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THE HINDU

‘Maize output up despite drought’

Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said on Thursday that despite two successive droughts, maize production during Kharif and Rabi was 21.02 million tonnes for 2015-16.

“Thanks to the hard work of farmers, scientists and policymakers, the area under maize has increased 2.9 times, productivity 4.8 times, and yield 14 times since 1950,” he said at India Maize Summit organised here by FICCI.

The Centre, he said, was promoting maize farming under different schemes. “Over 308 improved hybrid and mixed varieties have been distributed for various climate zones since 1957. During the last five years, 30 high-yielding hybrids and 10 mixed varieties have been released,” he said.

“Our government is giving subsidy on maize seeds under the National Food Security Mission: Rs.50 a kg on hybrid seeds and Rs. 15 a kg on composite seeds,” he said.

Haryana takes steps to meet kharif crop demand

The Haryana government has made arrangements for the current kharif season as the total area under cultivation of crops in the State stands at about 27.86 lakh hectares.

Of the total, paddy accounts for about 13.5 lakh hectares, cotton 6 lakh hectares, bajra and guar 4 lakh hectares each, Haryana Agriculture Minister O. P. Dhankar said here on Thursday.

The requirement of certified seeds of paddy has been kept at a level of 0.87 lakh quintal as against the sale of 0.47 lakh quintal certified seeds of this crop during kharif 2015.

He said that over 2.32 lakh quintals of certified seeds of various major crops are available with different agencies as against the requirement of about 1.32 lakh quintals.

Adequate seeds

Mr Dhankar said that adequate quantity of seeds of major crops like paddy, cotton, bajra, moong, til, guar and maize are available with different government and private agencies.

He further said that 7,256 quintals of certified seeds are available with Haryana Seeds Development Corporation Limited (HSDC), whereas 156 quintals of seeds are available with Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative Limited (IFFDC).

Another 478 quintals are with Krishak Bharati Cooperative Limited (KRIBHCO), 5081 quintals with National Seeds Corporation (NSC) and over 2.19 lakh quintals are available with private agencies.

Apart from this, over 30 lakh packets of BT Cotton seeds are available for kharif 2016 season. Sowing of cotton is over in about 75 per cent of the area till date.

He said that a comprehensive plan has been chalked out to arrange the insecticides, pesticides and weedicides for kharif crops through institutional agencies along with private sector.

Sufficient quantity of fertilisers are also available in the State, he added.

He said that 1.96 lakh metric tonnes of urea, 4.32 lakh metric tonnes of DAP, 5.17 lakh metric tonnes of MOP and 3.85 lakh metric tonnes of complexes are available which is sufficient for the current Kharif season. -- PTI

Forest officials foil attempt to encroach land

Forest officials on Thursday foiled an attempt by horticulture farmers to encroach a portion of the forest land.

A group of farmers commenced farming activities on a land belonging to the Forest Department in Pykara Range of Coimbatore South Forest Division. The place with vast spread of grass lands in Wenlock Reserve Forest is popularly known as Shooting Point as a number of films were shot at this place. Toda tribals live in Neerkachimund area, which is closer to the Shooting Point.

Shooting at this spot was banned long ago following objections from nature enthusiasts.

Meanwhile, the Forest Department came across information that Toda tribal people were clearing the land and are ploughing the same in a bid to commence agriculture activities. Initial attempts to stop them fructified. But after a couple of days, they once again resumed farming activities.

On Thursday, forest officials placed caution boards stating that the land belonged to the department and warned the farmers not to encroach upon it in any form or manner.

South Range Officer Rajesh and team removed the encroachments and installed the caution boards and held talks with the village heads.

It is learnt that the tribal people own closer to 33 acres of land where farming was already on.

Meanwhile, they removed the grass in a four-acre land belonging to the department and made an attempt to commence farming, the officials said.

During the talks, the leaders were told not to indulge in such acts in future. Officials said that with the Tamil Nadu Forest Rights Act not having come into enforcement in the State, tribal people should desist from encroaching forest lands citing the legislation as the basis for their act.

TMC wants special 'kuruvai' package

The Agriculture wing of the Tamil Manila Congress has urged the state government to announce a special 'kuruvai' package for the benefit of delta farmers. In a release issued here on Thursday, Puliur Nagarajan, state president of the Agriculture wing of the party, said that the state government

should sanction inputs worth at least Rs.25,000 per acre under the 'kuruvai package' plan, besides uninterrupted three-phase power supply.

UAS convocation tomorrow

Governor to preside over the event in Raichur



Prakash M. Salimath, Vice-Chancellor of University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur, addressing a press conference on the university campus in Raichur on Thursday.— PHOTO: SANTOSH SAGAR

The sixth convocation of University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur, is scheduled to be held at the university auditorium here on Saturday. Addressing a media conference on the university campus on Thursday, Prakash M. Salimath, Vice-Chancellor of the university, said that Vajubhai Vala, Governor and Chancellor of the University, will preside over the event.

S.L. Mehta, former Vice-Chancellor of Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology, Udaipur, and former Deputy Director-General (Education), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi, will deliver convocation address. Krishna Byre Gowda, Minister of State for Agriculture and Pro-Chancellor of the university, will be present.

B.V. Patil, Director of Education, said that undergraduate degree certificates for 213 students, postgraduate degree certificates for 107 students and doctoral degree certificates for 22 students will be awarded at the convocation. Besides, 39 gold medals — 17 for undergraduates, 13 for

postgraduate students and nine for doctoral degree holders — will also be awarded, he added.

D.M. Chandargi, Registrar of the university, said that Smitha K., undergraduate student, has topped with four gold medals — UAS, Raichur, Gold Medal, Dr. A.S. Hadimani Gold Medal, Sri Veeranagowda Patil Hireyerdihal Memorial Gold Medal and Dr. V.B. Nadagowda Gold Medal — for her outstanding academic performance.

Delighted by the academic performance of the students, Mr. Patil said that in 2014-15, 12 students had secured ICAR Junior Research Fellowship, three students had passed GATE Fellowship, five Ph.D students obtained INSPIRE Fellowship of Science and Technology, four students got Fellowship from International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, 11 students got Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship by University Grants Commission, two secured Maulana Azad National Fellowship, four students were awarded the Dow Agro-Sciences Fellowship.

Mr. Salimath said that UAS, Raichur, has been in the forefront in developing crop production and protection and agricultural engineering technologies. “In 2014-15, five high yielding and stress resilient varieties/ hybrids, including IET-19251, an early maturing rice variety which is suitable for water-scarce areas, are released for the benefit of farmers,” he said.

Basave Gowda, Special Officer of Seed Unit, and S.K. Meti, Director of Extension, were present.

