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# Business Standard

## Onion export doubles in April-Sept

Government had removed peak \$700 a tonne MEP last year in phases, to nil by last month



*Labours sort onions*

Onion exports doubled in the first half of this financial year (April-September), due to the government decision to extend to this the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) incentive, beside ending the earlier minimum export price (MEP).

Data from the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda) showed total export at 946,603 tonnes for April-September, from 488,446 tonnes in the same period last year. Despite this doubling of quantity, overall realisation was only marginally higher (Rs 1,204 crore, from the earlier Rs 1,156 crore) with a sharp fall in global prices.

“Exports have jumped due to removal of MEP. Since this was removed, India started shipping onions to all deficient countries — Sri Lanka, Far East, Middle East,” said Ajit Shah, president, Horticulture Exporters Association.

To arrest falling prices, the government in end-August introduced a five per cent incentive (MEIS) on export of “onion fresh or chilled”, initially till December and then for another three months till March 2017. The government had removed the peak \$700 a tonne MEP last year in phases, to nil by last month.

“Following the MEP removal, exporters have started shipping onion to overseas markets on their own. They would earlier sell on the basis of orders,” said Atul Shah, Director, Agricultural Produce Market Committee, at Pimpalgaon (Nashik district), one of the biggest wholesale centres.

A subdued domestic price on bumper production has impelled the export push, further depressing the price abroad, now at Rs 5-6 a kg from Rs 10-12 a kg about two months ago. earlier. This is actually Rs 3 a kg less than the actual cost of shipment to countries in the region on the east and to West Asia. Which means the export would now decline, said Shah.

The third Advanced Estimate from the Union agriculture ministry estimates output to rise 11 per cent to 21 million tonnes for this year.

## MEP GOES, TRADE RISES

### India's onion exports

Financial year	Quantity (tonnes)	Value (₹ crore)
2016-17*	946,603	1,204
2015-16	1,201,245	2,747
2014-15	1,238,102	2,300
2013-14	1,482,498	3,169

\*April – September

Source: Apeda

## **Sugar output to be lower than expected as drought hits crops**

In the past two years, back-to-back droughts have ravaged the cane crop in Maharashtra



*Photo: Shutterstock*

India's sugar production in 2016-17 is likely to fall to 22 million tonnes (mt), down 4.3 per cent from an earlier estimate, as mills in its key producing state are closing early due to a cane shortage, industry officials told Reuters. A drop in production below India's consumption of around 25 million tonnes could lift prices and prompt the world's second-biggest consumer to allow duty-free imports of the sweetener, supporting global prices that are trading near their highest level in 18 months.

In the past two years, back-to-back droughts have ravaged the cane crop in Maharashtra, the country's top sugar producer.

"The impact of drought was much more severe in Maharashtra than we anticipated. The state could end up with production of around 4.5 million

tonnes," B B Thombre, president of the Western India Sugar Mills Association (WISMA), told Reuters on Thursday.

The WISMA was earlier expecting the country to produce 23 mt of sugar in the 2016-17 crushing season that started on October 1, anticipating Maharashtra will churn out 5.5 mt.

As Maharashtra's output has been revised down, the country's total production could fall to 22 mt, Thombre said.

Maharashtra had produced 8.41 mt of sugar in the 2015-16 season, while India's total output was 25.1 mt. Sugar mills in Maharashtra typically operate between November and April but this year so far 25 mills have stopped crushing due to lower cane supplies.

"Some sugar mills have already closed operations due to cane shortage and most mills will close operations by February end," said Sanjeev Babar, managing director of the Maharashtra State Co-operative Sugar Factories Federation, on Wednesday.

Local prices are moving up on an expected shortfall in output and could prompt the government to allow duty free imports of the sweetener, a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading firm said on Wednesday.

"Ahead of state elections the government will try to keep a lid on prices. Right now it is more interested in protecting consumers than farmers," the dealer said.

The Election Commission of India on Wednesday scheduled five state polls for the next two months that will test support for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's move to abolish high-denomination banknotes.



