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## **Haryana farmers seek early purchase of paddy**

*They fear losses caused by the arrival of early maturing varieties*

Farmers in Haryana are still waiting for the government purchase of the new season's paddy to commence but the official buying date is yet to be announced. Farmers have urged the State government to start purchasing paddy from mid-September itself, against the usual date of October 1 for the kharif marketing season, because they fear losses caused by the arrival of early maturing varieties in a few markets of the state.

"Paddy arrival has already started in a few markets and, therefore, the government should start procuring paddy from September 20. Any delay, will only end in exploitation of farmers at the hands of traders," says the Bhartiya Kisan Union State unit said. Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar.

Harvesting of the kharif season crop, which is primarily grown in the Ambala, Yamunanagar, Karnal, Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Jind, Panipat, Sonapat, Fatehabad and Sirsa districts of the state, starts by mid-September. "Early procurement of paddy is a necessity now...traditionally, purchase of paddy by the government in Haryana starts from October 1, but that no longer makes sense. These days, we have many varieties of paddy that mature in 80-90 days, when compared with the 120-140 days it used to take. It's therefore important for the government to start early procurement otherwise farmers would suffer problems," said Gurnam Singh, State President of the BKU. Mr. Singh said that while the government intends to start online trading of paddy through the Haryana State Agricultural Marketing Board (HSAMB), it's important that all modalities are completed before large stocks of paddy start arriving in the market.

"The government should ensure that farmers are allowed to sell their produce across districts. For this, it is important that processes for securing the Release Order are eased out," he added.

Notably, the Haryana government has planned to link 27 grain markets of the state from October 1 with the National Agriculture Market (e-nam), a unified pan-India electronic trading portal for agricultural produce.

### **Workshops on gardening**

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information and Training Centre is conducting a workshop on landscape gardening and creation of lawns on September 16.

### **Understanding quality standards of water**

Another workshop on understanding safety parameters of potable water and composting bio-degradable waste will be conducted on September 21.

For details, call 044 - 2626 3484.

### **MANGO season in the hills**



MANGOES GALORE: Waiting to ripen.Photo: C.V. Subrahmanyam

*The Dongria Kondh revere the mango tree. Being an agricultural forest community, they understand the important role this canopy tree plays in their survival.*

On a particularly sultry summer's day last year, my colleagues and I were trudging uphill through the dense forests of the Niyamgiri hills. A few minutes into the hills, and the sticky sweet aroma of ripe mangoes wafted up our noses. As we walked deeper along a narrow path, the great, gentle giants bearing these mangoes were visible, and the aroma of mangoes now filled the jungle! I had never seen an entire forest on a mango harvest before, and it was thrilling for a mango lover like myself!

### **A place in the hills**

The Niyamgiri hills in the Rayagada and Kalahandi districts of the eastern state of Odisha are home to a small community called the Dongria Kondh. Small, because only about 8,000 people belong to this community, and they are called 'Dongria' by others around them because they live in the dongars or mountains. My colleagues and I were travelling there to meet an elder in the community.

We had heard that the Dongria Kondh place great spiritual importance in the mango tree. They associate a mango tree with purity. As we passed a few villages on our way to meet him, we were greeted by sights of mangoes and mango trees being used in various ways by the Dongria Kondh community. Just a few minutes after we began walking, we heard the beat of drums coming from one of the villages. We decided to invite ourselves to the festivities. Once at the village, we were greeted by a merry sight — a marriage was under way and the bride, from the neighbouring village uphill was supposed to be coming to the groom's village! A stream lay between the two villages where many *pujaris* from the community were gathered and performing a little ceremony beneath a giant mango tree! They were asking the spirits that they believe stay among the mango trees to bless the couple.

A little further away at another village, we saw all the components of a mango fruit being used for preparing various edible items that the community consumes and sells to earn a living. Ripe mango skins were being dried over rooftops of houses to be used in pickles; mango pulp was being extracted and dried, layer upon layer to make *aam papad*.

The domesticated animals of the Dongria Kond are also fond of mangoes! We saw many goats eating the mangoes and when we went to the hills again in winter, domesticated pigs were still feasting on mango kernels on the periphery of the villages! We learnt that the community holds a special ceremony before beginning the mango harvest to ensure that there is a plentiful harvest.

They also worship the flowering mango tree and there is a strong reason for this. The Dongria Kondh are an agricultural forest community. They practise shifting cultivation in which a patch of the forest is cleared, the undergrowth burned and then cultivated for a few years. After a few years, another patch of the forest is cleared and the previous patch is allowed to regenerate for several years. Thus, patches are cleared and used in a continuous cycle, ensuring forest regeneration in the unused patches and availability of enough forest produce. This kind of agriculture allows the Dongria Kondh to grow a variety of millets, grains and pulses in the fields which provide them sustenance throughout the year. They believe that if the winds blow away the flowers on the mango tree, the harvest will also be affected.

Even when the Dongria Kondh clear a patch of forests, they avoid cutting trees with canopy covers like the mango tree. They understand that such trees protect the forests and provide enough shade and sustenance and hold the soil on the hill slopes. They hold a deep understanding of the forests and the trees because the forest is their home and also provides them with plenty of food and water.

The experience of the mango season of the Niyamgiri hills and the Dongria Kondh, who call it their home taught me the importance of such trees in the lives of these communities. For them, the trees are not only special for the mangoes they provide, but also for the life-giving nature of such trees to the entire forest ecosystem. We have much to learn from such communities.

*The series on Conservation and Nature is brought to you by Kalpavriksh Environment Groups*

### **Search panel formed to pick fisheries varsity V-C**

The State government has constituted a Search Committee with three persons to recommend a panel of three names to the Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Fisheries University, Nagapattinam for selecting its Vice Chancellor. Ex-Vice-Chancellor S.P. Thyagarajan, (Chancellor Nominee), Tamil Nadu Agricultural

University Vice Chancellor K. Ramasamy (Academic Council Nominee) and retired IAS officer P.N. Veda Narayanan (Board of Management Nominee) would recommend a panel of three names of eminent persons in the field of Fisheries Science for being considered for appointment as Vice Chancellor of the Tamil Nadu Fisheries University. Mr. Thyagarajan would be the Convener of the Committee, said a notification from the Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries Department.

### **Short-term course on ‘Futuristic Agricultural Education’ begins**

A ten-day short term course on ‘Futuristic Agricultural Education’ began on a grand note at Sri Venkateswara Agricultural College here on Thursday. Speaking during the inaugural session, ANGRAU’s Dean of Agriculture T. Ramesh Babu said that agricultural education would not only provide employment opportunities but also develop innovative farming and entrepreneurship skills. Agricultural graduates would be in great demand, in the days to come, he said. “There is a good scope for agriculture in terms of opportunities to serve the society,” he added. RARS associate director of Research T.C.M. Naidu stressed on the need for practical-oriented training than theory.