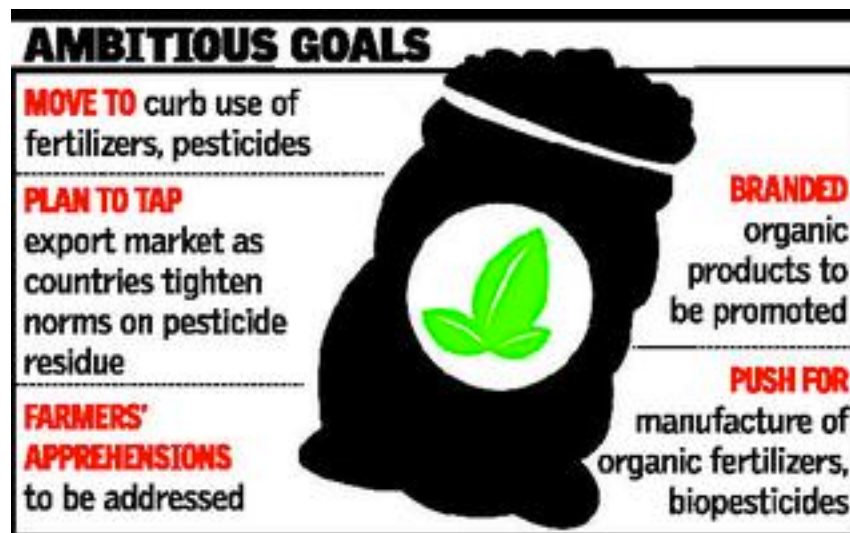
Help farmers with fresh loans, banks told

Zilla Panchayat CEO Sushma Godbole has asked the bankers to help the farmers with fresh loans in the wake of drought and resultant crop failure. Chairing the coordination committee of bankers organised here by Vijaya Bank (lead bank for the district), she said the farmers should not be forced to repay their old debt and the old loans should be rescheduled. “Farmers will not hesitate to repay the loans once they get good rain and a good crop. They should not be harassed for repayment as they would again be in the clutches of private moneylenders,” she said.

RBI representative Jayaprakash Narayan said that June 30 is the last date for submitting Aadhaar number for the Prime Minister's Jan Dhan Yojana . Agriculture officer Kattagoudar explained the crops covered under the crop insurance scheme.

A long-term route to organic farming

Govt. opts for long-term route to switch over to organic farming



The government is embarking on a programme to bring down the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, under plans to enhance agricultural production and tap the export market. Agriculture Minister V.S. Sunil Kumar told *The Hindu* here on Thursday that the government would prefer the long-term route to switch over to organic farming.

Outlining the government's objective to make Kerala a pesticide-free State, the Minister said a research and development programme would be taken up by the Agriculture Department and Kerala Agricultural University. "Branded organic products would help us tap a greater share of the export market and fetch a higher price for our produce." A project initiated by the previous UDF government to convert Kerala into a fully organic State by 2016 had been bogged down after the pilot phase was implemented in Kasaragod last year. The United Arab Emirates had recently imposed tighter controls on the import of mango, cucumber, and chilli peppers from India. The country has made it mandatory for Indian exporters to produce a pesticide residue analysis report for import of these items. The latest report of the pesticide

residue analysis lab under the KAU has revealed that most of the vegetables sold through markets stalls in Thiruvananthapuram, Pathanamthitta, and Kasaragod pesticide residue-free.

While curry leaves, mint leaves, and coriander leaves showed pesticide residue higher than the safe level prescribed by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, sambar chilli and green chilli were found to contain pesticide residue lower than the safety limit.

V.S. Sunil Kumar says an R&D programme would be taken up

by the Agriculture Department and KAU.

Workshop from tomorrow on borewell recharging

The Hyderabad Karnataka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HKCCI), in association with Dr. S.S. Siddareddy Foundation and Tilak Nagar Welfare Association, will organise a two-day workshop on “Borewell Recharging Techniques-A Mission” here from Saturday.

HKCCI president Somshekar G. Tengli, addressing presspersons here on Thursday, said that hydro geologist N.J. Devaraj Reddy from Chitradurga will deliver a special lecture on ground water rejuvenation and rainwater harvesting by scientific method.

On Sunday, Mr. Reddy will participate in an interaction with farmers and students from different colleges. A demonstration on rainwater harvesting and methods to improve groundwater level will be conducted.

Kalaburagi Mayor Syed Ahmed and Commissioner of Kalaburagi Mahanagara Palike P. Sunil Kumar will be the chief guest.

FDI in food processing may cross \$1 billion

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in the food processing sector is expected to cross \$1 billion in the next two years, helped by reforms in FDI space and streamlining of FSSAI regulations, Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal has said.

Highlighting achievements of two years of the NDA Government, Ms. Badal told PTI that her ministry has permitted development of 17 new food parks across the country and is making efforts to operationalise all 42 parks by 2019 that will help double processing level of fruits and vegetables to 20 per cent.

The ministry has also approved setting up of 30 new cold chains in the country.

The government has announced 100 per cent FDI in marketing of food products produced and processed in India in this year's Budget.

"From the very first day after assuming office, my aim was to carry out those reforms which promote investment in the food processing sector, raise farmers' income and generate employment opportunities," Ms. Badal said.

Streamlining rules

Besides food parks, she said the rules and regulations of the food regulator FSSAI had been streamlined to boost food processing sector. "I am quite confident that FDI inflows will cross \$1 billion on the back of these two major reforms — streamlining of FSSAI norms and 100 per cent FDI in food processing," Ms. Badal said.

The food processing sector has attracted \$463 million worth of FDI during April-February of the last fiscal, she added.

According to Ms. Badal, growth of the food processing sector will help farmers get better price for their produce as well as lead to reduction in wastage and lower prices of fruits and vegetables.

"As of now, we only process 10 per cent of our total production of fruits and vegetables, which the Narendra Modi Government is working on to double to 20 per cent of the total output of these two commodities," Ms. Badal added.

To achieve this, the government has taken various steps to create infrastructure at the farm gate level. The ministry had allocated 17 food parks and about Rs.50 crore per food park will be given as grant.

“In the last two years, seven food parks have become operational while during the UPA’s 10-year tenure, only two parks were operationalised,” Ms. Badal averred, adding that the target is to operationalise all 42 mega food parks by 2019. The minister said once the processing level reaches 20 per cent, consumers would have the option of processed fruits and vegetables and that too, at affordable prices. — PTI

Growth of food processing sector

will help farmers

get better prices

for their produce

Initiative to plug loopholes in watershed scheme

Mahabubnagar and Nalgonda in Telangana and Chittoor and Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh to benefit in the first phase

In a major initiative to plug loopholes in the Integrated Watershed Management Programmes, the Department of Land Resources, GoI has launched Neeranchal Regional Orientation Workshop for five States, including Andhra Pradesh and Telangana here on Thursday.

Neeranchal is a Rs.2,142-crore World Bank-aided project of the Union Government that supports the watershed development component of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY).

It will be implemented in nine States – Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana – which account for 60 per cent of the rain fed areas in the country.

It’s a five-year project which will commence in April, 2017 and 2016 is the preparatory phase for the project, said Sandeep Dave, Joint Secretary, Department of Land Resources (DoLR), speaking to *The Hindu* on the sidelines of the workshop.

In each of the nine States, two districts were identified to provide necessary interventions, guidance and support to the community for increasing crop

productivity, milk yield, water availability and improving groundwater table, he said. A similar workshop was already held in Ahmedabad.

The Joint Commissioners of Rural Development, Wesley of Telangana and Sivaprasad of Andhra Pradesh, said that in the first phase, Nalgonda and Mahabubnagar in Telangana and Anantapur and Chittoor in AP were selected.

Each district will have five watershed projects spread over 25,000 hectares. Gradually, the projects in each district would be increased to 40 and each State would get Rs. 200 crore from DoLR. The funding under the Neeranchal will be 60:40 between the Centre and the States.

The Integrated Watershed Management Programme, which has been under implementation since 2009-10, covers 39 million hectares in 8,214 ongoing watershed projects in 28 States at a cost of Rs. 50,000 crore. But it has been facing several challenges in achieving the desired outcome of increased crop productivity, improved groundwater table and enhanced participation of communities.

