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Farmers in Raichur happy with healthy red-gram crop, but concerned about price



Lakhs of farmers in Raichur district who had suffered heavy losses last year thanks to pink bollworm pest that devastated their grown Bt cotton fields just before the harvest are happy that their decision to switch from cotton to red-gram this year proved to be a good one. Sown on time thanks to early onset of monsoon, the red-gram crop is opulently standing on vast tracts of fields across the rural area.

Since the fear of recurrence of pink bollworm pest had driven the farmers to give up cotton and undertake red-gram cultivation, the area under red-gram cultivation has expanded from 40,000 hectares in the last kharif season to 96,000 in the current season. Similarly, the area under cotton cultivation has shrunk from 60,000 hectares to 43,000 hectares in the same period.

The farmers were upset when their healthy red-gram crop began to sear due to heat stress caused by deficit monsoon in August and first half of September. Their faces, however, bloomed, just as their crop did, in the second half of September when their fields received satisfactory rainfall.

"My red-gram crop has grown beautifully, just as others. I am expecting an yield of at least 7 quintal an acre. Hope, I recover the loss that I incurred last year in the cotton cultivation," a farmer from Ashapur village.

Uncertain price

Many farmers, however, are apprehensive about uncertain prices of red-gram crop this year. The crop that had seen as high price as Rs. 10,000 a quintal last year, is currently being sold at Rs. 4990 - Rs. 6,500 a quintal.

"With arrival of freshly harvested crop in December, the prices are likely to drop further. We may have to open red-gram procurement centres and buy the crop at Minimum Support Price (MSP) in the event of price cash," Dr. M. Kiran Kumar, Joint Director of Agriculture, said.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Padmayya Naik, Managing Director of Karnataka Red Gram Development Board, said that he would shortly write a letter to Government on the matter.

"We are going to discuss the matter in the meeting of Board of Directors and subsequently write a letter to the government. We will open procurement centres across red-gram growing areas and purchase the crop at MSP in the event of price crash. At present, the MSP for red-gram is Rs. 5050. It may be increased if the Union Government offers more financial support," he said.

Kochi Refinery to go green



The BPCL Kochi Refinery will begin the new chapter to earn the tag of Green Refinery as Rs. 500 crore would be pumped in to build a waste-to-energy plant in which agricultural and municipal waste would be converted into energy.

Union Minister for State for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Dharmendra Pradhan, said this at a function in the Kochi Refinery School organised to mark the 50th anniversary of the refinery.

Technologies are available to take this important green step and BPCL is in the process of identifying a suitable one, said Mr. Pradhan.

This would be taken up as part of the company's social responsibility project as the plant would not be giving much revenue.

The plant would be a second generation ethanol plant and the product can be utilised in blending with petrol in a ratio that does not exceed 10 per cent in the fuel.

Monetising biomass waste would be green step in tune with the requirement of the day of generating energy from waste, he said.

Waste management

It is also expected to bring in a solution for the increasing waste management issues of urbanisation that the local bodies are finding difficult to handle.

The refinery, which was commissioned in 1966 by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had henceforth grown from a capacity of making 2.5 million tonnes a year to 15.5 million tonnes a year by December 2016 when the Integrated Refinery Expansion Project (IREP) is expected to be completed.

Largest refinery

The Rs. 24,500-crore expansion project will make it the largest refinery in the public sector that meets the fuel demands of most parts of Southern India.

Pulses production may go up to 21 million tonnes

India's pulses production is likely to be 21 million tonnes this year (2016-17), thanks to good rain and more acreage, Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said on Monday.

The area under major kharif crops, including rice, pulses and maize, increased to 1,060 lakh hectares this year from 1,023 lakh hectare last year, he said at the inauguration of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Krishi Unnati Mela-2016, a four-day farmers' fair being held in Mathura. "This year, pulses have been sown on 145 lakh hectares nationwide against 112.43 lakh hectares last year. Given the increase in area and good monsoon rain, pulses production is likely to be 21 million tonnes, against 17 million tonnes last year," he said.