SVAC Dept. of Agronomy Head A. Pratap Kumar Reddy, associate Dean V. Raja Rajeswari, Course director V. Sumathi, and co-directors S.V. Prasad, G. Prabhakara Reddy took part.

### **Wholesale price of egg to go up**

With festival season to increase the demand for eggs, the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC), Namakkal Zone, has said that price of egg would increase for the next four months

On Thursday, the wholesale price of egg was increased by 14 paise to be fixed at Rs. 3.75.

Officials said that the demand for eggs have picked up after the conclusion of Shravan and Vinayaka Chaturthi celebrations across the country.

With Christmas and other festivals to be celebrated in the coming months, the demand for eggs will also increase, its chairman P. Selvaraj said.

The chairman said that there is no major difference in the price fixed by the NECC in respective zones and the price finalised by poultry farmers.

### **India's monsoon starts withdrawing from northwest**



This picture from August, 2016 shows a civic worker cleaning up waste coming from the sea when high tides hit the shore at Marine Drive in Mumbai as heavy rain lashed the city and large parts of coastal and western Maharashtra. Photo: Paul Noronha

*The country has so far received 5 per cent lower rainfall than normal in the current monsoon season*

India's June-September monsoon has started withdrawing from the north-western region, the weather department said on Thursday, which could increase the rainfall deficit for the season.

The monsoon usually starts withdrawing in the first week of September.

"The southwest monsoon has withdrawn from some parts of West Rajasthan today," the weather department said.



The July-September rains irrigate nearly half of India's farmlands, bringing relief to millions of poor farmers who till small plots of land to sustain their families.

The country has so far received 5 per cent lower rainfall than normal in the current monsoon season.

Monsoon rains in India, the world's second-biggest producer of rice and sugar, could be lighter than average this year in the absence of the La Nina weather pattern, two senior officials at the state-run weather department said.

### **‘Declare Siddapur a drought-hit taluk’**

Because of scanty rainfall this year, drinking water problems are likely to arise and hence, the government should declare Siddapur taluk as drought-hit, said taluk panchayat president Sudhir Goudar at the Karnataka Development Programme meeting held on Wednesday. He said within a month or two some areas of the taluk may need tanker water supply.

And with rainfall deficit of 40 to 50 per cent so far, a lot of crops have gone waste. A report on this will soon be submitted to the government, said the Assistant Director of Agriculture, R.P. Hegde.

### **Rain pushes up water level in Gundlakamma**

The water level in the Obul Reddy Gundlakamma reservoir went up to 2.05 tmcft as western parts of Prakasam district received moderate rain on Thursday.

Visiting the project brimming with water, Transport Minister S. Raghava Rao said that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu would formally release water from the reservoir to help farmers take up cultivation of irrigated dry crops.

Bapatla MP Sriram Malyadri and former MP K. Balarama Krishnamurthy accompanied the Minister.

District Collector Sujata Sharma, who was present, reviewed the arrangements being made for the Chief Minister's visit with Additional Superintendent of Police A. Devadanam and other officials. The water level in the reservoir stood at 22.3 metres with an inflow of 2,200 cusecs, said project Executive Engineer

R. Reddaiah. “The reservoir is expected to get filled fast as the current pace of inflow is likely to continue for the rest of the month,” he said.

Giddalur received a maximum rainfall of 8.7 cm, followed by Chirala 8.1 cm, Korisapadu 4.2 cm, Racherla 4 cm, Dornaka 1.9 cm, Tripurantakam 1.7 cm, and Yerragondapalem 1.6 cm as the low pressure area over Telangana and neighbourhood persisted.

***The reservoir will get filled fast as the current pace of inflow is likely to continue: Engineer***

### **GM mustard is tolerant of herbicides, says geneticist**

*Dr Deepak Pental, who led the effort to develop the variety, says India has a lot of catching up to do*

Former vice chancellor of Delhi University and geneticist Deepak Kumar Pental, who spearheaded the effort to develop transgenic mustard called DMH-11 that contains three genes sourced from soil bacterium, confirmed to *The Hindu* that one of the DMH-11 genes, called the bar gene, made the plant resistant to a herbicide (or weed killer) brand-named Basta, a product sold by multinational company Bayer Cropscience.

If cleared by the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee, a regulator that reports to the Ministry of Environment and Forests — it will be the first time a herbicide tolerant crop would be cleared for commercial use in India.

### **Activists objections**

In 2002, India’s biotech regulators had refused to clear a herbicide tolerant plant developed by Bayer Crop Science. Activist organisations from Greenpeace to the Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture have protested over decades that using herbicide tolerant genes in plants locks farmers into using select brands of agrochemicals.

Dr Pental, however, said such an argument was bizarre. “Germany uses four times more herbicide than India...There is no agriculture without herbicide in Western countries — even in countries that swear by organic farming,” he told *The Hindu*.



## **Enables hybridisation**

Dr Pental, a former vice chancellor of Delhi University, perfected a system over two decades that allows seed companies to more easily develop hybrid mustard varieties. This is done using a system already perfected in the 1990s and employed in Canada to make hybrid versions of rapeseed, he said. Two genes — that weren't patented in India — called barnase and barstar — are used to make mustard varieties more amenable to becoming hybrids. Crossing Indian and East European varieties of mustard improves their yield.

“We've perfected this system...and I've only applied for an Indian patent,” said Dr Pental.

With these Indian seed companies can take wild mustard varieties, those that have generally been hard to make into hybrids, and tweak them to develop new kinds of mustard that could be made to yield more oil, or more seeds. The third gene, called the bar gene, was necessary because when seeds varieties are crossed to make hybrids, only a fixed proportion of the next generation of seeds carry all the desirable genes.

Spraying these seeds with the herbicide Basta would ensure only the right kind of seed remained.

## Indian scientists recycle fish scales into green energy



File photo shows a fishing harbour in Munambam, Kochi, which has trouble disposing of fish waste. Scientists have shown how fish waste can be used to produce energy. Photo: Vipin Chandran

*Fish scales contain collagen fibres that generate an electric charge in response to mechanical stress.*

A team of researchers at Jadavpur University here has developed a biodegradable energy harvester - from raw fish scales - which could be tapped as a sustainable green energy source for next generation self-powered implantable medical devices.

It also has the potential for personal portable electronics with reduced e-waste elements said the researchers.

Fish scales, a by-product that is usually thrown away, contain collagen fibres that possess a piezoelectric property, which means that an electric charge is generated in them in response to mechanical stress.