“This is where the Neeranchal project will help the State Level Nodal Agency (SLNA) in all the nine States under the watershed plus programme,” Dr. Dave said.

Vegetable prices hit the roof

Green chilli at Rs. 110 a kg, tomatoes at Rs. 70 a kg, French beans at Rs. 100 a kg

The prices of vegetables have skyrocketed.

For the first time the prices of green chilli touched Rs. 120 a kg in the retail markets. Though on Thursday it dropped to Rs. 110, retailers and wholesalers say that the price for the commodity will keep hovering around the same rate for some more days.

Vegetable wholesaler in Kollam, Abdul Kareem said that vegetable markets in the central and southern parts of the State are now totally dependent upon Tamil Nadu for green chillies.

But in that State too there is shortage of the commodity because of the drought. Earlier green chillies used to come from Andhra Pradesh too.



Green Gold:A vegetable wholesaler in Kollam with his precious green chilli stock. —Photo: C. Suresh Kumar

But since the past two weeks, no supplies are arriving from Andhra Pradesh.

The retail price of tomatoes which stood at Rs. 20 a kg two weeks ago has now jumped to Rs. 70 a kg.

From Hosur

The entire supply is now coming from the Hosur belt. Earlier supplies used to come from Tamil Nadu. Mr. Kareem said that unless the supply from Tamil Nadu resumes tomato prices are unlikely to fall.

The price of French beans has touched Rs. 100 a kg.

But this commodity in the past had sold at even Rs. 130 a kg.

Since the drought had affected locally grown native vegetable crops, the prices of such vegetables have soared. For instance the price of snake gourd which was Rs. 20 a kg a week ago has now touched Rs. 40 a kg.

Mr. Kareem said that though there is huge demand, locally grown bitter gourds with the lighter shade are not arriving at markets. Only the ones with the dark shade from Tamil Nadu are arriving.

Long beans

Even the entire stocks of long beans available in markets are arriving from Tamil Nadu and sell at Rs. 50 a kg.

He said that in spite of the price rise the sale of vegetables have not dropped.

There is a rush of retailers at the wholesale markets every morning and soon the stocks of the costly vegetables are over.

Supplies fall

“But then the supplies arriving at wholesale markets too have fallen by over half the quantity compared to arrival before the price rise,” he said.

After the initial euphoria, Modi government has created widespread despondency

During elections, PM Modi had made huge claims about our “demographic dividend” and had promised 100 million jobs in manufacturing by 2022



Rural distress is an alarming reality and the government has been a silent spectator.

The Modi government has completed two years in office and is on its way to the halfway mark. The government came in riding a wave of expectations, after having promised an utopian world and “sabka saath, sabka vikas”, but across the spectrum — the farmer, the young student, the woman, the middle class — a sense of despondency and disillusionment has begun to set in. This is not just a classic case of “overcommit and underdeliver”, but is coupled with an unparalleled abuse of administrative machinery to control the discourse and detract attention from the government’s failures.

During elections, PM Modi had made huge claims about our “demographic dividend” and had promised 100 million jobs in manufacturing by 2022. The

reality is in stark contrast to these tall promises: There has been a downward slope in job creation since the NDA government assumed office.

Labour Bureau data has revealed that new jobs in eight major sectors of the economy fell to a six-year low of 1.35 lakh in 2015 compared to 4.21 lakh such jobs in 2014 and 4.19 lakh jobs in 2013.

The October-December 2015 quarter recorded a net decline of 20,000 jobs (negative change in employment) — the worst performance in the past six years. Despite the entire hullabaloo around “Make in India” and “Skill India”, the media blitzkrieg through witty acronyms and handy apps, there is no effective change — and in fact, a deterioration — on the ground.

Over the past two years, the country has also been reeling under severe drought. Exposed to the vagaries of nature, including unseasonal downpour at harvest, the farmer has suffered repeated crop failure. We have reached a stage where, let alone for irrigation, water is not even available for daily consumption for roughly 30 per cent of the population.

Rural distress is an alarming reality and the government has been a silent spectator. When its attempts to grab farmers’ land through amendments to the Land Acquisition Act and ordinances were thwarted by a united opposition, the government resorted to reducing MSPs and delaying MGNREGA wage payments to score political brownie points.

Far from preventing it, this government has done everything it possibly can, in the past two years, to push the farmer towards the extreme step of committing suicide.

Not just the welfare and livelihood of citizens, but the very institution of democracy is being threatened in the country. The government has left no stone unturned to suppress any view or opinion that is different from its own.

Educational institutions around the country — whether it be the Rohith Vemula suicide at HCU, the row over the Ambedkar-Periyar Study Circle in IIT Madras or the NIT controversy — have fallen victim to the saffronisation agenda of the Sangh Parivar.

At the same time, concerted attempts are being made to topple and engineer the demise of India's federal structure through destabilising elected state governments, as seen in Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

The government is working very hard to sketch a boundary of "one nation, one religion, one culture" and anyone who dares to colour outside this boundary is invariably labelled "pseudo-secular" or "anti-national", with no regard for nuance in debates or for the implications of such a vocabulary.

While the performance on internal affairs has left much to be desired, external affairs and foreign policy have been no different. Leaders of neighbouring South Asian countries were invited to PM Modi's swearing-in ceremony in May 2014, amid a lot of pomp and show, to signal seemingly warmer ties, but the goodwill generated in the region has all but evaporated since then. The tragic killing of 18 army personnel in Manipur was used as a pretext to conduct a "surgical strike" in Myanmar by violating international borders.

By flexing muscle and fuelling unrest in earthquake-ravaged Nepal, the government has driven the country closer to China and led to allegations of an Indian conspiracy to topple the Oli government there. The Centre's Pakistan policy has also been marred by U-turns and flip-flops to the extent that India is not negotiating from a position of strength any more — Pakistan is not only deciding when we talk but also what we talk about.

Indians are a patient people — resilient and courageous in the face of hardship. But, the clock on this government is ticking and before people's patience runs out, it must start acting as the government they deserve.

(This article first appeared in the print edition under the headline 'This Sinking Feeling')

Govt plans national food grid to ease supply, rein in prices

NEW DELHI: The government plans to set up a “national food grid” to move fruit and vegetables from surplus areas to deficit ones quickly by ramping up storage and processing as part of a long-term strategy to contain food prices.

The food processing ministry will bring in the “National Food Grid Development Authority Bill” that will enable seamless movement of food products,” food processing minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal told HT.

A “food grid” is akin to a power grid that speedily allocates power according to demand.

Badal said that a national cold chain network would be an essential part of the grid for ferrying goods during glut and shortfall.

The National Food Grid Development Authority will undertake mapping of all gaps in terms of infrastructure for storage, cold chains, markets and food testing laboratories.

“We shall bring policies, which shall put food processing on an auto-pilot seamless growth mode,” Badal said.

“We began with Nabard agriculture loans, FDI in food retail and now we are focussing on food processing infrastructure”.

In 2014, the government set up a Rs 2,000-crore corpus for National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) to help lend to food-processing units at a lower interest rate.

In the budget for 2016-17 in February, finance minister Arun Jaitley announced the government’s intent to allow 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) in food retail.

FDI in multi-brand retail for food products will also likely come bundled with the condition that these items are completely produced in India.

Inter-ministerial consultations have begun for writing the finer policy rules for fully opening up the food sector to overseas investors.

