchayat or municipality.

Investigators of the department will visit households and collect information such as extent of agricultural land in possession, utility of land, ownership, crop distribution, irrigation, usage of fertilizers and pesticides, farm implements and cattle. The national farm census is conducted every five years.

A district-level training session for the officials of the department will be held here on June 24. District panchayat president G.Venugopal will inaugurate it.



Mgnrega In Drought-Hit States: Work demand rises, but majority wait for additional days

Across the country, wage employment generated under the scheme has gone up from 32 crore person-days in April - May 2015 to 51 crore person-days in the corresponding months of 2016.



A majority of this work has been generated in the ten drought notified states which have seen 37 crore person-days so far as compared to 24 crore person-days in the first two months of FY16.

Signalling an increase in uptake of MGNREGA work on the ground owing to drought as well as the slow revival of the scheme itself, the person-days generated in the first two months of the financial year has gone up by more than 50 per cent as compared to the last year.

Across the country, wage employment generated under the scheme has gone up from 32 crore person-days in April – May 2015 to 51 crore person-days in the corresponding months of 2016. A majority of this work has been generated in the ten drought notified states which have seen 37 crore person-days so far as compared to 24 crore person-days in the first two months of FY16.

The wage employment guaranteed under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a major drought mitigation measure as it provides an alternative source of rural income in the face of failing farm outputs. The current surge in those being provided employment under MGNREGA is a result of a poor Rabi harvest in the months of April and May. With the next round of harvest, for Kharif crops, happening only in September - October, the demand for work is expected to remain high for another two to three months.

The uptake of work has more than doubled in the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. According to Yogendra Yadav, whose Swaraj Abhiyan had filed the apex court petition on the government's failure to mitigate drought, with elections around the corner in UP there has been a visible improvement of MGNREGA work in the parts of Bundelkhand that fall in the state.

He, however, added that MGNREGA is fast losing credibility due to non-payment and delayed payments. "With two consecutive drought years, what we have is not merely a drinking water crisis but a crisis of food, employment and fodder. However, it is business as usual for the state. MGNREGA funds are being choked from the top. The government is yet to keep its commitment made in the Supreme Court for releasing an additional Rs 17,000 crore of funds under the scheme by June," said Yadav.

MGNREGA: PERSON-DAYS GENERATION (INCR) PER MONTH FOR DROUGHT NOTIFIED STATES

STATE	FY15-16		FY16-17	
	APRIL	MAY	APRIL	MAY
Andhra Pradesh	3.64	4.42	3.06	4.44
Chhattisgarh	0.10	0.77	1.27	1.65
Jharkhand	0.38	0.62	0.93	1.48
Karnataka	0.20	0.09	0.79	0.89
Madhya Pradesh	0.08	0.30	1.08	1.30
Maharashtra	0.89	1.25	1.24	1.46
Odisha	0.14	0.67	0.83	1.15
Rajasthan	0.88	2.70	2.77	4.95
Telangana	2.70	2.43	2.18	2.30
Uttar Pradesh	0.54	1.83	1.03	2.65
TOTAL 10 STATES	9.55	15.08	15.18	22.27
		24.63		37.45
NATIONAL	12.94	9.18	21.78	29.53
		32.12		51.31

Despite the increased demand for work, ten of the thirteen drought-hit states are yet to provide the promised 150 days of work under the scheme. In April this year, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) decided to extend for 2016-17 the additional fifty days of work per household that was provided under MGNREGA in drought-affected regions.

These were to be applicable in ten drought-affected states where such extra work was already been provided since September 2015. Of the three additional states of Gujarat, Bihar and Haryana, where the 150 days work was to be extended, only Gujarat is the only one to have notified drought.

So far this fiscal, the promised 150 days is being provided merely in Karnataka. A week ago, the MoRD notified two additional states — Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan — for 150 days of work.

MoRD officials said that they are waiting for the states to write to the agriculture ministry which will, in turn, recommend the concerned states to the MoRD for grant of additional work.

“For the ten states, where drought has already been notified, we had provided the extra days of work only until March 31, 2016. If we have to extend this for another year, the process has to happen all over again with the states first sending in their proposals,” said a MoRD official. As far as funds are

concerned, officials said that they have released Rs 22,000 crore so far of which Rs 12,581 crore were for pending liabilities of last year. They added that the MoRD will demand another Rs 15,000 crore from the finance ministry.

Activists said that notwithstanding the relatively easier flow of money as compared to last year, funds squeeze remains a problem. For instance, despite the ministry's claims of having cleared all pending liabilities, the compensation that is to be given under the scheme for delayed payments works out to Rs 438 crore for 2015-16.

Just 2 per cent of this amount has been approved for payment and less than one per cent has been paid till date as per the ministry's own records. "About 90 per cent of the amount is rejected. Until last year, the ministry would mention the reason for rejecting the amount as 'insufficient funds'. Now they have simply stopped mentioning the reason," said Nikhil Dey from the Rajasthan-based Mazdoor Kishan Shakti Sangthan.

Similarly, while the total demand for work for 2016-17 based on the proposals submitted by all states was 314 crore person-days, it was scaled down by the centre to 217 crore person-days. "The problem is with the finance ministry. If the rains are above average this year, it will resolve the drinking water crisis and the fodder shortage will go down but it won't immediately ensure that people get food. This is why it is important that work is made available under MGNREGA until September," he said.

Madhya Pradesh-based Sunilam from the Kisan Sagharsh Samiti added that in the drought-affected regions of the state, about 60 to 70 per cent of the working population have migrated recently in search of work. "Workers get their MGNREGA money after a three-month wait. Let alone 150 days, not a single village can claim that all their labourers have received 100 days of work. This is why most choose to migrate in search of better paying work," he said.

61,000 acres of opium grown in Mexico between 2014-15, shows study

The head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in Mexico, Antonio Mazzitelli, said a second part of the study will try to estimate what the crop yield is in Mexico.