The researchers have synthesised flexible bio-piezoelectric nanogenerator (BPNG) from this bio-waste.

Assistant Professor at Organic Nano-Piezoelectric Device Laboratory, Dipankar Mandal explained: “We collected bio-waste in the form of hard, raw fish scales from a fish processing market, and then used a demineralization process to make them transparent and flexible.”

“We were able to make a bio-piezoelectric nanogenerator (or energy harvester) with electrodes on both sides, and then laminated them,” said Mr. Mandal, from the Department of Physics, at Jadavpur University.

### **Recycling value**

The recycling of the fish by-products into the BPNG via one step process is a promising solution for the development of value-added products and also to reduce the e-waste.

The nanogenerator also scavenges several types of ambient mechanical energies such as body movements, machine and sound vibrations, and wind flow which are abundant in living environment, and even repeated tapping with a finger.

Repeatedly touching the BPNG with a finger can turn on more than 50 blue LEDs.

The team’s work is the first known demonstration of the direct piezoelectric effect of fish scales from electricity generated by a bio-piezoelectric nanogenerator under mechanical stimuli - without the need for any post-electrical poling treatments.

### **Potential uses**

The group’s work could potentially be used in transparent electronics, biocompatible and biodegradable electronics, edible electronics.

It can also be used in self-powered implantable medical devices, surgeries, e-healthcare monitoring, as well as in vitro and in vivo diagnostics, apart from its myriad uses for portable electronics.

“In the future, our goal is to implant a bio-piezoelectric nanogenerator into a heart for pacemaker devices, where it will continuously generate power from heartbeats for the device’s operation,” Mr. Mandal said.

“It will then degrade when no longer needed. Since heart tissue is also composed of collagen, our bio-piezoelectric nanogenerator is expected to be very compatible with the heart.”

Disposal of the fish bio-waste increases environmental pollution.

The study was published in the journal *Applied Physics Letters* in September and is co-authored by S.K. Ghosh.



### **A big deal**

Bayer’s acquisition of Monsanto has huge implications for Indian agriculture in difficult times.



First it was Dow Chemical and DuPont merging into one another. Then came Syngenta’s acquisition by China National Chemical Corporation. And now we have Bayer buying out Monsanto. The significance of the three deals lies not only in their happening within just over nine months, but also the huge consolidation underway in the global farm input supplies industry. Bayer is the

world's second largest agro-chemicals firm behind Syngenta and just above Dow-DuPont, while Monsanto is the largest in seeds and genomics. Monsanto becoming part of Bayer creates an entity that would be a global leader in both agrochemicals and seeds. This extent of consolidation among suppliers of inputs embodying proprietary chemistries and plant breeding/biotech know how — on top of the stranglehold exercised by the “ABCD firms” (Archer Daniels Midland, Bunge, Cargill and Louis Dreyfus) over international agri-commodity trade — isn't the best thing today for farmers grappling with low prices for their produce.

The effects will be no less in India, where Monsanto and Bayer are already the biggest players in cotton and hybrid rice seeds, respectively. This is in addition to their respective subsidiaries — Seminis and Nunhems — who dominate the domestic hybrid vegetable seeds market along with Syngenta, which, in turn, also has the second largest share in agrochemicals after Bayer. There are two ways to respond to the consolidation that may seem detrimental to the interests of our farmers. The first would be to engage in the usual MNC-bashing, which isn't too useful. Whether we like it or not, farmers need and have right to new technologies that help boost crop yields, cut losses from pest and disease or save labour and time. If MNCs are the only ones giving them these, too bad. It cannot be reason for denial.

The more constructive response is to learn from China. The Syngenta acquisition isn't an isolated one. That, along with yet another state-run enterprise COFCO's buyout of two big grain traders, Noble Agri and Nidera, reflect a conscious Chinese policy to actively engage with the current realities of international agri-business. Such focus is sadly missing among policymakers in India, which faces a no less formidable challenge of ensuring food security for growing population with rising incomes. The ambivalence with regard to allowing commercial planting or even field trials of genetically modified crops, that too indigenously developed, is only a manifestation of the lack of a strategic vision for agriculture in tomorrow's India. The Bayer-Monsanto deal should be a wake-up call for those still stuck in slumber.

## **Rajkot district panchayat urges state government to pay crop insurance to farmers**

Rajkot district as a whole is facing around 32 per cent rainfall deficit.

Pointing out that scanty rainfall and pests had affected crops, the Rajkot district panchayat on Thursday adopted a resolution, urging the state government to initiate process for paying crop insurance to farmers of the district. “Kharif crops like cotton is feared to fail due to less and irregular rainfall and infestation of pink worms in the current year of 2016-17. Groundnut crop is also likely to fail due to infestation of white grubs. This is likely to impact the earnings of farmers and make condition of agriculturalists pitiable. Before farmers are forced to take any unusual step, it is hereby unanimously resolved to request state government to initiate the process of awarding crop insurance to farmers,” a resolution moved by district panchayat president Nilesh Virani stated.

The resolution, moved by the chair at the trimonthly general board meeting of the district panchayat, was adopted unanimously. Rajkot district as a whole is facing around 32 per cent rainfall deficit.

Almost all major dams in the district are empty and there is little water available for irrigation. In fact, some talukas of the district are facing scarcity-like situation due to scanty rainfall. Vinchhiya taluka has received just 199 mm rain so far and is running 48% deficit. Crops have failed in some villages in this taluka.



**As oversupply hurts prices, tea industry seeks sops from Centre to boost offtake**



AK Bhargava (right), Chairman, and Azaim Monem, Vice-Chairman of Indian Tea Association, are discussing at a press conference in Kolkata on Thursday

High-quality teas are fetching lower prices at auctions due to oversupply, the Indian Tea Association (ITA) said here on Thursday.

Hence, the association is seeking sops from the government to create consumption in the domestic market.

While there has been a 10 per cent (CAGR) rise in cost of production over a decade, tea prices have moved up by only around 6 per cent during this period.

### **Global oversupply**

According to Azam Monem, Vice-Chairman, ITA, there is a global oversupply of close to 90 million kg (mkg), which includes an increase in production of 70 mkg in Kenya. There's another 20 mkg glut in North India (particularly Assam).

Globally, around 2.5 billion kg is black tea consumption; whereas 2 billion is green tea.

“Exports in the April to July period have remained flat or not grown as per our expectations. This is because of global oversupply. It is a disturbing trend,” he said during a press conference.

Monem further pointed out that tea being a cyclical industry, the aim currently is to shore up domestic consumption.

Per capita consumption of tea in India stands at 733 grams.