Although India's food processing industry accounts for 32% of the total food market, only 2-3% of India's vegetables are processed into various products to increase their shelf life.

“The objective is to develop a singlewindow mechanism for all kinds of approvals in a stipulated time-frame for food processing industries.

The national food grid authority will bring about a transparent regulatory approval system,” the minister said.

All power of approvals and regulations shall be vested in the authority, which will have representatives from industry, farmers and labour.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has harmonised product standardisation for more than 8,000 additives, bringing them on a par with global Codex parameters, a joint WHO-FAO Food standards programme, Badal said.

“This is a big step forward because until recently the FSSAI acknowledged only 370-odd categories, which made the product approval procedure tedious and cumbersome for the food processing industry.”

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Farm Minister calls for steps to boost speciality corn production



Radha Mohan Singh, Minister of Agriculture (centre), along with Sarat Mulukutla, Chief Commercial Segment, NCDEX, and Vinay Mathur, Deputy Secretary-General, FICCI, releases FICCI-Synergy Technofin Knowledge Paper during India Maize Summit 2016 in New Delhi on Thursday

‘Sector holds immense potential in urban areas’

Targeted incentives need to be given for the cultivation of speciality corn such as baby corn, popcorn, sweet corn and multigrain flour to meet rising demand, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said.

India needs to work towards doubling its maize production by 2025 as the sector holds immense opportunities with its growing popularity among urban consumers, Singh said at the India Maize Summit organised by the industry body FICCI on Thursday.

Corn stats

“By 2025, India would require 50 million tonnes (mt) of maize for domestic consumption, of which 32 mt would be used by the feed sector; 15 mt by the industrial sector and 2 mt to be used for food and one million tonne for seed and miscellaneous purposes. There would be 10 mt of export potential as well,” Singh said.

Doubling the country’s maize production from the present levels of about 21 million tonne by 2025 is, therefore, a big opportunity for India, he added.

According to the third advance estimate, the total maize production (kharif and rabi) of the country during 2015-16 is likely to be 21.02 mt.

The Minister also stressed on the need for special programmes to promote Quality Protein Maize (QPM) as it provides nutrient security to even remote areas.

QPM contains 80 per cent protein as opposed to about 50 per cent in regular maize.

Drought-prone crop

The private sector should be provided special incentives to provide improved seed to remote areas such as the North-East, he said.

The fact that maize can be grown on all kinds of soils and in various climatic conditions make it a suitable crop for India, pointed out Ashok Dalwai, Additional Secretary, Agriculture Ministry.

Low productivity

Dalwai, however, pointed out that productivity was one of the lowest in India with a yield per hectare of just 2.4 tonnes compared to 6 tonnes in China and 10 tonnes in the US.

Raising yields will be possible through a number of focussed steps including wider use of single cross hybrids and increased use of micro-irrigation.

Monsoon stuck over Andamans as heat wave shifts to east India



The South-West monsoon has remained stuck over the Andaman and Nicobar islands even as heat wave conditions over the mainland shifted from North-West India to the eastern parts of the country.

Maximum and minimum temperatures over North-West and adjoining Central India may however start gradually rising over the next two days, an India Met Department update said.

Rain scale-up

According to the US Climate Prediction Centre, the thundershowers lining up over South India will scale up during the week beginning June 1.

Western parts of Sri Lanka, parts of Kerala and north Coastal Tamil Nadu (Puducherry-Chennai belt) are expected to witness moderate to heavy rain during this period.

According to the US National Centre for Environment Prediction, moderate to heavy rain is forecast over the seas (Arabian Sea) off the Kerala coast during the current week ending on June 3.

The following week (June 3-11) would see heavy to very heavy rain lash the Kerala and Karnataka coasts as also South Interior Karnataka, Rayalaseema and Telangana.

This more or less corroborates the India Met outlook for heavy rain associated with the delayed onset of the monsoon this year.

Heating under check

Dust storms or thunderstorms being triggered by a passing western disturbance would keep the temperatures under check in Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.

Thunderstorms have also been forecast for Bihar, Gangetic West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya while heavy rain will lash parts of Kerala as well as Assam and Meghalaya.

There is no heat wave warning for Saturday but heavy rain has been forecast at isolated places over Kerala, Assam and Meghalaya.

Thunderstorms accompanied by squall will continue to put a cap on the heat in Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.

This would be the likely weather pattern for Sunday as well, the Met forecast says.

Renewed demand holds oils firm



Edible oils ruled firm on back of renewed physical demand amid bullish futures. Local refineries raised their rates for palmolein and soya oil by ₹5-8 per 10 kg which lifted prices on the BCE by ₹2 for cotton oil and by ₹5 for palmolein.

Ruchi was quoting palmolein at ₹584, soyabean refined oil ₹625 and sunflower refined oil ₹725. Allana traded palmolein for ₹588, soya refined oil ₹640 and sunflower refined at ₹740.

At Rajkot, groundnut oil *Telia* tin was steady at ₹1,820 and loose (10 kg) at ₹1,170. BCE spot rates (₹/10 kg): groundnut oil 1,170 (1,170), soya ref. 625 (625), sunflower exp. ref. 655 (655), sunflower ref. 725 (725), rapeseed ref. 840 (840), rapeseed exp. ref. 810 (810), cottonseed ref. 648 (646) and palmolein 577 (570).

From hardy pigs to super-crops, gene editing poses new dilemma for EU

Heat-tolerant Angus beef cattle designed for the tropics with white coats instead of black or red. A button mushroom that doesn't turn brown. Pigs that don't fall sick.

These are all ideas thrown up by gene editing, the new technology taking the biomedical world by storm, and one which also promises a revolution down on the farm.

It poses a thorny problem for European policymakers wary of new molecular manipulation in agriculture after a quarter century of conflict over genetically modified food.

In a research lab in Norwich, 100 miles northeast of London, Wendy Harwood is making exact DNA tweaks in barley plants to produce better-germinating grain, with higher yield and quality.

“We've never been able to go in and make such a precise change as we can now with gene editing,” said the John Innes Centre scientist. “This gives you exactly the change you want without anything you don't want.”

Further to the south of England in Basingstoke, animal genetics firm Genus has tapped the same 'CRISPR-Cas9' technique to develop the world's first pigs resistant to a devastating and common viral disease, in a tie-up with US researchers.

Agricultural scientists and companies worldwide are joining the gene editing race, including seeds giant Monsanto, now the target of a \$62-billion takeover attempt by Germany's Bayer. Rival DuPont, which is merging with Dow Chemical, hopes to have CRISPR-edited corn and wheat on the market in five to 10 years.

Bright ideas from others include improved varieties of rice, soybeans and tomatoes, as well as hornless cattle and the heat-tolerant breed of Angus.

Using “molecular scissors” to cut DNA means scientists can edit genomes more precisely and rapidly than ever before, and agricultural products – which don't need the same clinical trials as human drugs – could get to market relatively quickly.

US green light

Last month, a non-browning button mushroom became the first CRISPR-edited organism to get a green light from the US government – and several crops developed with two older, less efficient editing tools have already been waved through.

But whether such products will ever arrive on European farms is another matter, since the European Commission has so far not made a decision on how they will be regulated, leaving the new science in limbo.

The EU executive had been due to decide by the end of 2015 whether to class gene-edited products as genetically modified organisms (GMOs), subjecting them to the same stringent restrictions that have curbed GMO use in Europe.

This deadline was missed, as was a second one of end-March 2016, and there is now no new timeline for a decision. Both sides in the debate are worried.