## **Govt may increase agri-credit target to Rs 10-12 lakh cr in FY18: PwC**

Govt has set a target of disbursing agri-credit worth Rs 9 lakh cr in FY17



The government may announce an increase in agri-credit target to Rs 10-12 lakh crore in the upcoming Budget in FY18 and even reduce the interest rates considering excessive cash flow in banks after demonetisation, consulting and accounting firm PwC India said on Thursday.

For FY17, the government has set a target to disburse agri-credit of Rs 9 lakh crore, of which, Rs 7.56 lakh crore credit has been disbursed to farmers till September this year, as per the government data.

"Agriculture credit might increase to around Rs 10-12 lakh crore keeping in mind the excessive flow of cash in the bank after demonetisation scheme," PwC India Director Ajay Kakra said sharing pre-budget expectation for the farm sector.

In the 2017-18 budget, he said the government may announce cut in the interest rates for agri-credit under different schemes as well, he said in a statement.

Postal network might also be utilised for further linking the new agriculture credit schemes with the farmers directly.

The General Budget for the 2017-18 fiscal is scheduled to be presented on February 1.

According to PwC, the government is expected to focus on the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana in the FY18 budget to bring in more land under irrigation after a target of bringing in around 28 lakh hectare was set for this year.

The government may also announce subsidy on electricity charges and purchase of farm equipment for irrigation practices.

"Government is also likely to look for renewable energy alternatives for farm equipment backed by incentive/subsidy related schemes for both farmers and natural resource harnessing equipment manufacturers," PwC said.

That apart, PwC said private-sector partnership towards the conversion of city waste to agricultural compost might gain momentum and there might be announcements pertaining to government support in terms of both infrastructure and incentives to encourage private sector investment.

Steps for digitalisation of market linkages such as e-platform for agri-marketing seems likely to gain momentum and there might be steps to link it with digital payments considering it as one of the steps for marching towards a digital economy.

The farm schemes introduced this year such as Soil Health Card and opening up of around 2000 soil and seed testing centres are likely to be increased both in terms of scale and scope keeping in mind the productivity enhancements objectives, the PwC India added.

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## High Court clears decks for 1,300 new staff for agriculture, horticulture



HYDERABAD: In a huge relief to the state of Telangana that is desperately waiting to equip its agriculture wing with new staff, the Hyderabad High Court on Thursday cleared all the hurdles that were lying in its way to fill the 1300 agricultural extension officers, horticulture officers etc. The bench of Justice V Ramasubramanian and Justice G Syam Prasad pronounced its orders after hearing scores of petitions filed by contract employees who are seeking weightage marks while filling these posts.

Contract employees are an integral part of the agriculture structure all these years and leaving them aside at this stage is unfair, J Sudheer, the counsel for the petitioners argued. The bench while partly agreeing with him directed the authorities to give them preference if they secure equal marks on par with the fresh candidates in the open category. Telangana state and its public service commission were ordered to take up recruitment accordingly.

## After 'milk route', now 'fruit route' for Madhya Pradesh farmers



BHOPAL: Following on the lines of 'milk route', Madhya Pradesh government now plans to come up with 'fruit route.'

This route would run along areas situated on the banks of the river Narmada, streamlining the process of production and marketing of the fruit products, greatly assisting farmers.

"A fruit route will allow unrestricted mobility of products between the source and destination, allowing fruit farmers to earn revenue, despite unavailability of markets," said Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan during his Narmada Yatra in Narsinghpur, on Thursday.

"The government is developing the necessary infrastructure and will also provide assistance in marketing", he added.



## **Dindigul farmers warm up to polyhouse in a big way**



MADURAI: Farmers in Dindigul are embracing polyhouse farming under National Horticulture Mission programme (NHM) in a big way with those who went for it five years ago reaping rich dividends. While the district had set a target for including 20,000 farmers under the Indo-Israeli agro project, it received 60,000 applications.

But things were not as rosy when the system was introduced with many farmers being apprehensive in adopting the method. ``Now, many have come forward to take it up'', said K Srinivasan, project officer for Centre for Excellence for Vegetables, Reddiarchathiram. As of now, there are about 30 farmers who had plumped for the method in the district.

Polyhouse cultivation is a protected cultivation where the crops are safeguarded against natural influences like too much sunlight, rain or drought. The major water source for polyhouse or green house cultivation is micro drip irrigation, which ensures that the plants get adequate water.

