

09.03.2016

# THE HINDU

## **3-day Agri Horti Tech India from April 22**

A three-day exhibition showcasing several products and services related to agriculture, horticulture as well as livestock and animal husbandry sectors will open in Hyderabad on April 22. Agri Horti Tech India 2016 is being organised by Radeecal Communications at the Hitex Exhibition Centre. a release from the organisers on Tuesday said.

## **South African youth trained to be future agri-preneurs**

“Today’s youth aren’t aware of all the potential there is are in agriculture. It is not just limited to farming in the fields, there are a host of opportunities like agribusiness, where youth can get involved,” said Lilly Thato Mabonela, one of the South African students.

Ms. Mabonela is among the first group of six South African youths to have successfully completed a four-month agricultural training programme at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT).

The initiative, with support from the South African government, is an effort to give youth from the region more opportunities in the agricultural sector.

Ms. Mabonela hopes to empower and engage more youth in her country in agricultural ventures that she plans to set up after she returns to South Africa.

## **Fishermen demand separate Ministry**

Fishermen have planned to stage a protest in New Delhi on Thursday to urge the Centre to fulfil their long-pending demands which include setting up of a separate Ministry and their inclusion in the Schedule Tribes list.

“Before the BJP was elected to power at the Centre, they organised three fishers’ conferences and released a 64-page policy document containing several of our demands. However, even after two-and-a-half years since they assumed office they have not met our demands. In this year’s budget, the

terms fishermen or fisheries did not even find a mention. We have been ignored, which is why we are planning a protest on Thursday in Delhi,” said M. Ilango, National Fishworkers Forum.

Representatives of Tamil Nadu Meenavar Munnetra Sangam, South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association and Akila Indiya Meenavar Valarchi Kazhagam will be taking part in the demonstration.

He said that the budgetary allocation for fisheries was very minimal and almost 95 per cent of that went towards salaries of organisations under the fisheries department.

“Our contribution towards bringing foreign exchange is not taken into account. We want fisheries to be treated on a par with agriculture,” Mr. Ilango added.

### **PGS to be boon for organic farming**

Participatory Guarantee System of certifying organic produce is expected to help scale up organic farming in the State and provide reliability for produce being sold under the ‘organic’ tag. The conventional system of certifying organic produce has been found to be too cumbersome and costly for farmers with small holdings. The participatory system is an effective alternative, said a spokesman for Organic Kerala Charitable Trust on Tuesday.

The Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council (VFPC) has launched registration of farmers’ local groups across the State. With Kasaragod being declared an organic farming district, the VFPC has launched the programme for farmers registered under the Department of Agriculture. — Special Correspondent

### **Celebrating 100 years of CPCRI**

As the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) enters the 100th year of its operations, the organisation is gearing up for its centenary celebrations from March 12.

The occasion would be marked by the unveiling of its centenary logo along with a painting by artist P.S. Punichithaya depicting his impressions on the

research achievements of the institute, CPCRI director P. Chowdappa told a press conference here on Tuesday.



A view of the building complex of the CPCRI in Kasaragod.— PHOTO: K. VINAYA KUMAR

Over 2,000 farmers have registered for a Kisan Mela being organised as part of the programme.

Various institutes of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), agricultural input agencies and Kudumbasree units would take part in the exhibition organised as part of the Kisan Mela, Mr. Chowdappa said.

Hundred farmers representing all coconut growing regions in the country would plant 100 coconut seedlings at the Centenary Coconut Park at 10 a.m. on March 12.

Coconut research in India started with the setting up of Central Coconut Research Stations in 1916. During 1970, it was brought under the ICAR as the CPCRI, with mandate on all small holder plantation crops.

Later separate institutes were formed for spices, cashew, and oil palm.

At present, coconut, areca nut and cocoa are the crops coming under the purview of the institute.

## **NABARD to issue bonds**

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has announced the issue of tax-free bonds to raise Rs.3,500 crore that will be utilised for direct lending and refinancing irrigation projects in the country.

A major portion of the bonds has been allocated for retail investors.

The public issue of tax-free, secured, redeemable and non-convertible bonds in the nature of debentures will open on March 9 and close on March 14 with an option for early closure or extension. The face value of each bond is Rs.1,000 and the bonds will be listed on BSE.

According to an official release issued by Ramesh Tenkil, Chief General Manager, NABARD, Kerala, 60 per cent of the issue size will be reserved for Category IV investors (resident Indian individuals) and HUFs through the 'karta', applying for an amount aggregating up to and including Rs.10 lakh across all series of bonds in the issue. Fifteen per cent will be reserved for Category I investors (qualified institutional buyers) and Category II investors (corporates). Ten per cent will remain reserved for Category III investors (high net worth individuals). The interest on the bonds will be exempt from the levy of income tax in the hands of the bondholders. Allotment would be done on first come, first served basis.

The bonds are being offered with options in tenure of 10 and 15 years. The coupon (interest) rates for Category IV will be 7.29 per cent and 7.64 per cent for 10 years and 15 years respectively. For investors in Categories I, II and III, the coupon rates will be 7.04 per cent and 7.35 per cent for 10 years and 15 years respectively. The interests will be paid annually.

The bonds have been rated AAA/Stable by Credit Rating Information Services of India (Crisil) and 'IND AAA/Stable' by India Ratings. The instruments with these ratings carry low risk credit.