Biotechnology companies, meanwhile, argue their gene-edited products are “non-GMO”, since they do not contain foreign DNA from a different species.

Find-and-replace function

The argument is complex. Unlike traditional GMOs, in which a gene is added from another organism, gene-editing works like the find-and-replace function on a word processor. It finds a gene and then makes changes by amending or deleting it.

Proponents argue this makes it similar to conventional selective breeding, which is freely allowed in the EU, since such mutations within the same species can – and do – also occur naturally. Rene Smulders, a plant breeder at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, says the current uncertainty is affecting research. His group had a grant application turned down last year because of concerns about the legal situation.

He wants Europe to follow the lead of Canada, which decides on new products based on their traits, not how those traits were produced. “Europe’s

process-based legislation creates problems and is not suitable for the future,” Smulders said.

Collectis CEO Andre Choulika, whose Calyxt unit has used older forms of gene editing to improve potatoes, wheat and soyabeans, thinks the odds are 50:50 that gene-editing will end up being classified as GMO in Europe.

Cotton body pegs output lower at 341 lakh bales on crop damage

The Cotton Association of India (CAI) has pegged the country’s 2015-16 (October-September) cotton output at 341.5 lakh bales (of 170 kg each), 10.8 per cent below the previous year’s production of 383 lakh bales.

The lower crop estimate is mainly due to damage in the northern region due to the white-fly attack this year.

Till April, arrivals of the fibre were estimated at 302.4 lakh bales – 89 per cent of the overall estimated crop, the association said.

For 2015-16, production in the central zone, which includes Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, was pegged at 188 lakh bales (204.5 lakh bales), CAI said in a press release.

The association expects output in the northern zone, which includes Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan, to decline to 41 lakh bales from 53.5 lakh bales a year ago, while the south zone is expected to record a production of 106.5 lakh bales against last year’s 118.7 lakh bales.

The projected balance sheet drawn by the CAI for 2015-16 pegs total supply at 429.10 lakh bales, while domestic consumption is seen at 305 lakh bales, thus leaving an available surplus of 124.10 lakh bales.

Maize cultivation needs to double by 2025: Agriculture Minister



India needs to work towards doubling its maize production by 2025 as the sector holds immense opportunities with its rising popularity among urban consumers, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh has said.

Special incentives need to be given for the cultivation of speciality corn such as baby corn, popcorn, sweet corn and multi-grain flour, the Minister said at the India Maize Summit organised by industry body FICCI on Thursday.

"By 2025, India would require 50 million tonnes of maize for domestic consumption, of which 32 million tonnes would be needed in the feed sector, 15 million tonnes in the industrial sector, 2 million tonnes as food and one million tonnes for seed and miscellaneous purposes. There would be 10 million tonnes of export potential as well," Singh said.

Doubling India's maize production from the present levels of 24.7 million tonnes by 2025 is, therefore, a big opportunity for India, he added.

Incentives need to be provided to the private sector so that they may provide improved seeds to remote areas such as the north-eastern region, the Minister pointed out.

Business Standard

Drought cripples farm sector



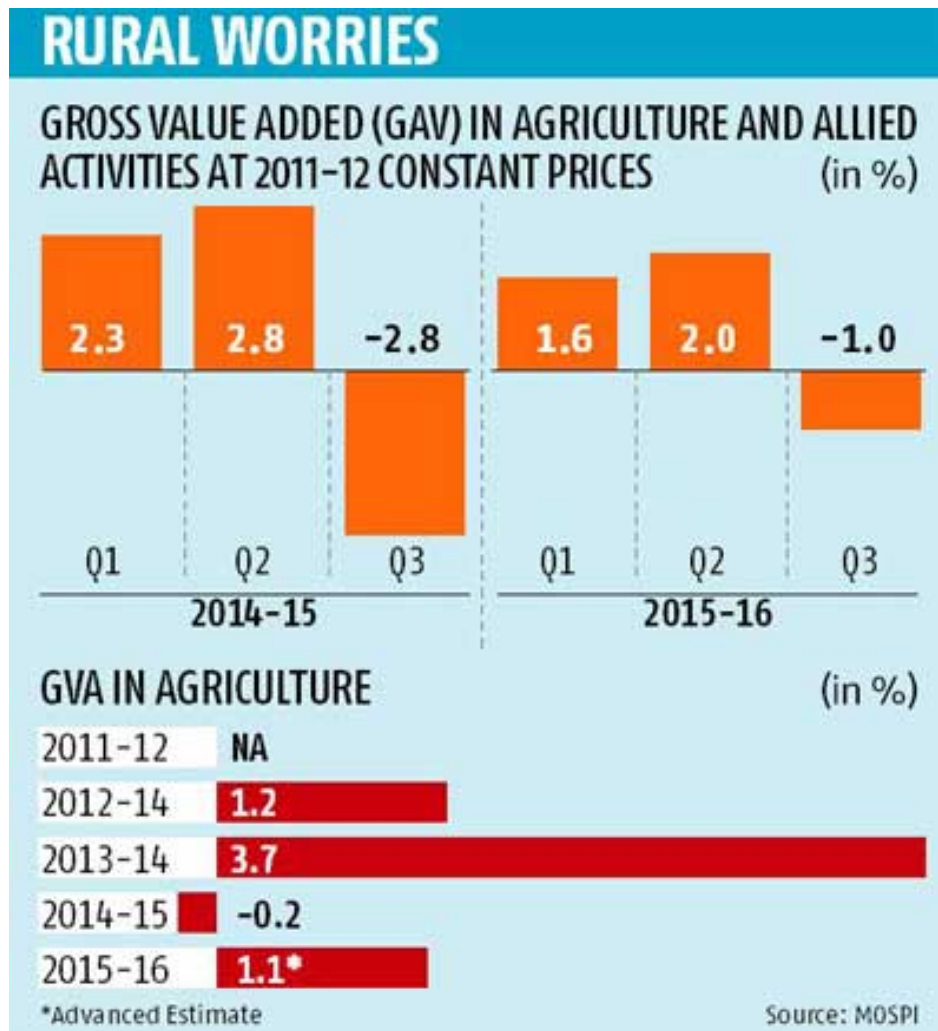
The first two years of the Narendra Modi government were marked by big announcements that will take their time to materialise. The one sector that is unfazed by slogans is agriculture.

The sector is crippled by back-to-back droughts coupled with a record fall in farm prices. A slump in global markets meant that agriculture exports, which could provide farmers alternative revenue, dried up. Agriculture and processed food exports from India dropped to a five-year low of \$24 billion in 2015-16. Wheat, rice, and even guar gum exports dropped sharply.

In Punjab and Haryana, they were forced to sell a basmati variety to the public distribution system because its price had dropped to a multi-year low.

In Maharashtra cotton farmers are selling their produce at record low rates, while in Andhra Pradesh tobacco growers have unsold stocks because retail prices have crashed.

Agriculture growth in the first two years of the Modi government averaged a miserable 0.5 per cent, with many experts questioning the 2015-16 performance because it is expected to come on strong growth in livestock, dairy and fisheries.



Agriculture growth in 2015-16 in preliminary estimates is 1.1 per cent, a big improvement from -0.2 per cent in 2014-15 but nowhere near the target 4 per cent.

Data from the National Crime Records Bureau show farmer suicides increased by 5 per cent in 2014 from the previous year's 12,360.