The farmers have to invest approximately Rs 10 lakh for a quarter acre, but they can get back the invested money in just two years as far as the hybrid variety of cucumber is concerned, according to Srinivasan. They initially started the cultivation with tomatoes and moved on to cucumber which is being cultivated in large areas.

G Kathirvel Murugan from Kalikampatti panchayat in Dindigul has now started cultivating chrysanthemums in polyhouses and started seeing good returns. The ones that he planted in July have now started flowering. He had invested Rs 30,000 on the plants and Rs 44,000 on setting up the polyhouse. Compared to those grown under open cultivation which start fading from the third day onwards, flowers under protected cultivation have thicker petals and remain fresh even for five to ten days.

On an average, plants on 1,000 square feet yield about 80 kilogram during peak season and sell at Rs 100 per kilogram. Srinivasan said that a farmer could earn about Rs 7,000 per day and quality chrysanthemums for two years.

Hybrid cucumbers with a 130-day cycle would yield 20 tonnes per acre and the fruits would be ready for harvesting 35 days after sowing. A farmer can make a profit of up to Rs 25 lakh per acre in a season with the vegetable selling for Rs 22 per kilogram. A farmer in Bodikamanvadi near Battalagundu has reaped 27 tonnes per quarter acre in the last season, creating a record of sorts. A polyhouse once constructed can be used for twenty years, according to him.

### Polyhouse Versus Open field farming

#### Polyhouse - Open field

- 1.Crops protected from natural weather - They are exposed to nature and conditions like excess sunlight and rain
- 2.Drip irrigation enables water supply - Drought can lead to water scarcity
- 3.They are protected from pests - Can be affected by pests
- 4.Crops produce 60 % more yield than under open conditions
- 5.Suitable for hybrid varieties - All traditional varieties are cultivated this way
- 6.Assured returns - Returns depend on climatic conditions.

### **Farmers learn poultry farming techniques**

Nagpur: Started with the aim of providing alternate source of income, a five-day training programme being run by the department of poultry science of Nagpur Veterinary College got good response from farmers.

Under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, state had sanctioned Rs 1.5 crore for the three-year project. Its mandate was to train 500 farmers in poultry farming in Nagpur district. But actual trainings started only in financial year 2016-17. "Yet, 400 farmers received training in the last eight months," said Dr Mukund Kadam, sectional head of the department.

He added that first two years of the project went in getting funds released and setting up training centre at Telanghedi.

Participants are taught techniques in farming like broiler, layer, cockerel, quail and turkey. Besides this, nutrition of birds, value addition such as information about products from chicken and prevention of diseases are also explained during the course.

"Anyone possessing 7/12 extract is eligible for the course. We are also focusing on women self-help groups," Kadam said.

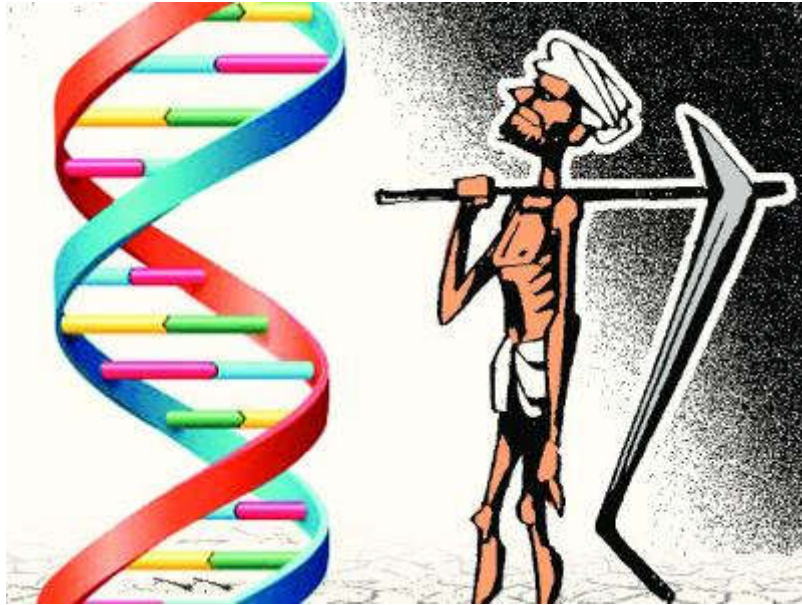
Hansraj Dhanjode, a farmer from Kuhi, said, "After the training, I opted for kadaknath farming as it is in much demand in our region. Earlier, I had only 200 birds. Now I have 2,000 and earning about Rs 3 lakh in every five months."