### **Govt help sought**

ITA is seeking government help to create an awareness campaign and branding agenda for long-term sustainability of the industry.

In this regard, the Tea Board's ‘TrustTea’ certification could be adopted as a vehicle (by the government) as a brand and to boost domestic consumption.

Long-term awareness campaigns to promote the certification are required on an urgent basis.

Trust Tea, a logo for the India sustainable tea code, was introduced in 2013.

“People who do not know the logo need to be aware of the Trust Tea stamp and the attributes it stand for. This logo can help us fetch better prices. The government should come in as the driving force,” said Arijit Raha, ITA Secretary General.

This apart, ITA will also carry out various promotional campaigns around ‘functional’ teas and cold teas to drive higher consumption among those in the 15-24 age group.

### **Coonoor tea turnover up 8.57%**

The cumulative turnover in the eight months of current calendar at the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) has risen by 8.57 per cent. This has happened despite the volume sold falling by 74 lakh kg because of the price rising by 24 a kg, reveals an analysis of market reports. Till August, 34 auctions had been held when the average price rose to 95.71 a kg from 71.64. The increase in price brought some withdrawal impact with buyers and the volume sold dropped to 3.21 crore kg from 3.95 crore kg. Nevertheless, the increase in price helped the overall realisation to rise to 307.23 crore from 282.98 crore. This increase of 24.25 crore marked a growth of 8.57 per cent.

### **Record food output in sight despite rain deficit: Centre**



Delay in monsoon's withdrawal revives hope of 265-270 MT foodgrain production

The slowdown in the intensity of the South-West monsoon has not dampened the Centre's hopes of a record foodgrain production in 2016-17.

“Overall, the monsoon has been favourable to farmers this year. We have received good rains, and the distribution was also good. I am sure we will have



record production this year,” Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said, addressing a conference on rabi crops on Thursday. He, however, did not quantify the likely production.

## ON COURSE

- Foodgrain production target for 2016-17 set at 270.1 million tonnes
- Kharif acreage up 4% at 1,054 lakh hectares, as on Sept 9
- Cumulative rainfall between June 1 and Sept 15 was 5% below normal
- 82% of the country has received normal to excess rains so far
- Storage levels in 91 main reservoirs up 17% over last year



The Centre had earlier set a target of 270.1 million tonnes (MT) of foodgrain production on expectations of an above-normal monsoon. The 265.04 MT output achieved in 2013-14 marks the current record. “A record production this year would mean an output of 265 MT to 270 MT,” a Ministry official said.

Foodgrain production fell in the past two years — to 252.02 MT in 2014-15, and 253.23 MT in 2015-16 — owing to drought.

This year, the Centre had set an ambitious target, encouraged by the Indian Meteorological Department's (IMD) forecast of an above-normal monsoon, with rainfall at 106 per cent rainfall of the Long Period Average (LPA).

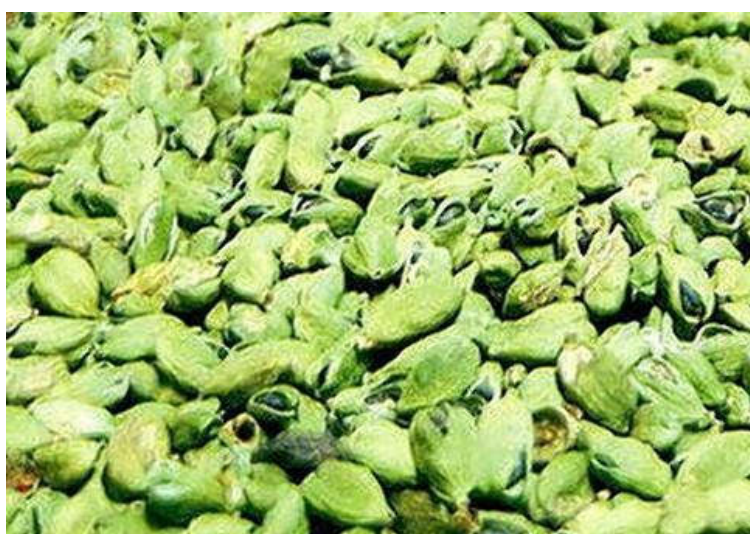
However, between June 1 and September 15, the rainfall recorded was 5 per cent lower than the average. Yet, the IMD reckons that its initial prediction will hold, given the delay in the monsoon's withdrawal, which usually begins early September. Kharif sowing since the monsoon arrived in June has been satisfactory due to the good spread of rainfall countrywide.

The Minister noted that pulses production was expected to be a record in the kharif season as sowing had risen 29 per cent to 143.95 lakh hectares.

“Since much of pulses output comes from the rabi season, we need to continue encouraging farmers to grow pulses,” Singh said. Farmers should get the minimum support price (MSP) for pulses so as to incentivise planting in the rabi season as well, he added.

Government agencies have begun procuring kharif moong in Karnataka and Maharashtra at the MSP. Other pulses like tur and urad will be procured once their arrival begins on large scale, Singh said.

### **Cardamom regains aroma, tops 1,000/kg again at auctions**



Cardamom prices have shown a firmer trend since Tuesday with the auction average crossing 1,000 a kg again on good demand amid tight supply.

At Thursday's auction by the Kerala Cardamom Processing and Marketing Company Limited, Thekkady, a total of 23.5 tonnes of the spice arrived and the entire quantity was traded.

The auction average price here increased to 1,019.13 a kg from 928.80 last Thursday. The maximum price stood at 1,260/kg.

In the Cardamom Processing & Marketing Co-Operative Society's sale, arrivals stood at 33.92 tonnes and almost the entire quantity was traded.

The average price here also rose to 1,010 from 926.04 a kg the previous Thursday.

The average price was at 1,239.

At the Tuesday morning auction by the South Indian Green Cardamom Company Ltd, Kochi, the average price soared by around 106 a kg to 1,029.38 from 923.23 the previous Tuesday.

A bullish sentiment has surfaced following reports of a sharp fall in output of the crop during the current season, trade sources said.

Added to this, inventories in the upcountry markets have reportedly been exhausted, resulting in fresh buying to replenish stocks to meet the Diwali demand.

This demand has also played a part in the upward price movement, PC Punnoose, General Manager, Cardamom Processing & Marketing Co-Operative Society, told *BusinessLine*.

### **GM mustard sub-committee ridden with conflict of interest, say activists**

Conflict of interest in the sub-committee, lack of any health safety expert on the panel, and inadequate data on additional studies on bio-safety are some of the issues raised by an anti-GM body on the government's recent proposal to clear genetically-modified (GM) mustard.