The poor showing in villages has started hurting the BJP's electoral prospects. Unfulfilled electoral promises like guaranteeing 50 per cent profit over cost through minimum support prices are coming back to haunt the government.

Against this background the Centre has embarked on a massive increase in rural investment in roads, irrigation, marketing network and infrastructure. The Budget for 2016-17 was billed as seeking to address many structural flaws in agriculture.

Programmes like the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, Soil Health Card, 100 per cent coating of urea with neem, National Agriculture Market, a new crop insurance scheme and enhanced compensation for crop loss will yield results in years to come but only if they are adequately funded.

For example, the Centre has sanctioned over Rs 12,000 crore to different ministries in the last two Budgets for irrigation plans to raise this to over Rs 50,000 crore. But a rough assessment shows over half this amount will be needed to complete just the existing minor irrigation projects as on March 31, 2015.

"In all possibility, this financially paralysed dream is likely to remain a just a dream for at least a decade," agriculture economist Ashok Gulati wrote in a newspaper about the scheme.

For the Soil Health Card, which aims to cover all 140 million farmer families at least once in the next two years, many experts said the funds provided were inadequate.

The Centre has a limited role to play in agriculture and implementation is in the hands of the states. But with the BJP rapidly expanding its footprint across the country, taking states on board should not be difficult.

The biggest impetus though will come from the monsoon, which is expected to be best in the last few years. If the rainfall is to forecast, it will mark the real 'achhe din' for India's rural population.

Excess late rains could hit agri hopes

However, too much rain in the later half might not always be good for crops



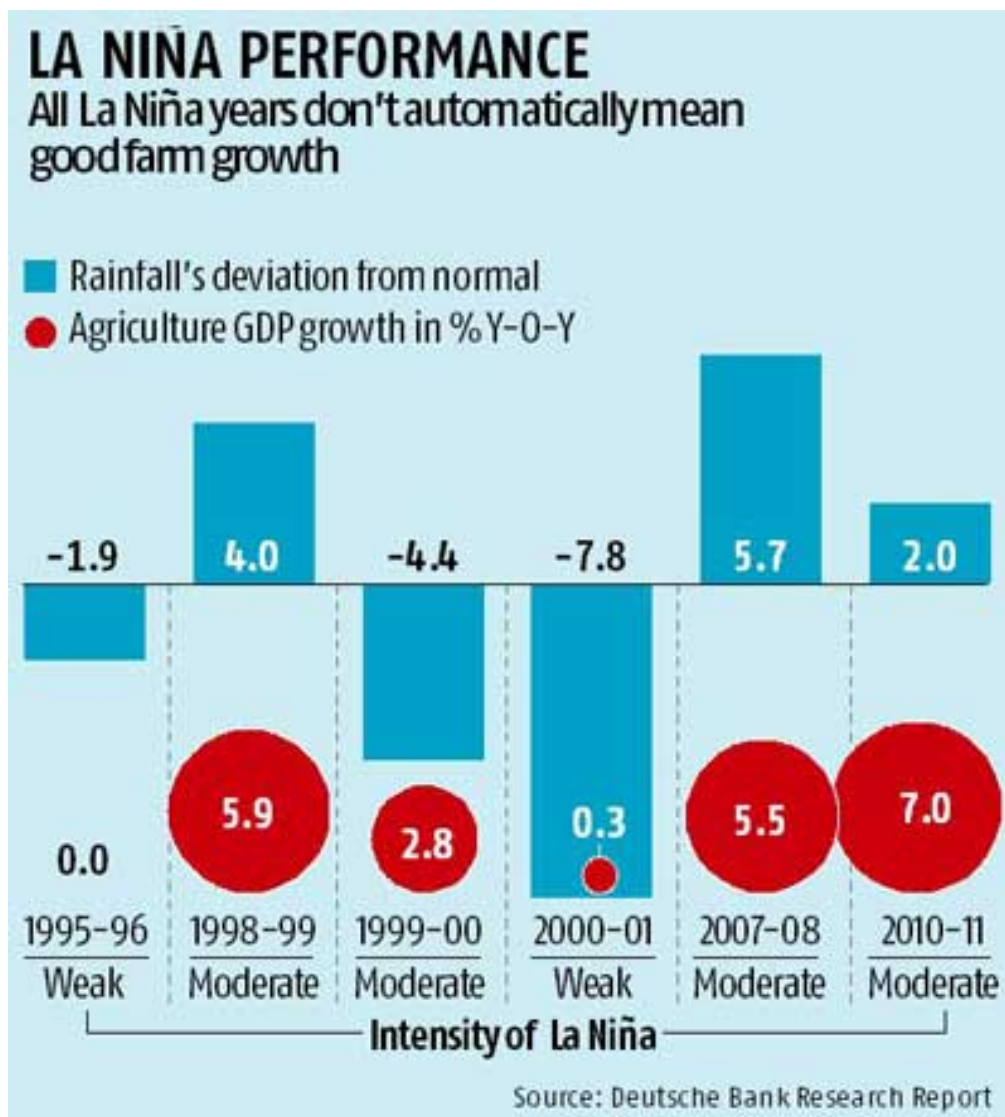
The southwest monsoon is likely to reach the country later than usual and gain momentum over the months, but that's hardly good news for agriculture if the showers are in excess and their distribution skewed.

According to meteorologists, the rains are expected to pick up speed in the second half of June and make steady progress across the country, getting stronger each day. The season lasts till September.

June, being the first month of monsoon, gets 17-18 per cent of the total moisture. So, a delayed start would not have too much of an effect on the total rainfall. July and August get the most showers. In many parts of central and north India, monsoon reaches only in July.

However, a delayed start could mean the current dry weather would continue for some time in many parts of the country. Water levels in the 91-major reservoirs, which dipped to about 18 per cent of their total capacity in the week ending May 19, would fall.

A delayed monsoon that goes on longer than expected is also not good. “Too much rain at the end of the monsoon as well as unseasonal rainfall could lead to flooding. Too little rainfall at crop-critical areas could be equally damaging for agricultural production,” said a Deutsche Bank research report last month.



Also, historical evidence suggests that agriculture growth is typically low in the years that follow La Niña — which was prevalent last year.

“This implies that if we end up with a strong agricultural sector growth in FY17 (5.0-5.5 per cent), this will likely be followed by a weak agricultural sector performance in the next financial year (FY18),” the Deutsche Bank report said.

La Niña is a climatic cycle over the Pacific Ocean that has often helps the monsoon in India.

For the time being, the Union agriculture ministry has pegged the food grain production target at 270 million tonnes for FY17, almost 17 million tonnes more than FY16.

With back-to-back droughts, there is little hope for a bumper crop growth.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) would come out with its monthly and region-wise monsoon forecast in the first week of June.

Private weather forecasting agency, Skymet, in its updated forecast released Tuesday had also predicted that the rains would gather steam from August onwards and might spill over well into October delaying its withdrawal.

“The monsoon reached Andaman and thereafter there has not been much movement. It is expected to again gather steam around June 6, which is around the time it is expected to reach Kerala coast. Overall, I feel that in the first half of June, the southwest monsoon might remain weak, but gather good steam there onwards,” D S Pai, deputy director general, climatology, IMD, told Business Standard.

India can achieve 50 mt maize output by 2025 to meet demand

To meet the rising domestic demand of the crop



India can double its maize production to 50 million tones (mt) by 2025 to meet the rising domestic demand of the crop, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said on Thursday.

In spite of the drought last year, the maize production stood at 24.17 mt in 2014-15, Singh said adding this signifies the resilience of maize cultivation against climatic variability.