Mexico and the United Nations announced on June 22 the results of a new study that estimates opium poppies were planted on about 61,000 acres (24,800 hectares) in Mexico between 2014 and 2015.

The study is the first of its kind in Mexico, so authorities can't compare the results with past years to determine whether opium growing has expanded.

The head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in Mexico, Antonio Mazzitelli, said a second part of the study will try to estimate what the crop yield is in Mexico.

Mazzitelli said production is concentrated in nine states along Mexico's Pacific coast, including Guerrero, Sinaloa and Nayarit.

The Mexican government said it had destroyed about the same acreage of poppy plantations in the same period, but it was unclear if that corresponded to the area mentioned in the study.

US authorities estimate that about half of the heroin seized there came from Mexico. Most of the rest of US heroin comes from South America.

The US Drug Enforcement Administration has said poppy cultivation in Mexico is on the rise, with 17,000 hectares in 2014 and an estimated potential production of 42 metric tons of heroin.

The governor of Guerrero state, one of the country's biggest opium producing areas, proposed earlier this year allowing farmers to produce opium poppies for legal, medicinal use.

The federal government said it will continue to combat poppy cultivation. But Assistant Foreign Relations Secretary Miguel Ruiz Cabanas said the government will use the new study not just to eradicate poppy plantations, but also to try to help the impoverished farmers who frequently grow the crop.

Vegetable hub for Mumbai, Pune to come up at Talegaon

Other than setting up of a "hub and spoke" for supply of vegetables to Pune and Mumbai, there are also plans to boost entrepreneurship-driven retail experiments in selling vegetables in the metros.



Collection would be done from areas within a 280-km diameter. 800 Farmer Producers Companies in the state will enlist them in the process, says Milind Akre, managing director of the Maharashtra State Agricultural Marketing Board.

As the state government goes ahead with its plan to delist fruits and vegetables, plans to set up alternate sources are gathering steam in the state. Other than setting up of a “hub and spoke” for supply of vegetables to Pune and Mumbai, there are also plans to boost entrepreneurship-driven retail experiments in selling vegetables in the metros.

Milind Akre, managing director of the Maharashtra State Agricultural Marketing Board, said the “hub and spoke” arrangement would see collection from farm gates. Refrigerated vans (Ref vans) would be used to collect vegetables from the farm gates and bring to a central collection centre. The main hub for this model for Pune and Mumbai is expected to come up at Talegaon by January 2018.

“Collection would be done from areas within a 280-km diameter. We have the list of 800 Farmer Producers Companies in the state and we will enlist them in the process,” he said.

MSAMB would be playing a facilitator for the project. “The National Dairy Development Board would be engaged as a consultant to the project and we have already written to them,” he said.

With a budget of around Rs 500 crore, the project is scheduled to kick off from January 2018.

Akre said this project would not see creation of new retail outlets. Instead, the MSAMB would be inviting the existing retail players to participate in the project.

The National Capital of Delhi already has a similar model where the Dairy Development Board operates 350-plus such retail shops and sells on a daily basis 300 metric tonnes of vegetables. The entire procurement network is spread across 16 states and involves more than 5,000 farmers.

There are also plans of either scaling up or implementing successful models developed by entrepreneurs in this field.

Ameya Supnekar of the Satara-based Krushak Ashram said they would be discussing their model of a retail in the field with the Minister of Cooperation Chandrakant Patil.

Since 2011, Krushak Ashram had started a farm to come up with a model for procurement and retail of vegetables in Pune. “We have a production plan ready for constant supply of 20-25 different kinds of vegetables. Also, we want to expand with the franchise model and hope the government will help us with the project,” he said.

Market prices and skewed procurement

If farmers in eastern India were to realise better market prices, concerted efforts have to be made to enhance official procurement in the region, the CACP has pointed out.



According to the CACP, about 37.3 per cent of the country's total estimated marketed surplus of paddy in 2014-15 was procured by government agencies. (Reuters photo)

Farmers in eastern India are worst-placed with regard to receiving the government's minimum support price (MSP) for their crop.

An analysis of wholesale market prices of paddy in the eastern states — comprising Assam, Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal — by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) shows these to have averaged below their corresponding MSPs for much of the last five years.

This wasn't the case in other major paddy-producing states — Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Punjab, Haryana and western UP — where, as the accompanying table shows, average wholesale market prices almost consistently ruled above the MSPs.

The main reason for this is the absence of a robust government procurement system in eastern India, notwithstanding region's acknowledged potential to bring about the country's "second" Green Revolution in view of its relatively abundant rainfall and groundwater resources.

**MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE
(MSP) vs. WHOLESALE
PRICE (WP) OF PADDY
(₹ per quintal)**

	MSP*	Eastern Belt	Other States
Q4 2010	1,000	998	961
Q1 2011	1,000	977	1,005
Q2 2011	1,000	974	1,057
Q3 2011	1,000	960	1,022
Q4 2011	1,080	932	1,040
Q1 2012	1,080	916	1,078
Q2 2012	1,080	934	1,175
Q3 2012	1,080	998	1,289
Q4 2012	1,250	1,028	1,314
Q1 2013	1,250	1,051	1,397
Q2 2013	1,250	1,142	1,400
Q3 2013	1,250	1,269	1,414
Q4 2013	1,310	1,273	1,404
Q1 2014	1,310	1,274	1,391
Q2 2014	1,310	1,310	1,405
Q3 2014	1,310	1,372	1,435
Q4 2014	1,360	1,301	1,436
Q1 2015	1,360	1,195	1,450
Q2 2015	1,360	1,177	1,392
Q3 2015	1,360	1,205	1,406
Q4 2015	1,410	1,268	1,541

**For common varieties;*

*Other States include Andhra Pradesh,
Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Odisha,
Punjab, Haryana and western UP.*

Source: CACP.