***Aim is to raise Rs.3,500 crore for direct lending and refinancing irrigation projects.***

## **State seeks Rs. 1,742-crore drought relief from Centre**

*State Revenue and Agriculture Ministers to go to New Delhi on Thursday to seek early release of grants*

Days after a Central team visited drought-hit districts and assessed the crop situation, two ministers from the Siddaramaiah Cabinet will visit New Delhi on Thursday to prevail upon the Centre for early release of grants for drought relief works.

Revenue Minister V. Srinivas Prasad and Agriculture Minister Krishna Byre Gowda will meet Union Minister for Agriculture Radha Mohan Singh and seek immediate disbursement of Rs. 1,742 crore aid in view of the State facing crop loss due to drought even during the Rabi season.

Disclosing this in Mysuru on Tuesday, Mr. Prasad told reporters that the 10-member Central team had assessed the crop situation recently. “The drought situation the State is experiencing is the worst in 40 years. I call it unprecedented and farmers are in a state of crisis,” he said.

The loss due to crop failure in the Kharif season too was severe and therefore, the Centre was asked to grant Rs. 1,540 crore for drought relief works, Mr. Prasad said. He said the Centre had released Rs. 1,300 crore, and though the assistance came late the money was used for relief works. “The State effectively used the funds and the deputy commissioners were asked to ensure there was no misuse of funds,” he said.

To a question on waiver of farm loans, Mr. Prasad said, “That is not possible as the loan amount is around Rs. 10,000 crore and the State is not in a position to consider waiver. The Chief Minister has already made his stance clear.”

However, he clarified that there won't be a severe water crisis in rural areas. “If the sources have dried up, the authorities must supply water through tankers. No matter how much money is spent, people should not go thirsty in the summer,” he said, adding that he had recently instructed deputy commissioners to ensure this.

He also said the State Cabinet reshuffle was the prerogative of the CM and the high command. “I don't know whether it will happen after the budget session,” he said.

*The drought situation the State is experiencing is the worst in 40 years. I call it unprecedented and farmers are in a crisis.*

*V. Srinivas Prasad*

*Revenue Minister*

### **AP team in Japan to explore avenues in food processing**

Representatives of 30 food processing companies from Andhra Pradesh interacted with 50 of their Japanese counterparts in Japan on Tuesday.

The delegates met Vice-Minister for International Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hiromichi Matsushima, in the morning.

The delegation, led by Secretary of Government (Food Processing) M. Girija Shankar and Andhra Pradesh Food Processing Society CEO Y.S. Prasad, reached Japan on Monday.

In his interaction, the Vice-Minister said that investment in mega food parks, rice bran oil extraction, and shrimp processing would be explored by the Japanese Government.

In the meeting, Mr. Girija Shankar made a detailed presentation on the potential for investments in Andhra Pradesh.

APIIC Chairman P. Krishnaiah and CII Chairman Suresh Rayudu Chitturi also participated in the meetings.

### **Cotton price expected to remain stable in July-August**



Photo: M. Srinath

As prices of long staple summer cotton on harvest are expected to be around Rs. 5,500-5,800 per quintal in July-August, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has advised growers to take sowing decisions based on their advisory.

The price of good quality long staple cotton in Konganapuram in the regulated Tamil Nadu market now rules at around Rs. 6,000 per quintal.

To advice farmers on cotton price during harvest period, TNAU's Agro Marketing Intelligence and Business Promotion Centre analysed monthly prices in Konganapuram for the last nine years, which suggested that prices would remain stable and hover around Rs. 5,500-5,800 per quintal.

Though the production and arrivals are lower than last year, the fibre has not realised the expected price for being moist and also because of ban on export.

The major cotton growing districts of Tamil Nadu are Dharmapuri, Tiruvannamalai, Vellore, Perambalur, Tiruchirapallii and Salem.

### **Low price hits tomato ryots**

*The price of the vegetable per kg is less than a rupee in the market*

Tomato farmers are in dire straits with the crop not fetching them even bare minimum price throwing them into unprecedented crisis.

Therefore, they stopped plucking the crop leaving it on the plants. In the current season farmers planted tomato crop in an extent of 5,500 hectares which is more than 1,000 hectares compared to the corresponding period last year. However the price per kg of this highly perishable crop in the market is less than one rupee. "We are leaving the crop on the field as the price is all time low and even the harvest costs and transportation charges cannot be recovered by selling the vegetable in the market. We have to give at the rate of Rs.300 per day per head for coolies to pluck it. Traders are not willing to pay even Rs.20 for one crate (containing 25 kg)," deplored K. Raja Reddy, a farmer at Borgam (K) village in Makloor mandal. The crop is grown in 20 out of total of 36 mandals in the district.

## Scanty rainfall

With the scanty rainfall all over farmers choose to cultivate vegetables under borewells and with the help of drip irrigation. Besides, Horticulture department sanctioned a maximum of Rs.6,000 subsidy per hectare for cultivating tomato which also in a way acted as an incentive to go for it in a big way. Authorities, however, at the time of supply of seed advised farmers not to grow one single vegetable as excessive yield would not fetch them profitable price. They suggested the farmers to plant three to four varieties of vegetables, but to no avail. Deputy Director (Horticulture) N. Sunanda told *The Hindu* that tomato cultivation increased by 15 per cent in the district this time resulting in more yield. “Naturally, the price would come down with more supply. Similar is the case with the onion”, she said.