"In the last two years, a drought-like situation prevailed in the country, yet grain production stood at over 250 million tonnes during 2015-16. Even milk production hit a record high of 160 million tonnes," he said.

"Grain production is expected to be more than 270 million tonnes this year," he said.

Fruit and vegetable production increased over the years, crossing the 280-million tonne mark in 2015-16.

Mr. Singh laid the foundation for a 'Gokul Gram' for conservation of native cattle breeds.

Pulses have been sown on 145 lakh hectares nationwide against 112.43 lakh hectares last year

Haryana to integrate 54 mandis with e-NAM

The Haryana State Agricultural Marketing Board (HSAMB) has decided to integrate 54 mandis with electronic-national agriculture market (e-NAM) in the first phase of the ambitious project.

While four grain markets of Ellenabad, Karnal, Ambala City and Shahbad have already been connected under e-NAM as a pilot project, 27 others will be covered under online platform by the end of this month, a HSAMB spokesman said here on Monday.

He said that the remaining 23 grain markets would be connected by March 31, 2017. This will ensure transparent sale transactions, he said.

He said that the Board has spent Rs. 823.66 crore on various development works including upgradation of grain markets, construction of new link roads and special repair of existing roads during the past two years.

Out of these, Rs. 342.84 crore have been spent on development of new grain markets and upgradation of facilities in the existing markets. In addition, works to the tune of Rs. 272.29 crore for providing similar facilities in existing markets are in progress.

Referring to the schemes to be launched during the year long golden jubilee celebrations marking completion of 50 years of Haryana being carved out as a separate State, the spokesman said that 31 mandis would be connected with e-NAM between November 1, 2016 and October 31, 2017.

Besides, Kisan Bazaar would set up in mandis at Panchkula and Rohtak. The Board will also complete automation facilities in 10 mandis of Hisar, Uklana, Barwala, Pipli, Cheeka, Kunjpura, Indri, Barara, Babain and Asandh. - PTI

IT will be used for modernisation of agriculture, says Chief Minister



Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu speaking at 48th convocation of Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University in Bapatla on Monday.— Photo:T.Vijaya Kumar

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Monday said that natural calamities have often taken a heavy toll on agriculture. Information Technology would be used in a big way as part of modernisation of agriculture, he added.

Internet of Things and Technology, which have ushered in the fourth industrial revolution, would change the face of farming in the coming days, Mr. Naidu said at the 48th convocation of Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University held on the premises of Bapatla Agricultural College. This is the first time that a convocation of ANGRAU was held outside Hyderabad.

Making a departure from the tradition of reading out a prepared convocation address, the Chief Minister spoke extempore on a wide range of issues concerning agriculture at a time when standing crops in over 30,000 hectares has been damaged due to flash floods. Mr. Naidu admitted that farmers had faced a heavy loss and it would be difficult to come out of the difficult times.

“Andhra Pradesh is the only state that had registered a growth of 22.7 per cent in the last fiscal while the country’s average growth rate is just 1.28 per cent. We have made farming more profitable by introducing soil health cards and recently, have used rain guns in Anantpur to save the standing crop,” Mr. Naidu said.

Urging the agricultural graduates and scholars to do further research in pre-harvest and post-harvest technologies, Mr. Naidu said that scientists should find out more disease resistant varieties.

Earlier, Mr. Naidu unveiled the pylon launching major infrastructural works at various Agricultural Colleges with Rs.150 crore funding from Nabard under Rural Infrastructure Development Fund.

Later, the graduates, post graduates and research scholars were presented with degrees by the Chief Minister.

Registrar of University, TVV Satyanarayana, Dean, PG, R. Veeraraghavaiah, Dean, Agriculture, Ramesh Babu Tatineni and Dean, Home Science, Neeraja were present.

Recent rain a boon to farmers planning to raise rabi crops



ray of hope: The recent rain has created a conducive atmosphere in Vijayapura district for the sowing of rabi crops, including jowar. - PHOTO: RAJENDRA SINGH HAJERI

The timely and adequate rain — which had already brought cheer among toor growers — has now come as a boon to the rabi crops, mainly jowar.

