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THE HINDU

Workshop on pink bollworm attack

A workshop to create awareness among Bt cotton growers about protecting their crop from pink bollworm attack was held here on Tuesday by the Department of Agriculture

Bheemanna, entomologist from the University of Agriculture Sciences, Raichur, and Basavanneppa, agronomist, Agricultural Research Station, Sirguppa, were among other resource persons to drive home the point on the importance of protecting cotton plants from pink bollworm and the steps to be adopted, including spraying of pesticides, placing of pest management kits, among other things. The resource persons interacted with the growers and clarified their doubts on systematic disposing of the affected crop, seeds and other residue. Some of the growers complained about the non-availability of pest control devises and the officials promised to arrange them. Ravishankar, Anand and Shaila, scientists from the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Hagari, spoke about drought management and ways to get good yield with judicious use of water.

Four-day Krishi Mela sees 11 lakh visitors



Recording a footfall of over 11 lakh and sale of seeds worth Rs. 28 lakh, the four-day Krishi Mela, which attracted people from across the State and adjoining States, concluded here on Tuesday.

The programme was organised by the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad. Farmers bought over 1,200 quintals of seeds for the rabi season. Extension workers, scientists, businessmen, students and people from different walks of life visited the stalls.

The mela witnessed sale of publications related to agriculture worth Rs. 3 lakh and a registration of over 3,000 farmers for farm consultancy services. Thousands of farmers visited the consultancy centre and accessed information on new farming methods, water and soil conservation, seed procurement, latest farm implements and others.

The theme for the mela was 'Pulses for nutritional security' and Vice-Chancellor of UAS-Dharwad D.P. Biradar said that steps would be taken for farmers' development and strengthening food security. Equipment for irrigation and water conservation, farm machinery, crop harvesters, and innovative tools were on display.

Farm experts also heard grievances of farmers pertaining to pest attack, water management, soil health and other issues.

Meanwhile, banks which took part in the mela tried to sensitise the visitors on issues concerning micro-finance and financial inclusion. Karnataka Vikas Grameena Bank through its stall made efforts to create awareness on solar lights, micro-insurance, financial inclusion, Kisan Credit Cards and para-banking issues. An interactive session with bankers was also held. The university honoured innovative farmers and farm women from seven districts of the region with 'Shreshta Krishika' and 'Shreshta Krishi Mahile' awards. To encourage youngsters who had taken up farming, 'Shresta Yuva Krishika' and 'Shreshta Yuva Mahile' awards were given away.

Lend liberally to farm sector, banks told

Bankers should give a push to term lending to agriculture sector by taking advantage of the Central government-sponsored subsidy schemes on offer, said K. Jeevanandham, Chief Regional Manager, Indian Overseas Bank.

Inaugurating a workshop on Central government-sponsored subsidy schemes for representatives from banks, sugar companies, voluntary organisations and farmers' producer companies organised by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) here recently, he said that banks are required to lend at least 18 per cent of their total lending for agriculture and efforts need to be made to identify potential activities on a cluster basis.

S. Suresh Kumar, Assistant General Manager, NABARD, Tiruchi, said that under the credit-linked subsidy programme, the Centre had set a target of installing 2,400 solar pumpsets in the State out of 30,000 solar pumpsets proposed for the country during the year.

He indicated that NABARD could extend up to Rs.3 crore as advance subsidy to banks for pushing the scheme.

A representative from Surya Power Magic, one of the approved manufacturers of solar pumpsets, made a presentation on different models of solar pumpsets and said the company had entered into tie-up with 11 banks for implementing the scheme. Muhammadu Zacariya, an agro-based entrepreneur, shared his experience with solar pumpset installed in his field.

Diraviam, Programme Director, Saraswathi Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Karur, explained the salient features of Agri Clinic and Agri Business Centre scheme, which envisages establishment of agri ventures and extension services by agricultural graduates and agricultural diploma holders.

Experts elaborated on Dairy Entrepreneurship Development Scheme, National Livestock Mission, National Programme on Organic Farming, Agri Market Infrastructure covering storage and non-storage infrastructure and solar lighting scheme.



Gujarat fisherman bags award for open sea cage culture

Kochi, September 28:

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute's (CMFRI) open sea cage farming model in Gujarat has received national recognition, with a fisherman associated with the institute bagging the Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay Antoyodaya Krishi Puraskar instituted by ICAR this year.

Hasanbhai Musangara Jumabhai, a tribal fisherman of the Siddi community, got the award for his active involvement in open sea cage farming, guided by the Veraval Regional Centre of CMFRI, off the Veraval coast.

Hasanbhai is the leader of the fishermen co-operative society Bharat Admjuth Matsyodyog Mandali-Talala, in Gujarat.

CMFRI regional centre provided cages and technical guidance to the co-operative society in Veraval to carry out the farming as an alternate livelihood option for Siddi tribes in the

region. The centre also offered the community a farming demonstration, training and hands-on exposure of the farming, under the Tribal Sub Plan outlay of the institute.

For the successful venture, the institute has supported the farming group financially and technically every year since 2011. The sea cage farm, which is regarded as one of the largest commercial sea farms in the country, comprised of 22 galvanised iron cages of 6 m diameter.

The tribes were empowered to operate the farm by themselves and they obtained four crops of lobsters and cobia, leading to provision of quality livelihood to the coastal folks and increased fish production.

Sugar output seen lower at 234 lt in 2016-17 on dip in cane acreage

New Delhi, September 28:

Sugar production in the 2016-17 sugar season, beginning October 1, is projected at 234 lakh tonnes, 6.7 per cent lower than the production of 251 lakh tonnes expected in the current year.