## Maharashtra-Telangana form inter-state board for irrigation projects



Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis with Telangana CM K Chandrasekhar Rao at the Sahyadri Guest House in Mumbai—Photo: Deepak Salvi

Maharashtra and Telangana on Tuesday signed an agreement to constitute an inter-state board for joint irrigation projects. The pact is likely to speed up work on three key irrigation projects, which were under dispute between two States for some time now.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who signed the agreement with his Telangana counterpart K Chandrasekhar Rao, said: “The board is constituted to take decisions by mutual understanding for irrigation projects such as Lendi, Pranhita and Rajapet on Lower Painganga.” Irrigation ministers of both the States were present.



On Monday, Mr Rao had held a meeting with Maharashtra governor C Vidyasagar Rao to discuss the signing of agreements, and the long-pending disputes between two States.

According to sources in the Maharashtra government, both the CMs had held an informal discussion earlier where it was decided to solve the disputes amicably. Apart from the three projects, the board will also work on projects such as Chankha-Koti on Lower Painganga and barrages on Piparad-Parsoda. All decision regarding project design, land acquisition, rehabilitation and benefits from the projects will be taken mutually by committees under the board.

“This is a historic day for both States,” said Mr Fadnavis. “The river water which flows to the sea can be used for the betterment of both the states. It will ensure there will be no water war between two States,” said Mr Fadnavis.

Mr Rao said it was a historic agreement, which will immensely aid farmers. “Our water problems will be solved because of this agreement,” he said. Lower Painganga and Lendi projects are largely beneficial to Maharashtra, while Pranhita is of greater importance to Telangana.

Maharashtra’s 1,40,818 hectare land will be irrigated due to the Lower Painganga project, while 26,924 hectare will be irrigated with the help of the Lendi project.

### **Women’s Day celebrated**



Women participating in a fashion show in Thoothukudi on Tuesday.—  
Photo: N. Rajesh

International Women's Day was celebrated at V.O.Chidambaram College here on Tuesday.

S. Sornalatha, Advocate Notary, Thoothukudi, in her keynote address spoke on legal remedies for tackling problems of women harassment. Professors of various departments and students participated in the programme organised by the women's counselling centre of the college. While V.Valliammal, Professor, welcomed the gathering, A.Sindhuja Cardoza, Professor, proposed a vote of thanks.

Similar programmes were organised at Annammal College of Education for Women.

Sterlite Copper also observed International Women's Day. S. Nirmala Vijaya Kumar, Infertility Specialist and chief guest of the programme, presented awards to six self-help group members and six women entrepreneurs.

Prizes were also distributed to winners of various sports events organised by the company recently.

Members of Southern India Regional Council of The Institute of Chartered Accountants, Thoothukudi branch, also celebrated Women's Day. Women officers of various departments spoke on challenges being faced by women in the society and how to overcome them.

M. Jamuna Devi, Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax, S. Shanthi, Financial Adviser and Chief Accounts Officer, V.O. Chidambaranar Port Trust, Manju Singhwi, Director, Ramesh Flowers, Sathya Priya, Superintendent of Police and Principal of Police Recruit School, Perurani, Jothi Motha, Proprietor, JM Associates, Sebasty, Associate Professor of English, St.Mary's College, and Shubhaa , an entrepreneur, were present.

### **NSS unit celebrates**

National Service Scheme volunteers celebrated International Women's' Day at Agricultural College and Research Institute in Killikulam.

M.Sundari , Senior Surgeon, Primary Health centre, Vallanadu, and chief guest, explained the importance of health for women. V. Subramanian, Dean, spoke about on this year's theme, "Step it for gender equality."

## **Awareness programmes held**

Various competitions, fun events and awareness programmes were organised in Coimbatore and The Nilgiris on Tuesday to mark International Women's Day.

Innovative competitions and a blood donation camp was organised by Avinashilingam Deemed University for Women. Supreme Court advocate Udaya P.S. Menon dwelt in detail on The Sexual Harassment at The Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

Four women achievers, V. Nanammal (country's oldest woman yoga teacher), K. Radhabai (inspiring professor of history), P. Rani (passionate environmentalist) and H. Poomalai (innovative food entrepreneur), were honoured at the event.



## **Centre shrinks eco-sensitive zone of Lonar crater lake**

In a move that has left green activists worried, the Centre has shrunk the Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) around the meteor-crater Lonar lake in Buldhana district to 100 metres from 500 metres.

In a move that has left green activists worried, the Centre has shrunk the Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) around the meteor-crater Lonar lake in Buldhana district to 100 metres from 500 metres. The one-of-its-kind Lonar crater was created by a meteor impact around 50,000 years ago. Activists fighting for its preservation have written to the environment ministry to reconsider its November 2015 notification, given the great significance the site holds for the global scientific community.

In the letter, Sudhakar Bugdane, a retired principal of a local college who has been fighting for the protection of the crater for more than 30 years, has said, "The Lonar Wildlife Sanctuary has been especially created to conserve the crater created by a meteor impact about 50,000 years ago in the basaltic

rock. This phenomenon has generated saline water (with pH value more than 10.5), full of microbial life of rare type of bacteria and blue green algae. Development of geomagnetic field is another outcome of the said phenomenon... Many international scientists have claimed the study of this location's geology will help understand other planets like Mars and Moon."

Bugdane said the ecology of the crater-lake will be impacted adversely if the ESZ is restricted to 100 metres. The draft notification also mentions that the Lonar sanctuary houses tree species such as Anjan, Ashoka , Beheda, Babul, Bel, Chandan, Dhavda, Gulmohar, Hiver and Palash, and animals such as hyena, wolf, leopard, jungle cat and squirrel. This, Bugdane said, is "simply baseless, misleading and does not match ground realities".

"The real values of the crater — its saline water, microbial life, algae, geomagnetism, rare mineral groups and other geo-morphological values — have been neglected (by the government)," he said.