According to the CACP, about 37.3 per cent of the country's total estimated marketed surplus of paddy in 2014-15 was procured by government agencies. But this ratio was a mere 0.4 per cent for Assam, 14.9 per cent for UP, 17 per cent for West Bengal and 24.2 per cent for Bihar.

On the other hand, state agencies procured 72.8 per cent of the marketed surplus of paddy in Punjab, with these similarly high at 72.4 per cent for Chhattisgarh,

67.2 per cent for Andhra Pradesh, 62.7 per cent for Haryana and 57 per cent for Odisha.

If farmers in eastern India were to realise better market prices, concerted efforts have to be made to enhance official procurement in the region, the CACP has pointed out.

Maharashtra government model village plan, in 14 drought-hit districts

The project has been undertaken to link the “jalyukta shivar”, the flagship project of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, with livelihoods of villagers.

The state government has taken up an ambitious project to develop model villages in 14 drought-hit districts. The project has been undertaken to link the “jalyukta shivar”, the flagship project of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, with livelihoods of villagers.

The shortlisted villages — Pimpalgaon (Osmanabad), Babhadi (Parbhani),

Babulgaon (Hingoli), Gariapur (Nanded), Nalni (Jalna), Sonhewra (Beed), Harangul (Latur), Mandrup (Solapur), Khatwada (Akola), Dabhadi-Pimpributi (Yavatmal), Ekdhara (Amravati), Neemgaon / Jambulhaba (Buldhana), Bamdevi (Wardha), Panala (Nandurbar) — are among the worst hit by agrarian crisis in the last two decades.

Each village will be provided funds for becoming self reliant in water through “jalyukta shivar” and livelihoods designed to make farmers and villagers economically self reliant.

District collectors have been urged to provide a full fledged development plan for each of these shortlisted villages after consultations with and consent of the village gram panchayats ensuring public participation. Special funds would be allocated for “jalyukata shivar”.

Initially, Rs 30 crores from the CM’s Relief Fund have been allocated for 15 villages across 14 districts for the jalyukta shivar abhiyan.

Other related infrastructure and livelihood projects are being worked out between multiple departments in the state government. The district collector will drive the project.

The chief minister said, “The larger objective of the jalyukta shivar project should not be confined to water projects alone. The next step should be to channel water reliance to change the livelihoods of villagers. We have to emphasis holistic development of villages for socio-economic welfare.”

hindustantimes

Climate Change prompts agriculture ministry to design women-friendly equipment



A woman farmer casts urea on a mustard field in Allahabad. (Reuters File Photo)

Men are migrating to cities, leaving behind women in villages. That’s impacting agriculture as women find it difficult to use heavy equipment used for farming. But that is going to change as the government plans to develop women-friendly equipment to sustain agriculture.

“Due to severe drought and other natural disasters caused by the climate change these men are leaving behind women who cannot cultivate the land as most of the equipment used for farming are heavy and meant for men,” RB Sinha, joint secretary to Union ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare, told IANS.

The capacity of women has to be enhanced to sustain agriculture in the country in view of demographic and socio-economic changes in rural areas due to climate change, Sinha said.

“The government has to equip women in rural areas with friendly technologies to sustain agriculture,” Sinha said in Delhi last week during the Knowledge Forum on Climate Resilient Development in Himalayan and Downstream Regions.

“Mechanisation development division of the agriculture ministry and Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) are working together to innovate women-friendly agriculture equipment,” Sinha said.

“Work has started to innovate women-friendly equipment and techniques to help small and marginal farmers, mostly women,” he added.

Sinha said the government will provide subsidies on such equipment to encourage their use.

Changes in temperature and precipitation, increased frequency of extreme events such as drought and floods, as well as the accelerated melting of the Himalayan glaciers have raised concerns about the future of agriculture and food production, and its ability to keep up with the growing demands.

According to ICIMOD, majority of people in the Himalayan region live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

Climate change, population growth, rural-urban migration and other socio-economic changes have impacted agriculture.

Keeping that in mind, the government has now stepped in to ensure that even if men migrate, women in the rural areas take up agriculture.

The focus is on these women whose hard work will drive this sector in the future.

It's a step to secure our food plate.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

First pan-India tea auction opens today in Coonoor



Tea tech A file photo of tea traders using the e-auction system at the Kolkata Auction Centre.

It is 155 years since tea auctioning was introduced in India. Coinciding with this, a new era in tea auctioning begins on Thursday with the introduction of pan-India auctioning.

According to the Union Commerce Secretary Rita Teotia, who theoretically inaugurated the pan-India auction last month, this system could prove to be a turning point for tea auctioning as it is intended to facilitate better price discovery and higher trading volumes on the digitised platform.

The higher realisations are expected from broadening the buyer base through the new system. Until now, buyers registered with an auction centre in the country can operate through that centre.

From now onwards, registered buyers of any of the seven e-auction centres will be able to transact in all other centres as well. So, the buyer base will be large.

This also means that apart from a single registration for buyers, the new system will contain uniform electronic auction rules for trade participants in all the auction centres.

The world's first e-auction for tea, Teaserve, was introduced in Coonoor on October 1, 2003, but it was a computer-based operation without internet support.

On December 21, 2008, the world's first internet-based e-auction was introduced at Coonoor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) auctions. In 2010, Teaserve also became internet-based auctions.

Over the years, other auction centres in the country became internet linked e-auctions.

Sporadic instances of pan-India auctions had taken place.

A couple of auctions for The Nilgiris Winter Speciality Tea conducted by Nilgiris Planters' Association through the CTTA were pan-India auctions.

Only now, 13 years after the first e-auction was introduced that regular pan-India auctions are coming into being.

Monsoon may shrug off delay; cover whole country ahead of time

The monsoon covered Madhya Maharashtra, east Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, most parts of west Madhya Pradesh, east Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh on Wednesday.