At a press conference here on Thursday, The Coalition for a GM-Free India alleged that the processes adopted by the government before calling for public comments on the proposal to give the food crop a go-ahead are “hasty.”

The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) “violated its own decision that the RARM (risk assessment and risk management) and full bio-safety dossier would be reviewed first in the GEAC. GEAC did not discuss the document but is inviting public comments on a ‘proposal on authorisation of environmental release’ of GM mustard,” the coalition said.

The coalition said that the seven-member sub-committee, constituted by the GEAC to look into bio-safety of GM mustard, had initially sought additional bio-safety studies and more analysis, the results of which are not clear from the Assessment of Food and Environmental Safety document shared by the GEAC.

#### **Sub-committee members**

The Coalition also questioned the constitution of the sub-committee, given that it has three members with close links to the GM industry.

The members named are — K Veluthambi, Chair of Sub-Committee and Co-Chair of GEAC who was a GM crop developer; SR Rao, Adviser, DBT, who is on the Golden Rice Humanitarian Board, funded by Syngenta; and B Sesikeran, who is a Board Member of International Life Sciences Institute funded by Bayer, Monsanto and others.

## **Business Standard**

### **Record pulses output may boost kharif harvest to all-time high**

This year's harvest is expected on the back on a good southwest monsoon and higher price realisation by farmers



India's output of pulses during the ongoing kharif season is likely to reach an all-time high of 8.22 million tonnes, almost 50 per cent more than last year. This could also mean a record crop in 2016-17. The Centre's target is 14.41 mt in the coming rabi (winter) season. If this happens, it would push the total harvest to over 22 mt. The highest till date was 19.25 mt, in 2013-14. Output fell to 16.47 mt in 2015-16 and 17.15 mt in 2014-15, due to drought.

This year's harvest is expected on the back on a good southwest monsoon and higher price realisation by farmers. Pulses apart, overall farm production in this kharif is expected to be a bumper one.

"Overall, the monsoon has been favourable to farmers this year. We have received good rains and distribution was also good," Union agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh said. The earlier high for total output was 265.04 mt in the 2013-14 crop year (July-June). This fell in 2014-15 and 2015-16 to 252.02 mt and 253.23 mt, respectively. The government's target for 2016-17 is 270.10 mt, on hope of bountiful rain. It has pegged paddy output at 108.5 mt, wheat at 96.5 mt and pulses at 24.5 mt.

Paddy, oilseeds and coarse cereals have all seen a rise in sowing area in this kharif, said the minister. Kharif sowing started with onset of the southwest monsoon from June and harvesting will begin from next month.

The minister said he was urging states to promote pulses in the rabi season, starting October, too. Unless farmers are assured of getting the announced Minimum Support Price (MSP), they will not be encouraged to plant lentils in rabi. "It is for this reason, the government has started pulses procurement," he said.

Procurement by government agencies has begun for moong (green gram) in Karnataka and Maharashtra at the MSP. Tur (pigeon pea) and urad (black gram) would also be procured once their arrival begins on a large scale, said Singh. Agriculture Secretary Shobhana K Pattanayak said increase in pulses output in the rabi season would depend on efficient procurement. "Right now, the crop is in very good shape. We are likely to break the record during the current year," he added. For the rabi, said agriculture commissioner S K Malhotra, states should adopt region-specific crop planning. Barring chickpea, there is sufficient availability of seeds of wheat, jowar (sorghum), urad and moong for rabi sowing, he said.

### **Centre raps states on its schemes**

Union agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh and secretary Shobhana K Pattanayak both rapped state governments on Thursday for tardy implementation of central schemes.

The secretary pointed to poor progress in implementing three major schemes -- crop insurance, e-agri market and soil health cards. The minister said some states had delayed rollout of the crop insurance scheme, to ensure minimal burden on their exchequer.

On the soil health card scheme, the secretary blamed "lack of interest and lethargic attitude of officers". The Centre wanted to provide a soil health card to 140 million farmers by March 2017. "One and a half years are over and six months are left. Till now, of 453 lakh (45.3 mn) samples collected, we have tested only 400 lakh (40 mn). Another 50 lakh samples are yet to be collected," he said.

## **Global Agri-business Alliance to tackle environmental, social challenges**

Focus to be on achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030



Thirty-six leading agri-business companies have launched an alliance in Singapore on Thursday, aiming to collectively tackle the major environmental and social challenges facing agricultural supply chains and rural communities across the world.

The newly-formed the Global Agri-business Alliance(GAA) is a CEO-led private sector initiative seeking to contribute significantly to the delivery of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, most notably 'End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture'.

The companies already involved are headquartered across the world with representation from Africa, Asia, Australia, USA and South America and are involved in multiple commodities, including grains, dairy, edible nuts, edible oils, pulses, rubber, sugar, as well as agro-chemicals.

The GAA is unique in bringing together the companies operating closest to the farmgate and therefore having the greatest influence on the stewardship of natural resources and surrounding communities, many of whom may also be employed by the sector.

Member profile includes growers and producers, traders, fertiliser, agro-chemical and seed suppliers, agri-service providers, primary processors and agri-tech suppliers for both food and non-food crops.

"Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 will change our world: eradicating poverty, tackling climate change and ensuring a prosperous, safe and healthy future for our children and grandchildren," said David Nabarro, special advisor to the UN Secretary-General on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Climate Change.

"The SDGs also represent investment opportunities for responsible businesses, and are essential for sustainable economic growth. Achieving the SDGs will only be possible with the full commitment of the business community, transforming their business models to deliver also social and environmental value, and working in partnership with the public sector and civil society," added Nabarro.

"The launch of the Global Agri-business Alliance is excellent news for the SDGs," said Nabarro.

While many agri-companies already collaborate with non-governmental organisations, technical implementers, consumer brands and retailers, the members of the GAA will harness their collective strengths at the 'front-line' of agricultural production to help bring the scale and impact required to drive major change.

Members will collaborate to improve rural livelihoods and working conditions, mitigate climate risks and manage natural capital sustainably at the landscape-level.

More than 300 delegates attended the forum and the launch of GAA on Thursday.



## **Govt expects record foodgrains output this year**

Pulses production is expected to be a record as area during kharif season increased sharply by 29% to 143.95 lakh hectare



*Farmers shifting wheat in a grain market*

Buoyed by a good monsoon after two consecutive years of drought, the country's foodgrain output is expected to touch a record in the ongoing 2016-17 crop year, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said today.

The country had last achieved a record output of 265.04 million tonnes (MT) in the 2013-14 crop year (July-June). However, the production in 2014-15 and 2015-16 fell to 252.02 MT and 253.23 MT, respectively, due to drought.