Bugdane pointed out that the opinion of important stakeholders, such as the Archaeological Survey of India and the Indian Institute of Geomagnetism, which are key to the conservation of Lonar, have been ignored in the draft notification.

In 2006 and 2008, IIT-Kharagpur and Indian Institute of Geomagnetism, Mumbai, had written to the President of India and Maharashtra government respectively, to put in place a protection regimen for the crater, and ensure the 500-metre ESZ limitation around it was not flouted.

Also, the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court had, in April last year, directed stopping of all construction and development activities within 500 metres of the crater-lake on a petition filed by a Nagpur lawyer Kirti Nipankar and Bugdane in 2009.

Lonar is the only meteor-impact crater formed in the basalt rock in the world and is visited by geologists, biologists, astrophysicists and tourists to get a sense of planetary creation, early microbial life and even a history of climate change over the past 50,000 years.

Rampant construction activity, including that by the Lonar Municipal Council, agriculture on land covered by the Ejecta Blanket (the material thrown up on the surrounding earth surface after meteor impact),

contamination of the alkaline lake water with effluents, agriculture inside the crater etc have led to degradation of the basic character/of the meteor crater.

## **How a silent women revolution is underway in the villages of Uttar Pradesh**

In the RGMVP model, they saw the tremendous power of the group and the strength that comes through collective organisation and therein lays the genesis of an innovative idea



Representative photo (AP)

A silent women revolution is underway in the villages of Uttar Pradesh: Over 15 lakh women have organised themselves for their development and taken their destinies in their own hands.

The idea of ‘Self Help Groups’ (SHG) in development discourse has been widely accepted and adapted all over the world. It is generally accepted as an effective tool for extending micro credit to the poor, usually women, and encourages entrepreneurship among the people. Building on existing social networks and the power of the group for exceptionally high repayment rates, the idea has demonstrated that poor can be organised into viable and sustainable business models.

However, when Rajiv Gandhi Mahila Vikas Pariyojana (RGMVP) adopted this model and began organising the women into SHGs, they were not content to use the model only as a liability group to deliver credit without collateral security. Instead they saw the tremendous power of the group and

the strength that comes through collective organisation and therein lays the genesis of an innovative idea. This idea was: adapting the SHG model to address multidimensional aspects of poverty, alter the model from just credit facilitation to deliver range of comprehensive services from health to education, in the process work to break social hierarchies that exist by using gender as a unifying force, and thereby transform the very socio-political landscape of rural Uttar Pradesh.

As of date over 15 lakh women have been organised into over one lakh SHGs across 275 blocks in 42 most backward districts of Uttar Pradesh. The strength of the programme lies in its ownership and execution by the community. Women from the community who are identified as best practitioners are trained as Community Resource Persons and play a lead in running programmes based on provision of health care, education, sustainable agriculture and livelihoods.

Swasthya Sakhis or Community Health Activists have been facilitating safe deliveries, ensuring immunisations, spreading awareness of best practices for mother and child and empowering the community to access and demand better health services and nutrition. Women in the SHGs have been actively involved in demanding toilets and the programme has facilitated hygienic practices around menstruation besides challenging the taboos around the same.

Several hundred crore rupees of credit line has been accessed by the SHGs most of which is utilized on income generating activities and livelihood enhancement, especially livestock and agricultural activities by the women. Thousands of women across the project area have been trained in making organic compost, which retains the fertility of the soil while increasing yield. An Ajeevika Sakhi each has taken the responsibility of disseminating the awareness and technology around soil testing, composting, kitchen gardening, systems of wheat and rice intensification, and vaccination of cattle, through formation of Kissan SHGs.

Training sessions about the Panchayati Raj and its election processes led to around 1000 rural women of the programme, with no prior political experience, to contest the recent Panchayati Raj elections in Uttar Pradesh. Over 350 women won and went on to take leadership role in their community, prioritising their needs, and emerging as decision makers in a context where women are sometimes not even allowed to leave their homes

without a veil. The training to prepare women for greater political participation is on-going with a self-replicating strategy; women who win, in turn help the others in their community, not just in terms of accessing their rights and entitlements but in becoming future leaders in their own right. Yet the greatest impact has been indirect, is non-quantifiable, but vital for this silent revolution. This has been achieved through four ways:

Firstly, collective strength of the women through SHG organisation has been much greater and impactful than the mere sum of its parts. Coming together on a common platform with common concerns has activated their agency and aided unlocking of their potential.

Secondly, support systems and safety nets generated through SHG networks have provided the women impetus to overcome immediate poverty and plan for themselves and their families on a longer term basis. Through social mobilisation achieved by the strength of the collective, women have demonstrated that poor can overcome poverty through their own institutions and have a strong innate spirit of volunteerism.

Thirdly, coming together of women has created a common space for listening and questioning. This questioning has led to challenging the antiquated customs like dowry and veiling, and has enabled women to find a common powerful voice. Through this challenge they have changed the way their families perceive them, gained respect both inside and outside of their homes, and led to perceptible shift in the gender relations in the village.

Most importantly, in a landscape which is primarily feudal and the primary way of grouping has been on rigid caste and class lines with deep hierarchies, inequalities and discrimination, women based SHGs have introduced a novel alternate way of organisation. A way which is based on gender, which is enabling instead of disabling, which increases access to rights and entitlements and works on the principles of inclusion rather than exclusion.