It has already covered Jammu & Kashmir and parts of west Uttar Pradesh as rains pushed in from the Bay of Bengal.

Normal schedule

The monsoon continues to be delayed in Gujarat by more than a week; on Wednesday, it has entered its border with neighbouring west Madhya Pradesh.

But the thrust from the Bay has taken it to parts of west Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh around the normal onset date.

It is in this context that its coverage during the last week of June assumes significance. The normal schedule suggests that the national coverage is complete as rain pushes past Rajasthan by July 15.



Forecasts put out by global models indicate that this could happen even ahead, which would mean that the eight day drag from a delayed onset over Kerala will have been more than made up.

Likely ‘low’

Crucial to this scenario is the assumption that a helpful weather system would form in the Bay of Bengal over the next few days to blow in even more monsoon easterlies into North-West India.

A familiar storm tracker featured by the US Climate Prediction Centre maintains that such a system would drop anchor over the ‘Head Bay’ (around Kolkata), the sweet spot for monsoon systems.

The US agency suggested that the system (which is expected to grow into a low-pressure area) would form over the next four days. From here, it is forecast to travel in a west-northwest direction along the plains in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh before heading into Rajasthan.

This makes for a copy-book style propagation of the monsoon from the Bay of Bengal into the farming heartland over East and North-West India.

The India Met Department appears to concur with this outlook. A preliminary circulation has already formed in the Bay, located on Wednesday off north Tamil Nadu and south Andhra Pradesh.

The system is expected to drive the monsoon to a fresh peak during the week beginning on Wednesday. The rains will now be concentrated over East, Central and North-West India.

Raw Pressery to expand product portfolio, outlets



Raw Pressery, the country's first juice-maker using cold-pressed technology, plans to expand its product portfolio and open more outlets in India and West Asia in the next one year.

The Mumbai-based clean label start-up, that raised 44 crore so far, will soon include fibre-rich smoothies, coconut water and protein-rich and non-dairy nut milk in its product portfolio that currently has nine fruit juices and six vegetable juices, Anuj Rakyam, Founder-Managing Director, told *BusinessLine*.

Capital infusion

Only cold-pressed juices come in 100 per cent pure juice format, all other processed juices have 10-99 per cent of fruit or vegetable juices as content, the remaining ingredients being added from outside.

The Raw Pressery brand, which is targeting revenues of \$100 million (670 crore) in the next five years, had recently secured a Series B round of funding of \$4.5 million (30 crore) from three equal partners – Sequoia, Saama Capital and DSG Partners. This was a follow-up to the first round led by Sequoia in February 2015.

With fresh capital infusion, Raw Pressery plans to expand product offerings from juices to smoothies, scale up operations, boost CAGR by four times, and enter general trade by next year.

It also plans to ramp up distribution by enhancing presence at 1,600 points of sale against the existing 30 points. The company will also move its production to a new facility with a manufacturing capacity of 1.50 lakh litres of juices per day, established at Panvel near Mumbai at an investment of 12 crore which, he said, was Asia's largest in this segment.

The Raw Pressery products, currently available across seven major cities, will reach new customers in eight more cities by the year-end.

In 2017, it will also reach West Asia, he said.

These products, manufactured with high-pressure cold processing, without involvement of heating, retain natural nutritional values and taste.

These juices are free of any added colour, sugar, artificial additives, water, chemicals or preservatives which are used to extend shelf-life.

“Our products are 100% fresh and pure with a shelf-life of 21 days.”

Incorporated as a part of Rakyan Beverages in 2013, Raw Pressery stemmed out Rakyan's personal need for consuming a healthy beverage and led to the conceptualisation of a juice that balances nutrition and flavour.

He said cold-pressed juices are rich in anti-oxidants, low in fat, boost immunity and help purify the blood.

The cold pressurisation process preserves essential enzymes and nutrients.

An investment banker at Morgan Stanley, Rakyam moved to brand consulting at FutureBrand, New York, and to diamond jewellery industry, before finding his calling in food and beverages industry.

India's organised juice market size is about 5,000 crore, with Real brand being the market leader, followed by Tropicana.

Demand for tomato puree, ketchup up 40%: Assocham



The demand for tomato puree and ketchup has shot up by 40 per cent within a month as people have curtailed the use of tomatoes and prefer dishes that do not require much use of tomatoes, for example lady's finger and pumpkin.

Industry body the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Assocham) on Wednesday said a survey by it has shown that the rise in the price of tomatoes has affected household budgets. About 78 per cent of households said they were finding it difficult to manage their budgets. The sudden rise in the price of tomatoes and pulses was squeezing families' finances to the lowest level.

According to government estimates, the country's tomato output was pegged at 18.28 million tonnes (mt) in the 2015-16 crop year (July-June) as against 16.38 mt in the previous year. Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Odisha are the major tomato growing states.

The survey was conducted in major cities such as Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad where over 1,500 housewives took part. The maximum impact was felt in Delhi-NCR followed by Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

According to the survey, local grocers have also increased stocks of tomato puree/ ketchup. In the last two weeks there has been a rise in sales of puree and ketchup as one spends less on buying puree/ ketchup than a kilo of fresh tomatoes.

The rise in price of pulses has come as a double-shocker for customers. Vegetables are increasingly becoming 'unaffordable' as prices have skyrocketed, particularly in the metros and major cities, said D.S. Rawat, Secretary-General, Assocham.

Prices have gone up because of tight supply in the major growing states of the south where the rabi crop was damaged in the flowering stage on account of the severe drought. The price of tomatoes shot up to Rs.80-100 per kg, nearly double of what it was selling for just a month back. The average housewife is either giving it a miss or picking up just a quarter of a kilo.

About 56 per cent of the respondents said they have curtailed the use of tomatoes and prefer dishes that do not require much use of tomatoes, like lady's finger or pumpkin, and some are substituting it with raw mango to get that sour taste.