The recent rain, which has created a conducive atmosphere for the cultivation of rabi crops, has encouraged farmers to start preparing their lands to sow jowar for the rabi season in Vijayapura district.

The crop is largely cultivated on dry land as it is primarily rain-fed.

Since the rabi season for sowing jowar and sunflower lasts till October 15, farmers, as of now, are not facing shortage of seeds of these crops.

Though, the sowing of jowar ends by middle of October, the officials concerned say that it would also stretch till the end of November depending on the climatic conditions.

The Agriculture Department has set a target of 5.25 lakh hectares for sowing in the rabi season in the district this year. However, this is expected to increase owing to the good rainfall.

Last year, though the sowing had take place on 6.66 lakh hectares in the rabi season as against the target of 5.25 lakh hectares, farmers incurred loss owing to scanty rain.

Similarly, the Agriculture Department had set a target to sow jowar on 2.25 lakh hectares of land last year. However, sowing took place on only 1.72 lakh hectares.

The area under sunflower cultivation is expected to come down as the farmers are reluctant to cultivate this crop since they are looking for a better alternative crop. Hence, the Agriculture department has reduced the area under sunflower cultivation from last year's 70,000 hectares to 34,000 hectares this year.

It may be noted that toor, which has become the most sought after crop in kharif season here, is expected to widen the smiles of the farmers as the Agriculture Department has anticipated a bumper harvest this year because of the timely rain. Toor has been cultivated on 3.4 lakh hectares in the district this year.

Rabi crops, such as jowar, are largely cultivated on dry

land in the district

as they are rain-fed

Milk union increases procurement price

The Hassan Milk Union has increased the milk procurement price by Rs. 1.5 per litre from October 1. Following this decision, milk producers will get Rs. 22.50 per litre.

Janata Dal (Secular) MLA and union president H.D. Revanna, in a press conference here on Monday, said the union had taken this decision owing to the prevalence of a drought-like situation in the district. "Farmers are facing difficult times because of the loss of rainfall and the non-availability of Hemavati water for agriculture," he said. At a recently held general body meeting, the producers had demanded that the procurement price be hiked.

Mr. Revanna said the union had registered a profit of Rs. 6.63 crore in the current financial year by the end of August 2016. Besides this, the union would be getting a profit of another Rs.3.5 crore in the current month. "We have decided to pay the profit to the milk producers in the form of a procurement price. With the increase in the price, the financial burden on the union in the current year (up to March 31) will be Rs. 20 crore," he said.

Mr. Revanna said the Hassan union was offering the producers the best price despite the fact that 70 per cent of the milk procured was being used for conversion. "Everyday, we collect 7.4 lakh litres of milk. Of this, only 30 per cent is sold, while the rest is converted

to be used in milk products,” he said. The union is expected to record a turnover of Rs.1,000 crore in the current financial year. “When I took over the union as chairman in 1996, the annual turnover was only Rs. 22 crore. It has grown all these years. In October, we will be transporting 4 lakh litres of milk to Indian Army camp at Lekhapani in Assam. The union has bagged the tender to supply milk to the army camp,” he said.

Hassan Union Managing Director Gopalaiah was also present at the press conference.

Stakeholders’ meeting on ARYA held in KVK

A stakeholders’ meeting on ‘Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture (ARYA)’ was held at Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), a district-level farm science centre of Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR), recently.

A release issued by R. Premavathy, Programme Coordinator, ICAR-KVK, Thirupathisagaram in Kanniyakumari district, said that the meeting was held under the Chairmanship of K. Narayana Gowda, former Vice-Chancellor.

Parasuraman, Coordinator, Youth and Sustainable Development, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, gave suggestions for an effective implementation of ARYA project.



More farmers covered under crop insurance scheme

New Delhi, September 27:

The Centre appears to have scored some points on the success of the recently-launched Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana — the flagship insurance scheme for farmers.

Going by the latest estimates of coverage and the sum insured it has seen a marginal increase vis-a-vis last year.