This is the silent revolution which is taking place in the villages of Uttar Pradesh. It is led by lakhs of rural women. It is powerful, and transformative. It is challenging rigid social norms and inequities and proliferating new ways of coming and working together for realising the collective strength of the women. It is changing the way in which men and women, and young people think about gender relations, poverty, society, knowledge and power

and it began with the simple idea that a small group of women together can change their destinies.

**hindustantimes**

**After 15 years, Uttarakhand's agricultural sector still unimproved**



Uttarakhand's agricultural sector has not improved despite 15 years worth of state budgetary allocations. (Sanjeev Verma/ HT Photo)

Uttarakhand has not been able to improve its agricultural growth in the past 15 years though the majority of its population and area are still classified as rural and the state government has a record of nearly 100% spending of its budgetary allocations.

Hill farming is still awaiting special attention from the government as much of the state's agriculture budget comes from the Centre and most of the agri-development schemes are centrally sponsored.

Experts and agriculture department officials say though the state has scope for development in other sectors, farming is the key to checking migration from hill villages.

“There is no alternative to a hill-centric agricultural action plan in the larger interest of the state. However, some important decisions have been taken in



the recent past. For instance, the government has resolved to enact a new land consolidation act for hill areas,” says Kedar Singh Rawat, a farmer who played a key role in framing the land consolidation act draft plan.

“This will benefit mainly the hills as farmers will have the opportunity to consolidate their holdings, bringing them together with the help of the local administration and increase their cropped area. Apart from this, those who have migrated from villages would also like to return to their roots with expectations to own consolidated large pieces of land.”

Rural areas of the state are concentrated in nine hill districts and most of the agricultural production comes from the four districts of Haridwar, Dehradun, Udham Singh Nagar and Nainital. Despite demands for a hill-centric development action plan very little has been done by successive state governments to promote agriculture.

The contribution of agriculture to the state’s domestic product is about 22% and 75-85% population depends on the occupation for livelihood. While the incumbent Harish Rawat government believes that development of hills is primarily linked to the development of agriculture it is yet to come up with a suitable policy boost for either mainstream agriculture or allied activities.

“Fifteen years have gone but we do not have a separate policy for hill farming. It’s a must as hill farming cannot keep pace with plain agricultural activities for the inherent hardships,” farmer leader Shankarchand Ramola said.

“Apart from promotion of local and traditional hill crops, farmers need to be given adequate cover in terms of welfare schemes. Besides this, adequate technical and financial support for water conservation measures must be provided to hill farmers.”

The state has done well on the budget spending front as almost 90% of the total Rs 482.69 crore outlay for the current financial year has been deployed. Of that, Rs 187 crore was Plan expenditure with the Centre and state sharing 50% each while the remaining was non-Plan spending.

“The proposed budget need for the coming financial year is likely to be around Rs 320 core. Of this, the Plan outlay will be Rs 140 crore with the

Centre-state share in a 90:10 ratio,” said the state agriculture director GS Arya.

The hills are constrained in terms of development of large-scale industrialisation as well as the service sector. Development of the agriculture sector, therefore, remains the state’s economic lifeline.

## THE HINDU BusinessLine

### **Soyameal exports fall to historic low at 1,127 tonnes in February**



Soyabean meal exports touched a historic low with a sharp decline of 98 per cent in February 2016 at 1,127 tonnes as against 64,515 tonnes in the same period last year.

The data collected and compiled by the Soybean Processors’ Association of India, Indore, revealed that so far during the financial year soyabean meal exports during April 2015 to February 2016 period stood at 70,392 tonnes as compared to 5,99,818 tonnes in the same period last year, showing a drop of 88.26 per cent.

In the current oil year (October–September), total exports of soyabean meal during October 2015 to February 2016 was 27,647 tonnes as against 5,02,958 tonnes last year, down by 94.50 per cent, the statement said.

According to the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) data, the total oilmeal exports for February 2016 stood at 53,866 tonnes as compared to 208,499 tonnes in the same month last year, indicating a drop of 47 per cent.

Meanwhile, the overall export of oilmeals during April 2015 to February 2016 declined by 52 per cent as compared to last year and was reported at 1,092,905 tonnes against 2,256,436 tonnes during the same period of the last year and 3,969,903 tonnes in 2013-14, an SEA statement said.

Soyabean crushing has dropped sharply due to the continuous disparity and high price of the domestic market, affecting the overall domestic availability of both oils and meals.

Capacity utilisation is at the lowest. The industry is passing through a tough time and many plants have closed down or are operating at low capacity, an SEA statement said.

### **₹,500-cr Nabard tax-free bond issue opens on March 9**

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) plans to raise ₹3,500 crore through tax-free non-convertible bonds.

“The issue will open on March 9 and close on March 14,” Nabard said in a statement on Tuesday, adding that the bonds will list on the BSE.

The proceeds will be mainly used for direct lending to irrigation projects and refinancing irrigation projects.

#### **Retail investors**

Nearly 60 per cent of the issue will be reserved for retail investors, who will be offered a coupon of 7.29 per cent and 7.64 per cent respectively for 10-year and 15-year bonds.

For qualified institutional buyers (QIB), corporates and high net worth individuals, the coupon has been set at 7.04 per cent and 7.35 per cent for 10- and 15-year bonds respectively

The interest on the bonds will be paid annually and allotment would be done on a first-come-first-serve basis.

### **Tea down in Coonoor auction**

Buyers resisted the high prices at Sale No. 9 of the Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction, resulting in the average price dropping by ₹6/kg over the previous week to rule at ₹100.50/kg. Nearly 33 per cent of the tea on offer remained unsold due to lack of buyers, at such prices. Homedale Estate's Pekoe Dust and Red Dust, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the Dust auctions, each fetching ₹201 per kg. Darmona Estate's Super Red Dust, auctioned by Paramount Tea Marketing, closely followed them at ₹200/kg.