Tea industry seeks GST exemption

The Tea Association of India, in a memorandum to the Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers on goods and services tax, urged the panel to consider tea as an "agriculture produce", exempt from GST, and not a plantation crop.

TAI has argued that tea plantation activity was "agricultural" in nature and about 70 per cent of industry cost consists of wages of workers, which do not offer any possibility of input credits.

The current rate of VAT for tea sector is between 5 and 6 per cent. "Thus even if the lowest rate of 12 per cent as proposed by the Committee is applicable for tea, the tax cost on tea would be increased considerably," TAI said.

It also apprehended that in the proposed GST regime, the States might not have the flexibility to have a different rate for teas sold through auction system thus making it less attractive.

TAI felt that any rise in tax incidence would inflate cost structure of tea production and render a negative effect on its demand affecting the economic viability of the industry. The industry was already saddled with a host of problems as well as the sustenance of the large number of workforce, TAI pointed out.

Business Standard

Cabinet clears Rs 6,000-cr package for textiles, apparel

The government will subsidise employers' social welfare contributions for employees in the textile sector, said Rashmi Verma, textile secretary

Government today approved a Rs 6,000 crore special package for textiles & apparel sector to create one crore new jobs in 3 years, attracting investments of \$11 billion and generating \$30 billion in exports.

The measures approved include additional incentives for duty drawback scheme for garments, flexibility in labour laws to increase productivity as well as tax and production incentives for job creation in garment manufacturing.

"Over the last few years, apparel manufacturing had shifted to countries like China which had cost advantages. However, China's cost advantage has been neutralised to some extent because of increase in labour wages. We have advantages of economies of scale. Therefore, it was decided to take steps to give a boost to the sector.

"The package will help in realising the true potential of employment generation in the textile and apparel sector," Finance Minister Arun Jaitley told reporters here.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The Rs 6,000 package will result in additional investments worth \$11 billion, creation of one crore additional jobs and increase in exports worth \$30.4 billion which will help boost textile and garmenting sector.

"We will overtake Vietnam and Bangladesh in garment exports within next three years if we properly implement the package," Textiles Secretary Rashmi Verma told reporters here.

Among the measures to usher in flexibility in labour laws are increasing overtime hours for workers which are not to exceed 8 hours per week in line with ILO norms and introduction of fixed term employment looking at the seasonal nature of the garment sector. A fixed term workman will be considered at par with permanent workman in terms of working hours, wages, allowed and other statutory dues.

"The package breaks new ground in moving from input to outcome based incentives by increasing subsidy under Amended-TUFS from 15% to 25% for the garment sector as a boost to employment generation," an official statement said.

A unique feature of the scheme will be to disburse the subsidy only after the expected jobs are created.

The majority of new jobs are likely to go to women since the garment industry employs nearly 70% women workforce. Thus, the package would help in social transformation through women empowerment.

Industry bodies welcomed the initiatives, including labour reforms, saying that the sector has huge potential for job creation. Some said however that support for R&D was missing.

Climate Change: India plans women-friendly agricultural equipment

Experts have repeatedly said that men are migrating from the rural areas due to climate change

Men are migrating to cities, leaving behind women in villages. That's impacting agriculture as women find it difficult to use heavy equipment used for farming. But that is going to change as the government plans to develop women-friendly equipment to sustain agriculture.

"Large numbers of men are migrating in search of jobs. This is due to severe drought and other natural disasters caused by the climate change. These men are leaving behind women who cannot cultivate the land as most of the equipment used for farming are heavy and meant for men," RB Sinha, Joint Secretary to Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, told *IANS*.

The capacity of women has to be enhanced to sustain agriculture in the country in view of demographic and socio-economic changes in rural areas due to climate change, Sinha said.

"With men migrating, the government has to equip women in rural areas with friendly technologies to sustain agriculture," he said here last week during the Knowledge Forum on Climate Resilient Development in Himalyan and Downstream Regions.



The event was organised jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and Delhi-based IEG.

"Mechanisation development division of the agriculture ministry and Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) are working together to innovate women-friendly agriculture equipment," Sinha said.

"Work has started to innovate women-friendly equipment and techniques to help small and marginal farmers, mostly women," he added.

Sinha said the government will provide subsidies on the women-friendly agriculture equipment to encourage its use.

Changes in temperature and precipitation, increased frequency of extreme events such as drought and floods, as well as the accelerated melting of the Himalayan glaciers have raised concerns about the future of agriculture and food production, and its ability to keep up with the growing demands.

Experts have repeatedly said that men are migrating from the rural areas due to climate change.

According to ICIMOD, majority of people in the Himalayan region live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Climate change, population growth, rural-urban migration and other socio-economic changes have impacted agriculture.

Keeping that in mind, the government has now stepped in to ensure that even if men migrate, women in the rural areas take up agriculture. The focus is on these women whose hard work will drive this sector in the future. It's a step to secure our food plate.

No need for licensing pact with GM technology provider: NSAI

NSAI said that seed firms have right to access transgenic varieties to develop hybrids



An Indian scientist holds a genetically modified (GM) rapeseed crop under trial in New Delhi (pic: Reuters)

As government proposes to bring new guidelines to regulate BT cotton market, apex seed industry body NSAI on Wednesday said there should not be any need for licensing agreement with technology providers as seed firms have right to access transgenic varieties to develop hybrids.

The Union Agriculture Ministry last month issued a notification prescribing new guidelines for licensing and royalty/trait value fixation of BT cotton seeds.

Under the fresh norm, royalty for the new genetically modified (GM) traits was capped at 10% of the maximum sale price of BT cotton seeds for the first 5 years. Eligible seed firms get access to the GM technology was also ensured.

But later, the government withdrew the notification and turned it into a draft guidelines to seek comments from stakeholders amid opposition from crop biotech industry.