### **Crops shrink from 90,000 hectares to 36,000**

MADURAI: The big deficit left by northeast monsoon has had a huge impact on agriculture in Madurai district this samba season with cultivation taken up only in 36,000 out of the usual 90,000 hectares. This was revealed by district collector K Veera Raghava Rao at the drought review meeting which was also attended by several state ministers here on Thursday.

He said the monsoon, which usually brought copious rain to meet the district's irrigational as well as drinking water needs, had failed this year. The district's average rainfall during the northeast monsoon was 407 mm, but this year only 215 mm was received. November usually brought the highest rainfall of the season — around 147.60 mm — but this year it shrunk to just 12.39 mm.

Contingency plans have been drawn up to meet the drinking water needs of the local bodies including Madurai Corporation, municipalities, town panchayats and panchayats. Some of them like Usilampatti have been marked as critical.



The collector said that even out of the cultivated area of 36,000 hectares there were chances of the yield getting affected due to the deficit rainfall.

Paddy cultivation is usually taken up in 43,000 hectares this season, but only 6,083 hectares had seen the crop and that too predominantly using well irrigation. Ministers R B Udayakumar and Sellur K Raju, MLA V V Rajan Chellappa were among those who attended the meeting.

The collector pointed out that there were different parameters to declare a place 'drought-affected', including rainfall, percentage of crop, crop damage and soil moisture. Minister Udayakumar said that a careful assessment of the ground reality would be conducted in the district with immediate effect and report submitted in two days.

Monitoring officer for the district Dharmendra Pratap Yadav said that the animal husbandry department should also assess the cattle situation and fodder availability to draw up plans to meet the requirements.



The ministers visited about 10 per cent of the affected villages on Thursday evening where they got a first-hand view of the crop situation. At least five sites were to be identified in each of the affected areas for specific crops from where samples would be inspected by the officials.

Agriculture department officials told the ministers that alternate cropping of pulses had been taken up by farmers on their directions in November when the monsoon showed signs of failure. However, 90 per cent of these crops had also been affected by the deficit rainfall.

#### BITING REALITY

Total designated area of cultivation for all crops: 96,000 hectares

Area that was cultivated this season: 36,000 hectares.

Regular paddy cultivation in 43,000 hectares.

Area in which paddy was cultivated: 6,083 hectares.

Normal rainfall for district in November: 147.60 mm

Rainfall received in November 2016: 12.39 mm

Average rainfall for district in northeast monsoon: 407 mm

Rainfall received in NE monsoon in 2016: 215 mm.

#### **Ministers, bureaucrats assess water, crop situation in districts**

CHENNAI: With pressure mounting on the government to declare drought in Tamil Nadu, high-level teams of ministers and bureaucrats fanned out to all the districts, barring Chennai, to assess crop damage and the water crisis. The state has seen a deficit rainfall of 62% during the northeast monsoon ending December, leaving farmers, especially those in the Cauvery delta region in distress.

Pointing to the dried sugarcane and cotton crop at Veerapandi in Salem, farmers demanded that visiting PWD and highways minister Edappadi K Palaniswami help get adequate compensation for the loss. The extensive depletion of

groundwater wreaked havoc on turmeric and corn crop too. "We will visit all the affected areas to assess the extent of loss," Palanisamy said, assuring compensation package for uninsured crop too. About 2.72 lakh hectares of agricultural land is staring at crop damage in Salem after water level plummeted three months ago and water bodies became bone dry.



From Friday, a team of ministers will visit the delta districts where farmers have died. The farmers risked taking up long-term samba cultivation expecting copious rainfall.

Earlier, chief minister O Panneerselvam announced that the ministerial teams would complete the assessment by January 9 and submit the report to government the following day. The state move came after the meteorological department said the state recorded only 168.3mm as against the normal rainfall of 440.4mm during the three month monsoon season.