As per the third advance estimates, the maize production is projected at 21.02 mt in 2015-16 crop year.

About 64 per cent of the total maize production is used for poultry feed, followed by 16 per cent for human consumption, 19 per cent for industrial starch and beverage and 1 per cent for seed.

Keeping in view the recent interest of urban consumers especially in specialty corn, like sweet corn, baby corn, popcorn, etc, it is expected that demand for maize as food may rise to 2 mt by 2025, Singh said.

"By 2025, India will require 50 mt maize for domestic consumption, of which 32 mt for feed, 15 mt for industrial sector, 2 mt as food and 1 mt for seed. Thus, doubling India's maize production would be an opportunity and it can be achieved," Singh said while addressing the India Maize Summit organised by an industry chamber here.

The minister said that in order to explore maximum uses of the crop, the maize-based industry needs to be promoted in a big way and special incentives need to be given for the cultivation of baby corn, popcorn, sweet corn, multigrain flour etc.

The quality protein maize (QPM) provides nutrient security to even remote areas of the country and programmes are needed to stress emphasis on the QPM, Singh said adding that special incentives should be provided to the private companies so that they can provide improved seed to remote areas like north eastern region.

The maize is cultivated throughout the year, 85 per cent during kharif (summer) season and 15 per cent during rabi season.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Agriculture minister flags off krishi raths

The minister for agriculture development, animal husbandry and fisheries, Randhir Kumar Singh, on Wednesday flagged off Krishi Rath to mark the beginning of the month-long Jharkhand Krishi Mahotsav. The state government seeks to promote awareness among the masses about the farming facilities provided by the Centre and state government.

The state agriculture department, which has nearly doubled the allocation for agriculture this financial year by introducing a separate budget for the department, is focused on agriculture.

Singh said the Krishi Rath initiative was launched last year to inform farmers about facilities available to them. "The initiative has yielded positive results. A lot more remains to be done," said Singh.

While Krishi Mahotsav will conclude on June 25, the raths (56 in total) designed to disseminate information about agriculture-related schemes and facilities, will cover four blocks each by June 9.

Director of the state agriculture management and extension training institute (SAMETI), Ajay Kumar Singh, said the crop insurance policy has been redesigned to suit farmers' interest and krishi rath will help educate farmers about the scheme.

"The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, availability of a single window for farmers, support available for construction of dobhas, soil health card, rainwater harvesting, availability and distribution of seeds are among the major issues that farmers should be aware about," said Kumar Singh. He also added that the initiative will also help farmers explore new farming practices.

Interview with Union agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh

First two years of the NarendraModi government had to suffer two back-to-back drought that had its bearing on foodgrain production, but India could somehow manage to minimize the impact. The year 2015-16 was worse in terms of deficit rainfall.

Still, the country is estimated to record slightly higher foodgrain production this crop year (July-June) as compared to 2014-15. Union agriculture minister **Radha Mohan Singh** in an interview to **Vishwa Mohan** gave the credit to hard works put in collectively by all stakeholders including Centre, states and farmers.

He emphasized on the roles of science in making India completely 'drought proof' in future and also enlisted the initiatives taken by his government to achieve this goal, provided states fully come on board.

Excerpts:

Q. What all the Centre had done to provide relief to farmers in case of disaster\drought?

A. We have revised the norms for providing relief to farmers and extended record amount of financial assistance to states in the past two years. Relief is now being given in case of 33 per cent damage to the crop as against the earlier norm of 50 per cent damage or more. The compensation amount under various heads has also been increased by 50 per cent. It was a historical decision, taken last year at the behest of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Besides, the Centre had approved nearly Rs 9,017 crore as relief to the states affected by drought and hailstrom as against their demand of Rs 42,021 crore in 2014-15 and approved Rs 13,497 crore during 2015-16 crop year as against the demand of Rs 41,722 crore. In contrast, the UPA government had merely approved a relief of Rs 12,516 crore as against the demand of Rs 92,043 crore during four years from 2010-14.

Q. Have the disaster/drought-affected farmers actually got the relief amount? Does the Centre's role end after extending financial assistance to states?

A. Under the Constitution, agriculture is the state subject and it is the states responsibility to disburse the relief amount to affected farmers. We have, however, been in constant touch with district-level officers through dialogue, pushing them not only to disburse the amount to farmers quickly but also to implement the various schemes — Soil Health Cards, Prime Minister Agriculture Irrigation Plan and National Gokul Mission among others — at local level.

Many states have been implementing all these schemes quite sincerely. But, few others have not been that successful. It all depends on states' sensitivity towards farmers.

Q. Which are those states that have not properly implemented the central schemes?

A. If you travel from Delhi to Kolkata by train and look outside, you would easily find out that the states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal) on the way have not implemented many of the central schemes that successfully as compared to others.

Q. In the existing system where "patwari" (local revenue officer) decides the actual beneficiaries, how would you ensure that only the real disaster-hit farmers get relief?

A. That's the reason why we have been promoting use of technology and drone-based survey to map the affected areas and identify the real affected farmers. The centre is also assisting the states to arm the local agriculture officers with smart phones and other scientific tools to make the farmers aware of all the central schemes and their rights over financial assistance. The direct benefit transfer (DBT), launched by us, will also ensure that the farmers can get quick relief.

Q. Many farmers have committed suicides in past two years. It seems the relief does not reach them. How can this unfortunate trend be stopped?

A. Many farmers took the extreme steps as they had to depend on loans from moneylenders. In case of crop failure, they lost everything. We don't want farmers to trap in such a situation and therefore our government has launched the Prime Minister Crop Insurance Scheme. This is the biggest ever financial support by the central government in crop insurance.

Farmers will have to pay lowest ever premium. It will provide them full financial security in case of crop failure. The scheme, which is to be implemented from the Kharif (summer crop) season this year, will cover and disburse relief to even those farmers who are unable to sow/transplant due to bad weather.

Mobile and satellite technology will be used for the first time for quick and correct assessment of loss so that farmers can get their claims without any delay.

Haryana takes steps to meet demand for kharif crops

Haryana government has made adequate arrangements for the current kharif season as the total area under cultivation of crops in the state stands at about 27.86 lakh hectares.

Of the total, paddy accounts for about 13.5 lakh hectares, cotton 6 lakh hectares, bajra and guar 4 lakh hectares each, Haryana Agriculture Minister O P Dhankar said here today.

The requirement of certified seeds of paddy have been kept at a level of 0.87 lakh quintal as against the sale of 0.47 lakh quintal certified seeds of this crop during kharif 2015.

He said that over 2.32 lakh quintals of certified seeds of various major crops are available with different agencies as against the requirement of about 1.32 lakh quintals.

Dhankar said that adequate quantity of seeds of major crops like paddy, cotton, bajra, moong, til, guar and maize are available with different government and private agencies.

He further said that 7,256 quintals of certified seeds are available with Haryana Seeds Development Corporation Limited (HSDC), whereas 156 quintals of seeds are available with Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative Limited (IFFDC).

Another 478 quintals are with Krishak Bharati Cooperative Limited (KRIBHCO), 5081 quintals with National Seeds Corporation (NSC) and over 2.19 lakh quintals are available with private agencies.

Apart from this, over 30 lakh packets of BT Cotton seeds are available for kharif 2016 season.

Sowing of cotton is over in about 75 per cent of the area till date.