"There is no need of any licensing agreement for GM traits to be signed by the plant breeders, farmers, researchers either in public or in private sector according to the provisions under the Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers' Right Act, 2001," National Seed Association of India (NSAI) President M Prabhakar Rao told *Press Trust of India*.

He said "the breeders have a right to access any transgenic variety for developing new varieties and need not sign any licence agreement for carrying out the basic activities of the seed companies".

Rao termed the overall draft guidelines issued by the government as balanced.

US biotech major Monsanto's India joint venture 'Mahyco Monsanto Biotech Ltd (MMBL)' has sub-licensed Bt cotton seed technology since 2002 to about 50 domestic seed companies, which sold over 5 crore packets of cotton seeds last year.

"The one-sided licensing agreement imposed by Monsanto has created monopoly in Bt cotton seed market," NSAI Executive Director Kalyan Goswami said.

On trait value, Goswami said the association would support the payment of royalty if it is "fair and reasonable" and encourages the development of new GM technology.

NSAI has prepared a draft response and put it on its own website for comments from its 377 members by July 15.

The government's draft policy came two months after it fixed the MSP of Bt cotton seed packets at Rs 800 per packet for bollgard (BG)-II version of Bt cotton hybrid, including Rs 49 for the trait value. The seed price was fixed according to the Cotton Seeds Price Control Order issued in December 2015.

According to the draft 'Licensing and Formats for GM Technology Agreement Guidelines, 2016', after the first 5 years, royalty would reduce by 10% of initial value every year. If the GM technology loses efficacy, technology provider would not be eligible for any royalty.

A new format for bilateral agreements has been proposed while the existing signed pacts between licensors (technology providers) and licensees (seed firms) would become invalid.

The licensing norms seek to ensure that technology provider gets adequately rewarded under the "fair, reasonable and non-discriminative mechanism (FRAND mechanism)".

Punjab takes steps for rural employment generation to rehabilitate drug abusers and indebted farmers

The state has earmarked Rs 35 cr as a subsidy to the beneficiaries for setting up their own ventures

Waking up to rampant drug abuse in the state, Punjab Government has decided to engage the rural youth in the local crafts by extending training and financial assistance in the hinterland of Punjab. The Punjab Khadi and Gram Udyog Board has decided to provide easy loans worth Rs 140 cr under Prime Minister Self-Employment Generation Scheme.

The state has earmarked Rs 35.06 cr as a subsidy to the beneficiaries for setting up their own ventures. The Industry and Commerce Minister of Punjab, Madan Mohan Mittal informed that 25 villages in the states would be developed under 'Smart Khadi Village Scheme' to facilitate the local artisans with all kind of support for making and marketing their products.

"The problem of drug abuse in Punjab has been exaggerated but we are making efforts to encourage our youth at the grassroots to indulge into gainful activities by this new scheme", said Mittal. As different studies conducted over last few years show the growing rate of suicides among farmers and farm labourers in Punjab due to agriculture indebtedness, the government has decided to set up Multi-Purpose Skill Training Centre in Mohali, where the family members of the farmers who committed suicides would be offered training technology and entrepreneurship. Easy loans would be provided to pass-out trainees.

He added that a subsidy of 15%-35% has been proposed for the beneficiaries. The state-of-the-art skill and training Centre would be set up in collaboration with Central Khadi and Gram Udyog Commission. This would first of its kind in north India and all states in north would benefit from this.

Pre-monsoon showers in Saurashtra, South Gujarat bring respite for farmers

The delayed monsoon has slowed down the initial kharif sowing in Gujarat



Pre-monsoon showers in areas like Amreli, Rajkot and Junagadh district of Saurashtra region and Surat and surrounding areas in South Gujarat on Tuesday evening have brought much needed respite for farmers, who were beginning kharif sowing.

However, Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has not declared it as official foray of monsoon in the state and a decision is likely to be taken on Wednesday regarding the same.

While Gondal, Jetpur and Virpur taluka of Rajkot district received about 30 millimeters (mm) of rain on Tuesday evening, several parts of Amreli district received nearly 65-70 mm of rain.

The pre-monsoon showers were accompanied by heavy rainstorm in South Gujarat regions of Surat and its surrounding towns. Kamrej taluka of Surat district recorded 69 mm of rainfall whereas Utchal and Nizar in Tapi district recorded 40 mm and 29 mm, respectively. Navasari and Dang district also recorded 30 mm showering.

According to IMD, monsoon is expected to progress towards Gujarat in the next 48 hours and into parts of Madhya Pradesh, East Uttar Pradesh and parts of Bihar.

The delayed monsoon has slowed down the initial kharif sowing in Gujarat, which is down by about 80% on a y-o-y basis. According to state agriculture department data, as on June 20, overall sowing has reached 2,74,300 hectares as against 1.34 million hectares in corresponding period of 2015.

"Beginning of kharif sowing is lower as monsoons have been delayed in the state. Farmers are waiting for the first showers. Sowing activity will gear up across the state once the rains set in," said a official of Gujarat agriculture department.

Insecticides (India) to set up manufacturing unit in UP

It had clocked a top line of Rs 988 cr in FY16 against Rs 964 cr during the preceding financial year

Leading agrochemical manufacturer Insecticides (India) has set up a manufacturing facility at Shamli district in Uttar Pradesh (UP).

The facility also houses a Research & Development (R&D) unit, company's Managing Director Rajesh Aggarwal told *Business Standard* here on Wednesday.

Spread over an acre of land, the facility started last month could be expanded in future depending upon emerging needs, he added.

The company already owned modern formulation units at Chopanki (Rajasthan), Samba & Udhampur (Jammu & Kashmir) and Dahej (Gujarat). For backward integration, it also has technical synthesis plants at Chopanki and Dahej to manufacture technical grade chemicals.

Insecticides (India) is BSE & NSE listed and had clocked a top line of Rs 988 crore in FY16 against Rs 964 crore during the preceding financial year.