On Thursday, health minister C Vijayabaskar and his team visited the dried patches of Annavasal Panchayat Union in Pudukkottai district. "All eligible farmers should be included in the list," the minister said at an inter-departmental review meet in the district collectorate. Instructions were issued to dig new wells, and repair the motor pumps and install new waterlines for uninterrupted water supply in the summer months.

Ministers R B Udayakumar and Sellur K Raju assessed the situation in Madurai district, where cultivation has taken place only in 36,000 out of 90,000 hectares of land. Poor monsoon has withered crop in most of the areas. Agriculture

department officials told the ministers that alternate crop such as pulses was taken up by farmers in November, but 90% of them too failed due to deficit rainfall. "The Animal husbandry department should also assess the fodder availability for cattle and draw up plans to meet the requirements," district monitoring officer Dharmendra Pratap Yadav said.

In a statement, DMK working president M K Stalin accused the state of being indifferent to the growing suicides, even as neighbouring states like Karnataka remained proactive and approached the Centre for assistance. "I requested the CM to convene a special assembly session to urge the Centre to declare drought," the DMK leader said. On Thursday, BJP state president Tamilisai Soundararajan led a delegation to meet the CM and discussed with him about farmers' suicides.

(with inputs from bureaus)

## THE HINDU BusinessLine

### **Sugar output in Maharashtra to fall 40%**



Mumbai, Jan 5:

Sugar production in Maharashtra, the country's second largest producer, is set to fall 40 per cent to five million tonnes against 8.4 mt recorded in the same period last year.

The Maharashtra State Cooperative Sugar Factories Federation has lowered the production estimate from 6.27 mt made in December considering the huge shortage of cane supply and low recovery levels. The acreage under sugar cane cultivation has also fallen by 33 per cent to 6.33 lakh hectares (9.4 lakh hectares).

Contesting the Indian Sugar Mills Association production estimate of 23.4 mt, Sanjiv Babar, Managing Director, Maharashtra Cooperative Sugar Factories Federation said the sugar output this season (October to September) will not be more than 22.5 mt and it may go down further if the recovery turns out to be low.

Sugar supply, if at all, may shrink further as most of the mills are interested in producing jaggery which fetches Rs. 45 a kg against sugar realisation of Rs. 36 a kg.

Of the 170 sugar mills in Maharashtra, he said only 147 have started operations and among them 32 mills have already stopped production in just 30-40 days due to cane shortage and increase in cost of production.

The sugar industry is unique as it is the only one which is compelled to take loan to buy raw material (sugar cane) while for other companies it is covered under working capital, said Babar.

Sugar output in Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu is expected to fall to 2.4 mt (3.82 mt), 1 mt (1.2 mt) and 1 mt (1.36 mt) while in Uttar Pradesh it will increase to 7.6 mt (6.8 mt), he said.

Mills in Maharashtra has taken a soft loan and other debt of Rs. 6,600 crore and need repay Rs. 3,400 crore next fiscal. It also faces repayment obligation of Rs. 1,100 crore on soft loan alone in FY'18-19 and FY'19-20 after an interest moratorium for two years that expires in March, 2017.

The demonetisation of high value currency and the RBI decision to exclude District Cooperative banks from exchanging currency notes has added to cup of farmers' woes, said Babar. Farmers faced huge liquidity crunch as they were not able to withdraw money from the 3,800 cooperative banks in Maharashtra and the situation is still worse, said Babar.



## Regaining lost glory: Castorseed futures makes impressive debut



Mumbai, January 5:

Castorseed futures on the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX) has recorded a turnover of 100 crore with an open interest of 10,000 tonnes on the first day of trading.

The contract was re-launched by the exchange on Thursday after it was suspended last January due to price rigging by few traders.

Castor futures saw a healthy participation from the industry on the first day of its launch and it reinforces the economic value that castor futures brings to the entire value chain, said the exchange in a statement on Thursday.

NCDEX had recorded a monthly turnover of 7,997 crore last January before it was suspended as some of the traders were cornering the stock to push up prices artificially.

In 2008, large volume generating agri-commodities such as chana, soya oil, potato, rubber, sugar, pepper, guar seed and guar gum were suspended.

Interestingly, these contracts never managed to generate business after they were re-launched.