He said that a comprehensive plan has been chalked out to arrange the insecticides, pesticides and weedicides for kharif crops through institutional agencies along with private sector.

Sufficient quantity of fertilisers are also available in the state, he added.

He said that 1.96 lakh metric tonnes of urea, 4.32 lakh metric tonnes of DAP, 5.17 lakh metric tonnes of MOP and 3.85 lakh metric tonnes of complexes are available which is sufficient for the current Kharif season. VJ ABI

Fresh crop loans delayed as 40L a/cs being restructured

Banks are working to restructure loans of as many as 40 lakh farmers in the state due to two consecutive years of drought. However, even as the deadline of June 10 looms, nationalized banks have disbursed only 10% of the crop loans set out as their target by the state government for the kharif season, said a farmers' think-tank set up by the government.

As part of the restructuring, the one-year period for repaying crop loans will be extended to five years. The first year's interest is borne by the state. This process has delayed fresh farm loans, even as the state wants banks to finish the job by May-end, or at the most before rains begin .

The state has seen two years of dry spell since 2014-15, with 30,000 villages declared affected. So, banks are restructuring loans of 2014-15 and 2015-16 before fresh lending can begin for the current year, said a senior official in the state level bankers committee (SLBC). "A list of 26,000 villages has been received from the state and another list is awaited," said a SLBC official. Farmers can use Kisan Credit Cards (KCCs) for immediate finance needs, the source said.

The state-sponsored Vasantao Naik Sheti Swavalambi Mission (VNSSM) in Pune held a review meeting of banks recently on this issue. In a press release, farm activist and VNSSM chairman Kishore Tiwari said if any farmer commits suicide on not being given loans by these banks, the mission will treat the case as culpable homicide and seek action against the

concerned officer. "Nationalized banks are hostile to farmer issues and are working against farmer interests," he alleged.

The state had recently waived the condition of submitting NOC from banks and societies while seeking fresh crop loans. The government has also decided to waive stamp duty on mortgages by farmers for availing crop loans. Chief minister Devendra Fadnavis had also announced the state would ensure credit to even those farmers who had defaulted on loan repayments after 2012, said Tiwari.

However, nationalized banks are not cooperating, and seeking search reports and compulsory mortgages from farmers, Tiwari alleged.

Veteran farm activist Vijay Jawandhia too said even as the banks are claiming that loans of 2014-15 are being restructured, not much is being done at the ground level.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Sugar millers may lure cane growers with higher pay



Mills in Maharashtra crushed 741 lakh tonnes of sugarcane and produced 83.79 lakh tonnes of sugar in the ongoing season, which begins in November.

PUNE: Sugar millers in Maharashtra are gearing up to pay higher prices to farmers than that mandated by the government as they anticipate shortage of cane in the next season while prices are likely to remain firm.

The prevailing sugar prices suggest that many sugar mills will have to pay higher price for sugarcane than the recommended fair and remunerative price or FRP, BB Thombre, chairman of Natural Sugar and Allied Industries told ET.

"We will review the financial position of the mills next month and take a decision about how much more money mills will have to pay to farmers, above the FRP," Thombre said. The area under cultivation of sugarcane in Maharashtra, the leading state in the country in terms of output, is expected to decline 25% in the 2016-17 season compared to that in the current season due to two consecutive years of drought.

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Adverse climatic conditions to have negative impact on tea cultivation in North-East India: Report

Capacity building of individuals and institutions, creating more awareness to stakeholders specifically the small tea growers, the report says.

KOLKATA: The FAO of United Nations at the 22nd session of the Intergovernmental Group on tea held at Naivasha, Kenya from 25th-27th May released its report of the Working Group on Tea on Climate Change. India chairs the working group on Climate Change on tea supported by Sri Lanka, China and Kenya.

The report states that as per advanced modeling studies conducted by using general circulation models at TRA Tocklai, has shown that tea growing

regions in Kenya, Sri Lanka and NE India are quite vulnerable to climate change and the adaptation measures need to be adopted.



The current adaptation measures need to be fine-tuned further because of modelling studies to include adaptation measures on a macro as well as micro scale - downscaling to tea garden scale level.

The results of these modeling studies should be translated by clustering gardens and small holders in a region and adaptation measures should be adopted in a region by all stakeholders together.

In the report released authored by Dr RM Bhagat of India, Dr M A Wijeratne of Sri Lanka, Dr John Bore of Kenya and Dr Wenyan Han from China gives a roadmap for adaptation measures for the tea industry in these countries.

Some of the key suggestions are - development of cultivars suitable for drought and water logging tolerance, more reliance on seed based high yielding quality cultivars by major TRIs, improving soil properties.

The report suggests that fertilizers are indispensable for higher yield, hence integrated nutrient management should be done. More emphasis on water conservation in situ and adequate shade, shelter belts in tea gardens, while taking all possible measure to create humid conditions in the gardens to prolong the onset of drought, the report adds.

Capacity building of individuals and institutions, creating more awareness to stakeholders specifically the small tea growers, the report says.

The 22nd session was attended by more than 20 tea producer and consuming countries. The Indian delegation was led by Shri Santosh Kumar Sarangi, Chairman, Tea Board of India and included major stakeholders of the Indian tea industry numbering 16.

India can achieve 50 million tones maize output by 2025 to meet demand



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In spite of the drought last year, the maize production stood at 24.17 MT in 2014-15, Singh said adding this signifies the resilience of maize cultivation against climatic variability.

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Keeping in view the recent interest of urban consumers especially in specialty corn, like sweet corn, baby corn, popcorn, etc, it is expected that demand for maize as food may rise to 2 MT by 2025, Singh said.

"By 2025, India will require 50 MT maize for domestic consumption, of which 32 MT for feed, 15 MT for industrial sector, 2 MT as food and 1 MT for seed. Thus doubling India's maize production would be an opportunity and it can be achieved," Singh said while addressing the India Maize Summit organised by an industry chamber here.

The Minister said that in order to explore maximum uses of the crop, the maize-based industry needs to be promoted in a big way and special incentives need to be given for the cultivation of baby corn, popcorn, sweet corn, multigrain flour etc.

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The maize is cultivated throughout the year, 85 per cent during kharif (summer) season and 15 per cent during rabi season.

Fresh rain raises hope on Darjeeling tea production

Domestic consumption of Darjeeling tea is increasing annually as tea drinkers are gradually developing a taste for Darjeeling's famous muscatel flavour.

KOLKATA: The prospect of Darjeeling tea production has improved as rains lash the hills of north Bengal bringing some relief to Darjeeling tea planters. A long dry spell has affected the first flush Darjeeling tea which fetches high price in the world market.

Talking to ET, a senior Darjeeling planter said "Rains lashed Darjeeling tea estates from middle of May.



We are hoping that second flush tea production will be better. The dry spell from the beginning of the new season had been a major concern to us." Darjeeling's 87 tea estates produce 8.5 - 9 million kg of tea annually.

The dry spell has affected nearly 20% of the first flush production. First flush production is around 1.8 - 2 million kg annually. Most of the first flush teas are sold privately and they hardly come to the auctions.

Prices of Darjeeling teas at the auctions have also appreciated by almost 6% in this week's sale as the availability is less. At sale number 21, held this week, Darjeeling tea was commanding a price of Rs 373 per kg in comparison to Rs 353 per kg at the same sale last year.

Interestingly, domestic consumption of Darjeeling tea is increasing annually as tea drinkers are gradually developing a taste for Darjeeling's famous muscatel flavour.