### **Mahyco, Arcadia developing salinity-tolerant rice variety**

Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Co (Mahyco), an agri-biotech company from India, and Arcadia Biosciences Inc, a Nasdaq-listed agricultural technology company, on Tuesday announced good progress in developing salinity-tolerant rice.

In two years of initial field trials, rice varieties with Arcadia's salinity-tolerance trait showed double-digit increase under saline conditions, with no loss of yield under normal conditions, said the company in a statement.

Mahyco will advance these lead ST rice lines into their trait introgression programme, and conduct further multi-location field trials to validate trait performance, it added.

Arcadia's salinity tolerance trait enables plants to produce increased yields under conditions of high salinity, expanding the range of usable acreage for crop production and reducing requirements for fresh water. The trait is in Phase 3 of development, and the trait has been applied to a wide range of crops, including wheat, rice, cotton, sugarcane and vegetables.

Globally, loss of crop yield to salt-induced land degradation is estimated at \$27.3 billion a year, according to the United Nations Natural Resources

Forum. Of the world's 568 million acres of irrigated land, 111 million acres are estimated to be salt-affected.

Rice is the world's most valuable crop, grown on over 405 million acres globally with a harvest value of \$328 billion in 2013, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

Salinity stress occurs globally where irrigation is prevalent, where ground water supplies are salinised due to seawater intrusion and mineral deposits. Such areas are common in India, China, North America, Australia and other regions of Asia.

Usha Barwale Zehr, Chief Technology Officer of Mahyco, said with the conclusion of the salinity tolerant rice trials, the company is able to identify lines which have shown superior performance in acute salt stress conditions, and going forward will incorporate these lines into elite materials, to bring

### **Soya meal exports hit new lows in Feb**

Crushing units face closure as high prices cause disadvantage to Indian produce

India's soya meal exports are losing market to competing suppliers from North and South America. Exports from India dipped to a historic low at 1,127 tonnes for the month of February 2016, as against 64,515 tonnes in the same month last year.

The decline was due to sustained higher prices of the domestic soybean, which made meal production costly, thereby making it unviable to compete globally.

Currently, FOB/FAS Indian soybean meal is quoted at \$480 per tonne against Argentina origin soybean meal CIF Rotterdam at \$321 per tonne. Indian soybean meal is out priced by about \$160 per tonne in the international market.

Davish Jain, Chairman of The Soybean Processors' Association of India (SOPA), Indore, maintained that the rising cost has made it unviable to compete globally.

“We are completely out-priced by global competitors. Crushing activity has reduced and several millers have closed their operations because of the disparity in prices,” said Jain.

So far, during the current financial year up to February 2016, soya meal exports stood at 70,392 tonnes as compared to 5,99,818 tonnes in the same period last year, showing a drop of 88.26 per cent.

At Indore spot market, soya meal prices have come down from ₹39,250 per tonne in May 2015 to about ₹32,800 by February 2016. However, it continues to be costlier to export it to the key markets like Japan, the US and Iran, where the Indian soya meal commanded almost monopoly.

Meanwhile, in the current oil year (October 2015-September 2016), total exports of soya meal till February 2016 stood at 27,647 tonnes, as against 5,02,958 tonnes last year, down by 94.50 per cent.

Solvent Extractors’ Association of India (SEA) data put the total oil meal exports for February 2016 at 53,866 tonnes, as compared to 208,499 tonnes in the same month last year, indicating a drop of 47 per cent. Raising its concerns about dipping exports and its impact on crushing activity, the SEA noted that capacity utilisation has touched its lowest, and that the industry was experiencing a tough time with many plants operating at low capacity or even closing down.

The overall export of oil meals during the April 2015-February 2016 period, fell 52 per cent to 1,092,905 tonnes, against 2,256,436 tonnes during the same period of the last year. The same was 3,969,903 tonnes in 2013-14, a SEA statement said.

Rapeseed meal exports have also reduced to one-third of last year primarily due to high cost. Average FOB price continued to be higher for rapeseed meal which stood at \$304 per tonne in February, which was \$253 in March last year.

Among the oil meal complex, castorseed meal had encouraging export numbers, with growth registered over the last month. Castorseed meal exports grew to 414,311 tonnes in the April-February period, against 386,831 in same period last year.

**Business Standard**

## **India in agrarian crisis, NDA has curbed inflation: Arun Jaitley**

Jaitley said that the import of cheap steel from China was hurting Indian manufacturers



Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said on Tuesday that the country is currently experiencing an agrarian crisis but his government has been successful in checking inflation.

"India is facing an agrarian crisis," Jaitley said in his intervention in the Rajya Sabha on the motion of thanks to the president's address at the opening of the budget session of parliament, adding that poor rural demand was a constraint on growth.

The Budget 2016-17, presented by him on February 29, has increased the allocations on agriculture, irrigation and rural infrastructure in order to help farmers cope with the impact of two successive years of poor rainfall, he said.

"Inflation has come down considerably compared to the double-digit inflation prevailing before we came into government.

"The wholesale price index (WPI) inflation has gone into the negative for some time now, while CPI (consumer price index, or retail inflation) has been in the positive," he said.

As per official data last month, retail inflation climbed to 5.69% in January from 5.61% in the month before, while a seasonal softening in food prices and a sharp drop in fuel costs resulted in the annual wholesale rate of inflation declining marginally to (-)0.90% from (-)0.73% in December last year.