"We are targetting to grow by 20% in the current financial year," Aggarwal informed. In UP, the company posted turnover of Rs 69 crore during FY16.

"UP is one of the most important markets due to its large size and agricultural production, especially paddy. It has a huge potential to grow if further awareness is created amongst farmers for modern farming and interventions," he added.

Meanwhile, Insecticides (India) launched a new post emergence herbicide 'Green Label', which has been manufactured in India for the first time. It provides price differential of almost 40% to Indian farmers compared to the imported alternative.

"Paddy contributes a significant share of crop in Indian agriculture. However, problem of weed is huge in the country. The weeds compete with the crop and share nutrients, food, space and light, which reduce crop growth and yield," he said.

Green Label controls grassy, sedges and broad leaf weeds of rice crop.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

13% Karnataka farmers avail benefits of crop insurance

Farmer suicides along with the state's poor record in crop insurance schemes is a huge concern for the Karnataka Agriculture Prices Commission (KAPC).

The percentage of farmers utilizing the Prime Minister's Fasal Bhima Yojana (crop insurance scheme) in the state is just 13, against the national average of 20%. The Institute of Social and Economic Change (ISEC) has been tasked with investigating the reasons for farmers not availing the benefits of crop insurance.

"The study will find out what makes crop insurance schemes more farmer friendly. Poor response to National Agriculture Insurance and Modified National Agriculture Insurance schemes saw them being scrapped," said Pramod Kumar from the Agricultural Development and Rural Transformation Centre.

"Farmers are plagued by risk at every stage owing to excessive dependence on nature. A farmer can incur losses despite a good harvest if he fails to get the right price for his produce," said Meenakshi Rajeev from the Centre for Economic Study and Policy. ISEC held the first round of meetings with farmers, insurance companies and banks.

Architect gets sweet deal for mango farmers

What could an architect possibly have to do with mango growers? Help them build their dreams. That's exactly what Atul Johri is doing. Short-changed by middlemen who buy their produce for dirt cheap prices, Channapatna mango growers were getting a raw deal all this while. But not any more, thanks to Atul's Tulsi Farm Initiative.

Once based out of Bengaluru, Atul, 48, moved to Channapatna around nine years ago to work with local lacquer artists. He bought a farmland in Tagachegere, a village known for its mango groves. As days passed, Atul learnt about the many issues mango growers faced, especially because of unscrupulous middlemen who'd eat into their profits. He heard stories where farmers were pushed to sell their land to make ends meet.

According to Atul, natti, the local variety of mangoes cultivated in Channapatna, is not just cheaper but also healthier. This is because these mangoes are plucked along with their stems which helps preserve their freshness; they are ripened using rice hay. "Naturally grown mangoes can never acquire the uniform yellow colour that we see in artificially ripened fruits," says Atul, adding chemicals like carbide and ethylene are used to artificially ripen fruits which can be harmful for those savouring them. Channapatna farmers, though, were unable to get any profit for their pesticide and chemical-free produce.

Once Atul took up their cause, better marketing and direct selling made a big difference to the lives of these local farmers. Atul used his contacts in Whitefield to spread the word in apartments about the locally grown natti variety of mangoes. Using the Tulsi logo, farmers can now directly reach out to customers. "Also, at Rs 150 a kg, they offer a competitive price when compared to the retail outlets in the city," says Atul.

Lingaraj, a farmer who earned only Rs 60,000 for his six tonnes of produce last year, has been able to see his profits soar to over Rs 2 lakh this season.

Krithika Chandrasekar

Bumper crop for Gumla farmers

Gumla farmers are giving up the traditional mono-cropping system in favour of commercial farming. So far this year, farmers have cultivated tomatoes on a large scale, which has been marketed to Raigarh, Chhattisgarh, Rourkela in Odisha, Ranchi and Jamshedpur with a favourable price realization.

District farmers have always grown paddy as their main crop along with some vegetables.

However, their mode and the kinds of crop have undergone a great change while linking them with outside markets and enhancing their income as well.

The year 2006 saw a pilot initiative of growing tomatoes before and during rains just as the prices went up in Palkot.

Tomatoes are being supplied to Raigarh in Chhattisgarh also this time in addition to Odisha, said trader Suresh Prasad.

During this season, Gumla tomatoes will swell up in outside markets, he added. Alim, a farmer from Panso village said farmers have shown zeal in growing tomatoes in several villages and are earning good income along with a new marketing approach.

"In order to attract the market towards the farm, a new approach of farming in a collective manner involving individual women farmers in agro - production clusters (APCs) has been taken up in the district," said Pradan team leader Suvakant.

According to an official of Pradan (that provides technical support to farmers), over 15,000 tillers in the district have grown tomatoes this season and about 22,000 of them will grow the same during the current Kharif season as the nursery is nearly ready.

Safal Giddhi, a farmer of Ragunathpur - Tukutoli said he sold four crates of tomato at Rs 500 per crate (Rs 20 per kg). While other farmers made good income by selling it also."

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

India to tap Israel's renowned drip irrigation expertise



Water Resources Minister Uma Bharti aimed at exploring possibilities of using technological expertise in water management during her upcoming visit.

JERUSALEM: India will tap Israel's globally recognised drip irrigation skill during the upcoming visit of Water Resources Minister Uma Bharti to the country aimed at exploring possibilities of using technological expertise in water management.

A well established leader in water management, desalination and recycling techniques, Israel has set a template for reusing wastewater for irrigation. It treats 80 per cent of its domestic wastewater, which is recycled for agricultural use and constitutes nearly 50 per cent of the total water used for agriculture.

Israel's Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Uri Ariel had led a delegation of experts in the field to participate in India Water Week in Delhi in April and is said to have also offered Israel's help in the ambitious clean Ganga project during his meeting with Bharti.