The government has set a target to achieve a record foodgrains production of 270.10 MT in 2016-17 crop year on hopes of bountiful rains. It has pegged paddy output at 108.50 MT, wheat at 96.50 MT and pulses at 24.50 MT for this year.



"Overall, monsoon has been favourable to farmers this year. We have received good rains and distribution was also good. I am sure, we will have record production this year," Singh said addressing a conference on rabi crops here.

Pulses production is expected to be a record as the area during the kharif season has increased sharply by 29% to 143.95 lakh hectare, he said.

Even sowing area of paddy, oilseeds and coarse cereals in the kharif season has improved, he said.

Kharif sowing started with the onset of south west monsoon from June and harvesting will begin from next month.

Urging states to promote pulses even in the rabi (winter) season starting October, the Minister said, "since majority of pulses output comes from the rabi season, we need to continue encouraging farmers to grow pulses."

Unless farmers do not get the minimum support price (MSP), they will not be encouraged to plant lentils in the rabi season. "It is for this reason, the government has started the pulses procurement operation," he said.

The government agencies have started procurement of kharif moong in Karnataka and Maharashtra at the MSP. Other pulses like tur and urad will also be procured once their arrival begins on large scale, he added.

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Many farmers in delta region opt for alternative crops



Though water is not flowing in the Cauvery river and irrigation canals, anticipating a good monsoon farmers in the delta region have started to dig and plough their fields to make it fit for sowing seed. But some others say there is no point in waiting for the Cauvery water and instead traditional methods of water management and irrigation techniques to sustain ground water table should be adopted.

T Perumal, a farmer from Thiruthuraipoondi in Tiruvarur district, said he had not taken up cultivation on his seven-acre farm this year as Cauvery water was not available. However, there was no sense in waiting for the Cauvery water anymore and he had begun farming operations, he said.

"I have no money to feed my family or the cattle. I am already under debt so I cannot get further loans from any bank or finance company or even from my relatives. However I have to feed my family. I do not know any occupation other than cultivation. So anticipating good monsoon rain, I have started to make my land ready," said Perumal.

Meanwhile, a section of farmers said they were looking for other options. PRajendran from Nagapattinam said he had bought a van and was transporting vegetables from the fields to the market. Many farmers have migrated to town in search of jobs, he said.

"We have no money though we have been cultivating our lands for decades. We are understanding the reality and the present situation. However, we do not want to keep our farm lands vacant. So many are taking up vegetable cultivation rather than paddy, which needs a lot of water," said C Rajasekaran of Vettaikaraniruppu in Nagapattinam district.

Farmers should adopt the traditional method of collecting water. A pond was there for every 10 acres of land to irrigate the farm. If those ponds are desilted, no one needs to wait for the Cauvery water, said C Rajasekaran of Vettaikaraniruppu in Keelvelur taluk in Nagapattinam district.

"I have only concentrated on horticulture produce for the past two decades. The method of cultivation should also modified. Farmers should come forward to change their produce from traditional paddy to horticulture produce," he said.

### **Government to pay premium on crop insurance**



The government has decided to pay the premium amount on crop insurance in a single demand draft on behalf of ryots to help them and insurance companies.

A group of ministers met on Thursday to review the scenario of agriculture insurance in Telangana. It was decided that the government consider a village as a unit and pay premium for crop insurance to the insurance company on behalf of ryots. Agriculture minister Pocharam Srinivas Reddy, irrigation minister T Harish Rao and health minister C Laxma Reddy attended the meet. They asked insurance companies to submit details of premium paid for 2014-15 and 2015-16 within two weeks. Ministers also instructed government officials to take steps to procure farm produce from farmers through primary agricultural cooperative societies by paying price profitable for ryots.

## THE ECONOMIC TIMES

### **No health expert in panel to examine GM mustard biosafety data**



Coalition for a GM-Free India questioned whether the risk assessment report given by the sub committee was even "reliable and scientific" as it had no health experts in it.

NEW DELHI: An anti-GM group today alleged that sub committee constituted by the country's biotech regulator GEAC to examine the biosafety data on GM mustard, did not have any health expert and three of its members have conflict of interest.

Coalition for a GM-Free India questioned whether the risk assessment report given by the sub committee, which has claimed that the hybrid does not not

pose any risk to biodiversity or agro-ecosystem, was even "reliable and scientific" as it had no health experts in it.

Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) had constituted a sub-committee of scientific experts to examine the biosafety data on GM mustard.

The report was placed on the Environment Ministry's website, inviting comments from stakeholders within a period of 30 days before the biotech regulator took a decision.

"The sub-committee of seven was constituted with at least three members having conflicting interests. Why should the public trust the work of this committee, especially given that the biosafety dossier is being kept away from the public?

"Most importantly, there was no health safety expert in the sub-committee processes and the report still gives a green signal to biosafety - is this reliable and scientific?" Kavitha Kuruganti from the coalition said.

The Coalition alleged that K Veluthambi who is the chair of sub-committee and co-chair of GEAC was a "GM crop developer" till his retirement recently, working on GM rice development for disease-resistant transgenic rice, with DBT and Rockefeller support.

It alleged that another member of the sub-committee S R Rao, Adviser DBT is also on the Golden Rice Humanitarian Board, funded by Syngenta.

At the same time, it alleged that B Sesikeran, another member was the former Director of National Institute of Nutrition, a board member of International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) which has Bayer, BASF, Monsanto and others as members.

"It is important to note that he (Sesikeran) was a member of the expert committee headed by Anupam Verma for the CGMCP project, advising on what studies to take up for health safety assessment of GM mustard...



"...also then conducted the studies as former director of NIN, then also gave a green signal as chairperson of RCGM in DBT and now sits in GEAC as a member and was included in the sub-committee! He however did not attend the February 2 meeting. From all information available, did not take part in the sub-committee processes," the Coalition alleged.

### **Southwest monsoon starts withdrawing from parts of west Rajasthan**



The weather office expects rainfall to cover parts of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and Maharashtra till September 18, followed by rain in the northeast, Konkan region and Goa.

NEW DELHI: The southwest monsoon has started withdrawing from some parts of west Rajasthan, as projected by the India Meteorological Department a few days ago.

"In view of the changeover of the lower tropospheric circulation pattern from cyclonic to anticyclonic, reduction of humidity in the lower tropospheric levels and dry weather prevailing over west Rajasthan, the southwest monsoon has withdrawn from some parts of west Rajasthan, today the 15th September, 2016," the weather office said on Thursday in its mid-day forecast.

The withdrawal line passes through Anupgarh, Bikaner and Jaisalmer, it said.

The weather office expects rainfall to cover parts of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and Maharashtra till September 18, followed by rain in the northeast, Konkan region and Goa.