The finance minister said that in the globally integrated economy of today, global prices have a domestic impact.

"Prices of a large number of items have come down," he said, indicating that the opposition parties were not considering these, but were only pointing at pulses' prices that have shot up dramatically over the past few months.

"Some items did experience a shortfall in production both domestically and abroad," he added.

Jaitley also said that the import of cheap steel from China was hurting Indian manufacturers.



## THE TIMES OF INDIA

### **Rain, hail damage crops; farmers seek compensation**

Agra: Repeated showers coupled with the hailstorms lashed most parts of the region since Saturday and damaged potato, wheat and mustard crops. For farmers, who are still recovering from the damage caused to their crops by heavy rains in 2015, it was a double whammy.

Shocked farmers took to the streets at several places in the district to raise their grievances and demand compensation from the government. In further trouble, Meteorological department has forecast more rain and hailstorm in the days to come.

The last year's rains had damaged crops worth around 159 cr. Most of the farmers allege that they have not got the compensation from the government for their losses. In the last three days, the showers and hails have harmed crops of potato, wheat and mustard in several villages of Fatehpur Sikri, Kheragarh, Achenera, Kiraoli, Bichpuri, Etmadpur, Sainya, Jagner, Pinahat, Barauli Ahir and other blocks of Agra district.



Raj Kumar, additional district magistrate (finance and revenue), said that a survey to evaluate harm caused to the crops by repeated winds, rainfall and hailstorm since Saturday is taking place in different blocks.

Mohan Singh Chahar, district head of Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, claimed that a huge portion of the standing crop has been hit by the rains. "Up to 70 to 75 per cent wheat crop has been affected. At least 40 % potato crop has been hit. Potato is at high risk of getting rotten due to moisture. Mustard crop has also been harmed by 50 per cent," Chahar said, adding that farmers are in high need for compensation. However, the farmers are cynic about getting compensation from the government any soon. Even compensation announced after 2014 drought in the region have not been fully distributed.

District administration had sent an estimate of Rs 41.89 crore to the state government for drought relief. So far 36.81 crore rupees has been distributed.

In the year 2015, excessive rainfall and hailstorm caused damages to the tune of Rs 159 cr to the crops. However, the UP government released Rs 84.35 cr and the administration distributed Rs 83.95 cr.

The ADM said, "As per the directives of the state government, compensation has been distributed among farmers. The 2014 drought relief compensation was for small farmers and they have been suitably compensated in Rs 36.81 crore."

Kumar admitted that the last year's compensation has not been fully disbursed. "Remaining amount of 2015 compensation will be distributed soon after the sum is released by higher authorities," he said.

### **Minister announces panel to study demands of forestry students**

**andrapur:** Forest minister Sudhir Mungantiwar on Tuesday instituted a committee to study the demand of providing separate quota to candidates of BSc (forestry) in direct recruitments for posts of RFOs and ACFs in forest department. The decision was taken in a meeting with the minister, forest secretary Vikas Kharge and representatives of forest students, who are staging agitation since 57 days here. The five-member committee headed by APCCF (administration), Nagpur, will give its recommendation to the

government for separate quota for BSc (forestry) candidates in direct recruitments. Other members in committee include, member secretary CCF (human resources management), members APCCF (personnel), CCF (education and training) and CCF (territorial) Amravati.

The committee will look into details of similar reservation given to BSc (forestry) candidates in other states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Odisha with regard to qualification, percentage of quota, court cases if any against such quota, number of colleges and number of students clearing BSc (forestry) in these states, details of syllabus etc. The committee will submit the report with its recommendations on providing quota to BSc (forestry) candidates within a period of two-and-a-half months.

Meanwhile, support has poured in for the nearly two-month-long agitation of forestry students from social organizations and political parties. On Tuesday, police twice made attempts to forcefully remove all students staging fast unto death to the hospital over the last 24 hours. Nationalist Congress Party and Prahar organization have extended their support to the students.

Two of the seven forestry students staging indefinite hunger strike were admitted to the general hospital after their condition deteriorated on the seventh day. Students had launched the indefinite hunger strike from March 2, after 50 days of relay hunger strike to demand of reservations in forest department jobs. Doctors looking after agitating students have said that the remaining five students are critical, and advised police to ensure their medication and treatment.

However, the students refused and foiled attempts by cops to forcefully take them to hospital. The cops warned they would be booked under section 309 of IPC (attempt to commit suicide) if they don't take medication. Students have, however, maintained that if condition of fasting students deteriorates, they will themselves admit them to hospital.

Over 100 students, including 20 girl students, from forestry colleges at Akola and Dapoli are camping here since last two months. Two rounds of talks between forest minister and agitating students had failed. With budget session of state assembly slated to start from Wednesday, forest minister Mungantiwar made yet another attempt to break the ice and summoned the representatives for a meeting at the secretariat in Mumbai for secretary level talks on Tuesday. Students cheered and celebrated after the news of

institution of committee reached the agitation venue late in the evening. Students held a meeting among themselves and said that they would decide whether to call off or continue their agitation on Wednesday.

### **3-day training on forestry mgmt at FRI**

RADUN: A short-term training on 'forestry management' for Gurgaon-based field staff of Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative Limited (IFFDC), is being conducted for three days in the Silviculture division of Forest Research Institute . In this programme, 20 personnel of IFFDC from the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pardesh and Rajasthan are participating.