According to the first advance estimate made by the Indian Sugar Mills' Association, based on a second set of satellite images of the sugar crop, total cane acreage in the 2016-17 sugar season is likely to be 49.99 lakh hectares.

This is about 5 per cent less than in 2015-16.

There is, however, no need for import of sugar as domestic availability was plentiful, said sugar millers.

Ample supply

“Considering the healthy opening balance of 75 lakh tonnes (lt) and estimated sugar production of 234 lt in 2016-17, the country would have sufficient sugar stock in 2017-18. Therefore, the committee of ISMA unanimously agreed that there is no need to import sugar,” a release issued by the Association, on Wednesday, said. The outer limit of annual sugar consumption in the country is 260 lt.

Sales slump

Sugar sales in 2015-16 have been lower as compared to 2014-15, but it is due to a correction in demand as there was a steep abnormal jump in sales in 2014-15, the release explained.

Till the end of August 2016, sugar mills had dispatched 226.50 lt compared to 237 lt during the same period last year.

It is expected that domestic sales till the end of September for the 2015-16 sugar year may be around 250-251 lt (as against 256 lt last year).

“This will leave a closing balance of around 75 lt, which may be higher if 23-24 lt is not sold by sugar mills in September,” the release said.

Open sesame: SEBI unveils options trading in commodities

New Delhi, September 28:

Market regulator SEBI on Wednesday allowed commodity derivative exchanges to introduce trading in ‘options’, unveiling a historic step that is expected to deepen the commodities market, expand the product basket and draw new participants.

SEBI’s move was in effect a first-anniversary gift for the commodity derivatives market. Exactly a year ago, it had merged the erstwhile commodities regulator Forward Markets Commission with itself.

Currently, the only instrument available in the commodity derivatives market is “futures” on individual commodities. Commodity derivative exchanges looking to start trading in options contracts should take SEBI’s prior approval, for which detailed guidelines will be issued in due course, SEBI said in a circular on Wednesday.

Simultaneously, the Finance Ministry provided legal clarity by specifying a list of 91 commodities on which commodity derivative contracts will be permitted under the Securities Contracts Regulation Act 1956 (SCRA).

The commodities notified include 17 cereals and pulses, 12 oilseeds and oils, 12 spices, 11 metals, 3 precious metals, 4 plantation products, and 11 energy related products.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had announced in this year’s Budget that “new derivative products will be developed by SEBI in the commodity derivatives market.”

NCDEX welcomed the decision and highlighted that it will be a “game-changer” for farmers. “It would help them to sell their produce in the derivatives market and get the benefit of price protection in case the price falls below their cost of production and also derive the benefit of any rise in price. Options are also a much better hedging instrument as compared to futures for hedgers,” NCDEX said.

NCDEX said it was fully prepared for the launch of options and had invested in next-generation trading technology, geared towards providing unrivalled levels of

performance. “We await detailed guidelines from the regulator in this regard,” the statement added.

Mrugank Paranjape, MD and CEO, MCX, said that introduction of options would deepen and transform the Indian commodity derivatives markets both in terms of products and participants. It will also complement the existing futures contracts and would make Indian commodity derivatives more vibrant and efficient, he said.

“It will provide for inclusive development of the market and encourage cost-effective hedging for participants like farmers and SMEs,” Paranjape added.

Kishor Narne, Head of Commodities and Currencies at Motilal Oswal, said that though the move had come a bit late, SEBI had finally fulfilled its promise to strengthen and grow the commodities markets.

Turmeric gains colour on demand

ERODE, SEPTEMBER 28:

Spot turmeric prices increased on Wednesday due to some demand. “The price of the commodity increased by ₹200 a quintal in the futures on Tuesday evening and again it gained ₹100 on Wednesday. This has created an impact in the local market also, so the traders quoted higher price and procured the turmeric,” said RKV Ravishankar, a trader. He said 2,000 bags arrived for sale and 65-70 per cent stocks were sold. In the local market the finger turmeric was up ₹200 a quintal and that of the root variety by ₹250. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the finger variety went for ₹7,451-9,005 a quintal; the root variety at ₹7,149-7,965. Of the 719 bags kept for sale, 455 were sold.

Mahindra Univeg to sell fruits, vegetables on MeraKisan



MUMBAI, SEPT 28:

Mahindra Agri Solutions, a part of Mahindra & Mahindra Group, has formed a joint venture with Belgium-based Univeg (Greenyard Foods) to source fruits and vegetables directly from farmers and retail them on e-commerce platform www.shopping.merakisan.com.

The newly formed joint venture company Mahindra Univeg will own and operate the online platform MeraKisan.

Mahindra Agri Solutions will own 60 per cent in the joint venture company, while the rest would be held by Univeg.

Mahindra Univeg plans to cut out the intermediaries in the fruits and vegetables value chain business and sell them on the digital platform to benefit both the farmers and end consumers.

Prashanth Patil, majority stakeholder of MeraKisan, will be the CEO of the newly formed company.

Ashok Sharma, Managing Director, Mahindra Agri Solutions, said the company's investment in MeraKisan will enable the farmers and the consumers to connect digitally to create a win-win situation.

Prashanth Patil, CEO-Designate of MeraKisan, said the digital platform will ensure delivery of high quality fruits and vegetables at the door step of the consumer and become a trendsetter in creating value for farmers.

At present, Mahindra Agri Solutions retails pulses and edible oil in select states through its NuPro brand. It also sells fruits, vegetables and dairy products under Saboro brand.

Having grown over 11 fold in the last 5 years, Mahindra agri business has become one of India's largest grape exporters and established 'Farm to Fork' presence across the agri value chain.