From September-20-22, it has forecast rain at many places in east and northeast, along west coast and a few places over central and adjoining southern areas. It said rain is likely at a few places over the rest of the country, except Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, where weather is likely to be dry.

The withdrawal of the monsoon from the east and northeast is expected to take time. The retreat of the southwest monsoon coincides with the onset of the northeast monsoon (October-December) in south India.

The normal date for withdrawal of the monsoon from west Rajasthan is September 1 and by mid-October it retreats completely from the northern half of the peninsula.

Rainfall across India from June 1 to September 14 was 5% below average.

As of Wednesday, the monsoon delivered 766.1 mm of rain since the start of the season and 27 of the country's 36 subdivisions received normal to excess rainfall.

India receives 70% of its annual rainfall during the four-month monsoon season, which lasts till the end of September. In 2015, the retreat of the monsoon started on September 4.

### **Bayer bullish on India, but Monsanto's image remains a challenge**

Bayer's Indian operations already include a crop science segment, which is involved in crop protection.

PUNE/NEW DELHI: German chemicals giant Bayer, which is acquiring MonsantoBSE -1.24 % for \$66 billion, sees big opportunities in the Indian market, from where the target company had threatened to walk out, while the local industry has mixed feelings - worries about consolidation and optimism that BayerBSE 0.96 % would take a fresh look at the disputes it inherits.

"We see India as a huge and important market at Bayer Sciences. Last week, there was delegation from India and we spoke about how digitisation of technology could contribute to increased productivity and sustainability, which is required by farmers," a top Bayer executive said at a conference call.



Bayer's Indian operations already include a crop science segment, which is involved in crop protection, seeds and what it calls "digital farming." It aims to expand its seed footprint, especially soybeans and wheat, with the help of acquisitions and partnerships. The company markets high-value seeds and pest management products for farmers as well as gardens.

On the question of Monsanto's clashes with the Indian government over pricing and royalties, the executive said the expectation is to have a level playing field, invest in research & development and unlock mechanisation. "Providing opportunities to farmers and improving export of countries is what we look to do," said the Bayer official.

Monsanto has bitter disputes with seed companies and the Indian government over pricing and licensing issues and the technology fee it can charge. Seed companies said the global acquisition could lead to a fresh look at the disputes.

"We expect that the new entity created by the merger of Bayer and Monsanto will take a fresh look at the issues between Monsanto and the Indian seed industry," said MG Shembekar, vice president of the National Seed Association of India.

## **MONOPOLISATION WORRY**

Kalyan Goswami, executive director at the association, said mergers could lead to fewer choices and higher prices. "More exploitation and monopolisation is feared. Ultimately, farmers will lose out as product ranges are rationalised and attempts are made to increase prices as Bayer would try to recover its expenses," he said.

He hoped that Bayer would take the right path on the Bt cotton issue in India and support the government policy for farmer's welfare.

## **IMAGE PROBLEM**

A Bayer executive earlier told ET that Monsanto, known for its GM technology, did not enjoy a good image in many parts of the world and that would be a challenge for Bayer, which is strong in crop protection products. "Monsanto's image would be a challenge if the deal goes through. However, we have to take this risk," a senior global executive of Bayer had told ET on condition of anonymity.

The Indian seed industry is engaged in a court battle with Monsanto over sharing of the trait value of Bt cotton technology. "The new entity should establish friendly relations with all the stakeholders and follow all the government regulations in the interest of benefit-sharing among all the stakeholders," said Shembekar.

In India, Monsanto has a 50:50 joint venture with Mahyco, which has been trying to introduce its GM brinjal seeds in India, having already launched it in Bangladesh. Last week at its headquarters in Leverkusen, Germany, Bayer officials had categorically denied any plans to enter into GM vegetable seeds because public opinion is against it. Mahyco declined to comment on Bayer's stance on GM vegetable seeds "at this moment."

However, the domestic seed industry is hopeful that the merged entity can bring some state-of-the-art technologies to India. Bayer is currently focusing on digital farming, which can benefit Indian farmers.

## **Acquisition may trigger open offer by Monsanto India later**

Germany-based crop sciences and pharmaceuticals giant Bayer has agreed to buy US seeds giant Monsanto in a \$57-billion deal, culminating a chase that started at least six months ago. With debts, the deal is valued at \$66 billion, according to news reports.

From the combined global operations, Bayer said it expects to generate synergies of \$1.5 billion after three years from the date of closing of the deal.

In India, Monsanto and Bayer are listed on the stock exchanges and the deal is expected to trigger an open offer in due course and be subject to local regulatory clearances. Bayer Cropscience reported sales of Rs 3,742 crore, a 7% growth during the last financial year, while its net profit stood at Rs 300 crore. Monsanto India, the listed company that specialises in selling genetically-modified seeds, reported revenue of `541.5 crore for 2015-16 with a net profit of Rs 101 crore.

Throughout the process of deal negotiations between Bayer and Monsanto, opposition has been mounting with reports suggesting the combined entity will have monopoly over farming products. It may even hit the anti-trust regulations, global news agencies have reported.

While some analysts have said Bayer has paid a high premium for Monsanto, others contend that the offer price could have been bettered by Monsanto.

While the combined operations of the two global companies will complement each other, an industry expert in agrichemicals said global companies are facing stiff competition from local players.

Besides, the lacklustre and deficit monsoon over the last three years have impacted operations of most crop protection companies. In 2015-16, the Indian crop protection market remained flat. "Most companies de-grew over the previous year," Bayer cropsciences said in its 2015-16 annual report while adding that the seeds business has seen a "below average" year.

For Monsanto, India has been a challenging market. While sales of its genetically-modified high yielding seeds have seen a steady pick up, the company has witnessed frequent flare ups with the Indian government. Most recently, Monsanto threatened that it will not introduce its latest strain of genetically-modified cotton and also re-evaluate its business in India, given the arbitrary and innovation-stifling interventions that makes it impossible to recoup R&D investments.

The government has reportedly retaliated by pushing for local variants of Monsanto's genetically modified cotton.

### **All India tea production dropped by 7.22%**



Heavy rains had inundated tea estates in Dooars and Darjeeling. Flood water had entered many tea estates and even factories where black teas are produced. A portion of Goodricke Group's Leesh river tea estate was completely washed away.

All India tea production has dropped by 7.22% in the month of July to 145.85 million kg in comparison to 157.2 million kg in the same month last year. Heavy rains in July in Assam and West Bengal had affected the production of the crop.

Tea estates in Assam valley were worst hit due to heavy rains. Tea crop declined by 10.63 million kg in Assam valley in July to 74.87 million kg in comparison to 85.50 million kg in same month last year. Tea estates in Cachar however, witnessed an increase of 6.58% increase in production.