Israel's globally recognised drip irrigation expertise was prominently displayed at the Water Week event with a seminar, "More Crop per Drop - Adoption of Precise Irrigation Technologies" organised to familiar participants with the technology.

Some of the leading Israeli companies in the field of water technologies have already been active in India and set up manufacturing units in India to serve their local clients.

Bharti's three day official engagement in Israel starts on June 28 during which she would be meeting Uriel and Minister of National Infrastructure, Energy and Water Resources, Yuval Steinitz.

The Union Minister will also be visiting facilities of several Israeli companies active in the field of water management and meeting experts in the sector.

No need for licensing pact with GM technology provider: NSAI



Under the fresh norm, royalty for the new genetically modified traits was capped at 10% of the maximum sale price of BT cotton seeds for the first 5 years.

NEW DELHI: As government proposes to bring new guidelines to regulate BT cotton market, apex seed industry body NSAI today said there should not be any need for licensing agreement with technology providers as seed firms have right to access transgenic varieties to develop hybrids.

The Union Agriculture Ministry last month issued a notification prescribing new guidelines for licensing and royalty/trait value fixation of BT cotton seeds.

Under the fresh norm, royalty for the new genetically modified (GM) traits was capped at 10 per cent of the maximum sale price of BT cotton seeds for the first

5 years. Eligible seed firms get access to the GM technology was also ensured.

But later, the government withdrew the notification and turned it into a draft guidelines to seek comments from stakeholders amid opposition from crop biotech industry.

"There is no need of any licensing agreement for GM traits to be signed by the plant breeders, farmers, researchers either in public or in private sector as per the provisions under the Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers' Right Act, 2001," National Seed Association of India (NSAI) President M Prabhakar Rao said.

He said "the breeders have a right to access any transgenic variety for developing new varieties and need not sign any licence agreement for carrying out the basic activities of the seed companies."

Rao termed the overall draft guidelines issued by the government as balanced.

US biotech major Monsanto's India joint venture 'Mahyco MonsantoBSE -1.00 % Biotech Ltd (MMBL)' has sub-licensed Bt cotton seed technology since 2002 to about 50 domestic seed companies, which sold over 5 crore packets of cotton seeds last year.

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On trait value, Goswami said the association would support the payment of royalty if it is "fair and reasonable" and encourages the development of new GM technology.

NSAI has prepared a draft response and put it on its own website for comments from its 377 members by July 15.

The government's draft policy came two months after it fixed the MSP of Bt cotton seed packets at Rs 800 per packet for bollgard (BG)-II version of Bt cotton hybrid, including Rs 49 for the trait value. The seed price was fixed as per the Cotton Seeds Price Control Order issued in December 2015.

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initial value every year. If the GM technology loses efficacy, technology provider would not be eligible for any royalty.

A new format for bilateral agreements has been proposed while the existing signed pacts between licensors (technology providers) and licensees (seed firms) would become invalid.

The licensing norms seek to ensure that technology provider gets adequately rewarded under the "fair, reasonable and non-discriminative mechanism (FRAND mechanism)."

Maharashtra okays Rs 2,000-crore bank guarantee for farm loans



The Minister said he has asked cooperative banks not to recover pending loan amount from farmers' crop insurance payments deposited in their bank accounts.

MUMBAI: Maharashtra government today approved a bank guarantee of Rs 2,000 crore to district cooperative banks to sanction additional loans to farmers, contending they would need more money in the upcoming sowing season of kharif crops.

Chandrakant Patil, Minister for Cooperation, said Marathwada Rural Bank and 16 other cooperative banks had demanded additional Rs 2,000 crore for distribution as crop loans among farmers.

"Due to restructuring of loans since the last three years (2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16), and drought situation, farmers could not repay installments of loans that forced cooperative banks to seek additional monetary help from the Government," said Patil.

In view of this, the government has approved an additional bank guarantee of Rs 2,000 crore to district cooperative banks so that farmers are able to avail crop loans, he said.

These banks are predominantly in Vidarbha, Marathwada BSE -5.00 %, and North Maharashtra.

The Minister said he has asked cooperative banks not to recover pending loan amount from farmers' crop insurance payments deposited in their bank accounts.

"We will take action against those banks that recover farmer loan from crop insurance benefits. Farmers should come forward and complain if any bank deducts their insurance amount to recover crop loan."

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has reviewed the prevailing agriculture scenario with all District Collectors through video conferencing and appealed to nationalised banks to provide loans to farmers wherever required, he said.

Cotton farmers confused as forecasts unpredictable as weather

Policy makers and agricultural experts are not too sure whom to trust when it comes to weather and this is hampering them from taking the right decision on planting, especially cotton crop.

PUNE: Policy makers and agricultural experts are not too sure whom to trust when it comes to weather and this is hampering them from taking the right decision on planting, especially cotton crop.

While some of them rely on forecasts by the India Meteorological department, others seek inputs from public and private agencies to decide on sowing patterns.

Based on the forecast of a dry spell of about 10-15 days in July in central India, Nagpur-based Central Institute of Cotton Research (CICR) has advised farmers to complete cotton sowing by June end to avoid resowing. Though India is the top exporter of cotton in the world, large tracts of cotton acreage are dependent on monsoons for irrigation. Cotton seeds being expensive, the stakes are high for cotton farmers.



"We use forecast of 4-5 different agencies, including public and private ones. We also use the 90-day forecast given by one private agency," said Keshav Kranthi, director, CICR. A CICR advisory issued for June 13-19 for Gujarat states, "A prolonged dry spell is expected in Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Patan and Mehsana districts from the third mers to follow advisories based only on the IMD's forecast.

"We want farmers to base their decisions on forecast from only the official agencies,"said an official.The experimental forecast by Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology too shows some decrease in rainfall in central India in July. "As of now, we can give predictions for the next 20 days. A clear picture on the July rainfall will be possible towards June-end. We have forecast above normal rains for July,"said DS Pai, head (long range forecasting), IMD.