While castorseed this time around has made a decent debut, only time will tell whether it will once again top the turnover table of the exchange.

There has been a bullish trend in castorseed prices as the area under kharif coverage is lagging by 2.68 lakh hectares at 8.40 lakh hectares as of December 13, according to the Central Organisation for Oil Industry and Trade.

In 2015-16, castorseed production was higher at 14 lakh tonnes against 12.95 lakh tonnes produced in the same period last year.

### **MCX also launches contract**

Meanwhile, MCX — which launched the castorseed contract for the first time on Thursday — recorded a turnover of 26 crore with an open interest of 1,300 tonnes. The exchange has fixed a flat transaction charge of 50 paise per 1 lakh of transaction while it is about 2 per lakh on NCDEX.

Mrugank Paranjape, Managing Director, MCX, said the decision to launch castorseed contract was made to cater the need of the stakeholders looking for a reliable instrument for price discovery and risk management.

MCX castorseed contract would play as a hedging tool and price discovery with India dominating the global castor oil trade and rising volumes of production of castorseed commensurate with an increasing trend in export of its extract, he said.

India leads in castorseed production and dominates international castor oil trade, meeting over 80 per cent of the global demand. It exports castor oil and derivatives worth over 3,000 crore annually.

### **Mixed trend seen in pepper**



Kochi, January 5:

Spot pepper prices ruled steady on matching demand and supply on Thursday, while the current month contracts dropped on fear of increased supplies from mid-January. On the terminal market, 12.5 tonnes were traded at 640-675 a kg. Spot prices stayed steady at 65,900 (ungarbled) and 68,900 (garbled) a quintal. January contract fell by 1,000 a quintal to 69,000, while February and March contracts remained unchanged at 67,000 and 62,000 a quintal. Export prices were at \$10,425 a tonne c&f for Europe and \$10,675 for the US.

### **Sugar edges up in routine trade**



Mumbai, January 5:

Sugar at Vashi market extended little gain of 5-10 a quintal as producers kept prices higher making costly parity for stockists. However, mill tender rates and naka prices were steady with routine volumes. Some mills sold for M-grade 5-10 higher. At Vashi, arrivals were about 61-62 truck loads and local dispatches were at the same level. On Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were: S-grade (in ) 3,702-3,800 (3,702- 3,800) and M-grade 3,752-3,996 (3,746-3,996). Naka delivery rates: S-grade (in ) 3,700-3,740 (3,680-3,730) and M-grade 3,740-3,840 (3,750-3,800).

## **Punjab farmers plagued by pests and payment crunch**



Sangrur and Samrala, January 5:

In normal times, the grain mandi of Samrala is abuzz with the hum of agrarian commerce. These days, however, it lies virtually vacant, with only a handful of farmers coming to sell their produce. Joginder Singh Sahni says that usually the mandi is full of wheat and rice farmers selling their goods. Commission agents and other links on the commercial chain add to the decibel level.

Sahni, who has come to the mandi to sell basmati rice, says that the market today is a mere shadow of its usual lively self. “Most of the farmers are not selling their produce. Grains can be stored easily, so they are holding them back, hoping for better price.”

He and a few other farmers from nearby villages, however, have come to sell a part of their produce. According to Sahni, and another farmer Jeet Singh, the price of basmati rice has fallen from 4,500 per quintal to about 2,200 per quintal following demonetisation.

“The price is falling every day. Just two or three days ago, it was selling at 2,500 per quintal,” Sahni says. He is hoping to sell some of the rice, which he is unable to store, before the price drops further.

Punjab’s agriculture now is fairly well-insulated from the vagaries of weather. Instead of depending on monsoon, farmers depend on diesel-powered irrigation and fertilisers; their harvest remains fairly consistent, come rain or drought.

This year, which comes after two straight years of droughts that wreaked havoc, farmers in the State were looking for a reprieve. But then came the “surgical strike” on black money, which ran the cash-based rural economy to ground.



## **Pest problem**

Additionally, some regions in Punjab have seen the output of wheat and rice dip due to a pest attack. “It has been a dual strike – of pests and demonetisation,” says Avtar Singh, an aged farmer from Dhuri.