“We are still compiling the numbers, but the latest number we have got is that about 3.15 crore farmers have been insured this kharif season as opposed to 3.08 crore last year. The sum insured has also increased and nearly doubled for some states. It is a big achievement as last year was a drought year and insurance was being sold till the end of the sowing season (September 30) by which time farmers knew that they would need it,” an Agriculture Ministry official told *BusinessLine* .

No deadline extension

As opposed to that, under the PMFBY, the deadline for insurance in most States is July 31, which was extended by ten days to August 10 this kharif as most States notified the new scheme late and the coverage was low.

“It was a one-time extension that we allowed as the scheme was new and without the extension most farmers would have been left uncovered. In the rabi season, coverage would be higher as States now know about the scheme. It is unlikely that we will extend deadlines again as it spoils the premium calculations made by insurance companies,” the official said. The older insurance schemes were not very good insurance products as they were available for such a long period that the whole concept of safeguarding against risks was defeated.

Premium for crops

“As a result, the premium paid by the farmers was much higher and the sum insured was also low as the government could not afford to insure against large amounts,” the official said.

The PMFBY, which replaced the older National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and the modified NAIS, seeks to provide comprehensive insurance to farmers against the vagaries of nature at very low premia of 2 per cent of the insured value for the kharif crop and 1.5 per cent for the rabi season.

More important than increased coverage under the PMFBY this kharif is the increase in the sum insured this year.

“Because there is no cap on the sum insured, the entire loss to a farmers’ crop can be covered. So, the sum insured has increased significantly and for about five-six States it has actually doubled,” the official said.

More funds

The Agriculture Ministry has approached the Finance Ministry for more funds as there is a “huge increase” in government support because higher coverage would mean higher claims and higher premium charged by insurance companies.

The Centre and States share the burden of the difference between the premium charged by the insurance company and that paid by the farmer.

The PMFBY has covered about 23 per cent of India’s farmers this kharif against a target of 30 per cent, but the coverage is likely to increase in the rabi season as States are expected to carry out bidding for insurance companies in time, the official said.

The scheme seeks to cover 50 per cent of the country's farmers in three years.

Cotton federation looking at ways to tackle supply shortfall

Coimbatore, September 27:

“It is very premature, but yes, we are in talks with the port officials seeking support for a raw material centre at Colombo port. Such a facility will help the mill sector in Tamil Nadu to import cotton more quickly, be it from West Africa, Australia or even the US,” Srihari Balakrishnan, Managing Director, Sri Kannapiran Mills said, on the sidelines of the 37th Annual General Meeting of the Indian Cotton Federation (ICF).

Though the dates have not been finalised yet, the delegation, according to Srihari, would comprise of 4-5 members and looking to travel during October first week. “We are awaiting confirmation from Colombo Port officials.”

ICF sources perceive that textile manufacturers in Tamil Nadu would benefit if the proposal comes through.

Earlier, in his presidential address, J Thulasidharan, President, ICF, said the area under cotton in 2016-17 has been estimated to be lower by 10 per cent compared to the current year.

“China's fibre policy and release of old stock might tilt the global cotton demand and supply equation. Further, cotton supply could be tight due to the overall shortfall in acreage. It is therefore necessary to guide farmers on practising Precision Cotton Farming. Unless farmers are reassured of increased yield and better realisation, they will not undertake cotton cultivation. All stakeholders should work towards quality cotton supply,” he added.

ICF Vice-President P Nataraj stressed the need for a conducive cotton trade policy.

Cotton Scientist V Santhanam, who was co-opted as member, ICF at the 37th AGM of the federation suggested the need for a visit to China to understand the factors for increased productivity. “We should explore and understand,” he reiterated.

Scientific solution needed to increase crop yield: PM Narendra Modi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday sought a scientific solution to increase crop yield while taking into account the shrinking land and water resources.

“I have always said, per drop more crop. We must also think about – an inch of land and a bunch of crops,” he said addressing scientists on the occasion of the platinum jubilee of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

The Prime Minister said the 21st century is a technology driven century and India’s requirements can be met through a scientific solution.