During the inauguration of the training course, chief guest Saibal Dasgupta said that IFFDC is doing commendable work on afforestation and development of wasteland through tree plantation and also contributing towards enhancing the socio-economic status of rural poor through sustainable Natural Resource Management by collective action of the society. This training would provide scientific inputs on nursery raising and plantation management. He hoped that the participants would benefit from such courses and gain knowledge from the scientific inputs on various aspects.

Kunal Satyarhi, Head of Silviculture division, explained that the institute is regularly organizing training programs on nursery and plantation technology for the state forest departments and other stakeholders from all over the country and their feedbacks have been very positive in past. He said that the course program is well-structured as per the requirements of IFFDC and hoped that participants would have good interaction with the resource persons.

Earlier Manisha Thapliyal, course coordinator gave a detailed report of the course and told that more emphasis is being given to practical exposure in nursery ad plantation activities. The training module includes the techniques of seed handling and dormancy pretreatments, seed storage, different agroforestry models, nursery techniques of important tree species of UP, MP and Rajasthan, medicinal plants in agroforestry with practical exposure in nursery and field. The training lectures also include soil fertility management in nursery and plantations, afforestation of difficult sites and management of fungal & insect-pest diseases in nursery & plantations.

# THE ECONOMIC TIMES

## **Cotton price expected to remain stable in July-August**



The price of good quality long staple cotton in Konganapuram regulated market in Tamil Nadu now rules at around Rs 6,000 per quintal.

COIMBATORE: As prices of long staple summer cotton on harvest are expected to be around Rs 5,500-5,800 per quintal in July-August, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has advised growers to take sowing decisions based on their advisory.

The price of good quality long staple cotton in Konganapuram regulated market in Tamil Nadu now rules at around Rs 6,000 per quintal.

To advice farmers on cotton price during harvest period, TNAU's Agro Marketing Intelligence and Business Promotion Centre analysed monthly prices in Konganapuram for the last nine years, which suggested that prices would remain stable and hover around Rs 5,500-5,800 per quintal.

Though the production and arrivals are lower than last year, the fibre has not realised the expected price for being moist and also because of ban on export.

The major cotton growing districts of Tamil Nadu are Dharmapuri, Tiruvannamalai, Vellore, Perambalur, Tiruchirapallii and Salem.

**Focusing on horticulture to reduce tobacco cultivation: Govt**



As many as 384 districts spread across 23 states and union territories have been covered by National Horticulture Mission (NHM) under MIDH.

NEW DELHI: To wean away people from tobacco cultivation, the government is giving high priority for remunerative horticulture crops, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh told Lok Sabha today.

The government has been implementing the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) with effect from 2014-15 that covers fruits, vegetables, root and tuber crops, coconut and cashew, among others.

"Horticulture is emerging as a prospective sector for replacing tobacco cultivation. High priority is given for promoting remunerative horticulture crops for weaning away tobacco cultivation," Singh said.

As many as 384 districts spread across 23 states and union territories have been covered by National Horticulture Mission (NHM) under MIDH.

These include 45 districts in Uttar Pradesh and 39 in Madhya Pradesh.

Under MIDH, various steps have been taken to promote horticulture, including creation of infrastructure for post harvest management and rejuvenation of old and unproductive orchards.

States are also given funds under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) for development of horticulture.

MIDH has subsumed NHM, National Bamboo Mission and Horticulture

Mission for North East & Himalayan States, among others.

### **Export of soybean meal dips to 1127 tons in February**



During current Oil year, total exports during October 2015 to February, 2016 is 27,647 tons as against 5,02,958 tons last year, showing a decrease by 94.50%.

KOLKATA: Export of soybean meal during February, 2016 was just 1127 tons as compared to 64,515 tons in February, 2015 showing a decrease of 98% over the same period of last year. On a financial year basis, the export during April'2015 to February'2016 is 70,392 tons as compared to 5,99,818 tons in the same period of previous year showing a decrease of 88.26%, according to Soyabean Processors Association of India (SOPA).

During current Oil year, (October - September), total exports during October 2015 to February, 2016 is 27,647 tons as against 5,02,958 tons last year, showing a decrease by 94.50%.

The data has been collected and compiled by SOPA based on the information received from the members, port authorities and other agencies. The data does not include exports to Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh by rail or road.

**While rain, hailstorm affect wheat growers, it may also benefit farmers by raising temperatures**



The weather office had earlier issued warnings to farmers, particularly in Maharashtra, advising them to use hail nets and mechanical support.

NEW DELHI: Rain and hailstorm in the past couple of days have hit some farmers growing wheat, mustard and fruits and vegetables in parts of western, central and northern India, but the unseasonal showers should also benefit many farmers as temperatures had soared well above normal. Farmers still face the risk of heavy rainfall next week, when a rainbearing system of clouds called a western disturbance is forecasted to bring showers in northern India. Farmers are worried as the monsoon had failed .

The weather office had earlier issued warnings to farmers, particularly in Maharashtra, advising them to use hail nets and mechanical support to protect vegetables and young fruit plants. It also warned farmers that oranges, sweet lime, pomegranate and papaya fruits may fall from trees due to hail and squally wind.

KK Singh, head agro meteorologist at the India Meteorological Department, said only in a few pockets crops were flattened or waterlogged. He said farmers should now watch for rains from March 12-19, which will cover most parts of the north, northwest and central India.

"The rains in the past few days was very beneficial for the wheat crop in north and northwest India as temperature which was 4-5 degree above normal came down. At some isolated places where crop was harvested and threshing not done, the hailstorms might have damaged crop," Singh said.