Heavy rains had inundated tea estates in Dooars and Darjeeling. Flood water had entered many tea estates and even factories where black teas are produced. A portion of Goodricke Group's Leesh river tea estate was completely washed away.

Tea production in Darjeeling in the month of July declined by 27.78% to 1.04 million kg. Estates in in Dooars witnessed 1.67% drop in tea production in July.

However, production in south India went up by 3.34% to 19.18 million kg in July 2016 in comparison to 18.56 million kg in the corresponding month of 2015.

### **West Bengal to set up organic market at Eco Park in Kolkata**



An 18 cottah plot has been allotted by Hidco to the State Agricultural Marketing department for setting up the organic market, which will be fairly large in size. (Representative Photo)

KOLKATA: In a bid to make fresh and non-toxic food items available to people living in and around Kolkata, the West Bengal Agricultural Marketing department is going to set up an organic market at Eco Park in New Town which is close to Salt Lake - the IT hub of the state.

An 18 cottah plot has been allotted by Hidco to the State Agricultural Marketing department for setting up the organic market, which will be fairly large in size.



The market will be set up close to the gate number four of Eco Park in New Town. Various food items such as vegetables, rice, pulses, tea, spices and other edible products, all organically grown, will be sold in this market. The state government's idea is to reach out to people with these healthy food items. Only government approved quality organic food grown by farmers across the state will be sold in this market. Organic manure and organic pesticides will be used to produce these food items.

The idea has been floated and approved as a pilot project by the state government. The market is expected to come up within a year's time, state government officials said.

### **Lower prices of pulses yet to reach consumer as retail rates still high**



In wholesale, toor/arhar dal in Delhi was selling for Rs 98 a kg, while government data said it was at Rs 115 and retail prices at over Rs 160 a kg.


NEW DELHI: Now that supplies of both imported and domestic arrivals of pulses reaching the markets, the signs of prices cooling are obvious, yet the price gap between wholesale prices and retail prices of the pulses remains stark and consumers are yet to benefit.

For example in wholesale, toor/arhar dal in Delhi was selling for Rs 98 a kg, while government data said it was at Rs 115 and retail prices at over Rs 160 a kg.

"Over the last 18 months the wedge between wholesale milled pulses versus pulses on retail shelf has increased tremendously between 40-50 per cent. This was not the case in the past years," said Pravin Dongre, chairman of the Indian Pulses and Grain Association.

Dongre added that the sharp drop in prices is not reflected at the end of the consumers because it is not reached retails shelves. "Among various locations in the city also there is price differential in what organized retail or mom and pop stores offer," he said, adding that the association has given details, bills and samples of price to the consumer affairs ministry which has done its own research and confirmed it.

A Finger on the Pulse				
Pulses prices (₹kg)	Delhi wholesale	Consumer affairs dept	Retail store	Prices taken as on Sept 13
Tur/Arhar dal	98	115	160	Wholesale price of Delhi's Naya Bazaar market  Retail price is average price taken in Delhi market
Chana dal	98	112	140	
Urad dal	98	135	160	
Moong dal	62	89	140	
Masur dal	67	88	140	



On Monday, the government threatened to fix maximum retail prices for pulses if the difference between wholesale rates and prices at points of purchase doesn't narrow soon. Retail prices are high, Consumer Affairs Secretary Hem Pande said, while asking retailers to ensure parity between wholesale and retail prices.

Pulses traders said prices were already seeing a downward trend, beginning with moong which was being sold below the minimum support price of Rs 5,225 (includes Rs 425 of bonus) per quintal by farmers. After processing, moong dal in Delhi's wholesale was being quoted at Rs 62 a kg while in retail at Rs 140 a kg. The government has procured 25 tonnes moong in Karnataka till date at MSP.

"Things will change October onward, when large quantities of chana will be imported from Australia and Russia and domestic crop of arhar, urad and moong are harvested," said Sunil Baldeva of Siliguri Associates, an importer and trader based in Delhi's Naya Bazar market. He said retail prices should fall drastically as retailers and companies processing pulses in packages were cornering huge profit.

Mitesh Patel, MD, Lakshmi Protein Products Pvt Ltd, whose Vasad-based company sells tur dal under the brand name of Laxmi toor dal said the supply chain was large going through a wholesaler, semi wholesaler and then to retailer and therefore the end price was higher than the wholesale price.

The government is expecting pulses production to be at 20 million tonnes in the 2016-17 crop year (July-June), much higher than 16.47 million tonnes last year. Areas growing pulses have increased 29 per cent from the previous year to 143.95 lakh hectares. Planting of arhar has increased 39.81 per cent from last year, followed by moong bean and urad bean.

### **Bumper crop may pull down olive oil prices by 20 per cent**

NEW DELHI: Retail prices of olive oil in India are expected to fall by up to 20% due to a likely bumper crop in some key producing countries, particularly Spain, marketers such as Borges and Del Monte have said. "The promotion in retail for olive oil will go up and prices will go down by 15% to 20%," Rajneesh Bhasin, MD at Borges India, said. Olive oil prices had spiked up to 50% last year due to crop failure in olive growing countries and an increase in import duties. Marketed as a healthy oil, olive oil consumption in the country is currently about 12,000 tonnes. Retail prices for refined oil at present range from Rs 500-700 a litre while for extra virgin oil, it's over Rs 800.

Bhasin, who is also the president of India Olive Association, said firms will pass on the reduction in prices to consumers by end of September or beginning October.



As per the industry, in the April to June quarter, imports of olive oil stood at 3,104 tonnes, 20% higher than the year-ago figure of 2,583 tonnes.

Leading brands in organised retail include Borges, Cargill's Leonardo, Field Fresh's Del Monte and Figaro. As per the industry, in the April to June quarter, imports of olive oil stood at 3,104 tonnes, 20% higher than the year-ago figure of 2,583 tonnes.

Yogesh Bellani, CEO at Field Fresh Foods, said olive crop in Spain, which caters to 60% of India's demand, was looking better than the previous year and they were watching Italy and Greece crop which were not looking good. "Prices correction might start taking place by November-December, reflective of a good crop in Spain," he said.

Siraj Chaudhry, chairman of Cargill India, said world over the oil crop looked good, including Spain and Greece. "We are seeing a pickup in demand and consumption in the country. Now, we want prices to be lower to increase consumption," he said.

Domestic producer Raj Olive Oil — a PPP between Rajasthan government, Pune-based Finolex Plasson Industries and Indolive Industries of Israel — looks to sell 12 tonnes of olive oil in domestic market through auction.