Reduced output, deep price cuts, and rise in input costs — of fertilisers, pesticides, diesel for irrigation and others — have made life difficult for grain producers in the State.

According to Kirpal Singh from Punnawal village, where the average yield of basmati rice per acre has fallen from around 8 quintals per acre to 5-6 quintals per acre due to the pest problem.

Nishathar Singh, also from Punnawal, says, “I am a relatively big farmer, but even I find it hard to deal with this situation. With lower yield and the cash crunch, I don’t have the money to pay my workers.”

## **Jeera gains aroma on export buying**



Rajkot, January 5:

Jeera futures traded up on the back of short covering by traders. It gained in physical markets on export demand. Traders said that continuous export demand and tight supply pushed up jeera prices on the spot. Following it, short covering by market participants lifted jeera price up on the futures platform. On the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, jeera January contract gained by 60 to 18,085 a quintal, with an open interest of 3,165 lots. March

series increased by 40 to 16,690, with an open interest of 2,085 lots. At the Unjha mandi of Gujarat, arrival of the spice was reported at about 1,000 bags and prices increased by 10 to 3,200-3,600 per 20 kg. At Rajkot APMC, jeera prices were up by 5 to 3,300-3,650 per 20 kg.

## DECCAN Chronicle

### **Telangana: Centre to lift excess red gram**

Kumar said red gram production may cross 1.5 lakh metric tonnes this season due to good rainfall and harvest.



“There was a talk NAFED would buy only 50,000 tonnes hence we met the Union Minister. He promised us that there would be no limit in the purchase of red gram from farmers,” Mr Kumar said. (Representational image)

**Hyderabad:** The Central government has agreed to purchase Red Gram in the state following a glut in the market.

TRS MPs B. Vinod Kumar and Vishveshwar Reddy met Union agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh and apprised them of the red gram crisis and how

farmers are facing hardships due to Central agency's decision to buy only 50,000 metric tonnes.

Mr Kumar said red gram production may cross 1.5 lakh metric tonnes this season due to good rainfall and harvest.

“There was a talk NAFED would buy only 50,000 tonnes hence we met the Union Minister. He promised us that there would be no limit in the purchase of red gram from farmers,” Mr Kumar said.

**06-01-2017**



### **Quality water and compost technology**

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University - Information and Training Centre, Anna Nagar, is conducting a training programme on 'Water Quality Standards and Composting Technology', on January 10, 9.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m.

According to a press release, the training will focus on the importance of water quality parameters to have a safe drinking and house hold water for the urban people.

Various method of composting technology to convert city waste into organic manure will also be taught.

Venue: Tamil Nadu Agricultural University - Information and Training Centre, No.U-30, 10th Street, (Behind Jaigopal Garodia School),

Anna Nagar.

For details, call 2626 3484

## **Farmers hit by crop loss will be compensated without delay: Minister**

Minister for PWD, State Highways and Minor Ports Edappadi K. Palaniswami, accompanied by Nasimuddin, monitoring officer, made assessment of crop loss suffered by the farmers due to severe drought conditions prevailing in the three Assembly constituencies in the district on Thursday.

The Minister inspected the fields of the affected farmers in Yercaud, Attur and Gangavalli Assembly constituencies. They visited the villages of Tukkiyampalayam in Valappadi block, Ariyappalayam and Mullaivadi (Bethanayakkanpalayam block), Naduvalur south and Lathuvadi (Gangavalli block) and assessed the extent of loss suffered by the farmers. They made enquiries with the farmers and the farm workers and assured them adequate compensation.



Later, addressing a meeting of the officials at the Collectorate, Mr. Palaniswami said that the state government has initiated effective steps for the assessment of crop loss due to the failure of the north-east monsoon by special teams to provide adequate compensation to the affected farmers without any delay.

The Minister said that the work of assessing the crop loss got under way in all the 20 panchayat unions in the district on Thursday.



Special teams comprising deputy tahsildars, revenue inspectors, village administrative officers, officials of the agriculture and horticulture departments, have been formed to assess the extent of drought and the crop loss.

He said that the modalities for adopting proper yardstick for arriving at exact loss has already been explained the members of the teams. The officials should take pictures of the affected crop and forward the same along with their report to their higher officials.

Training has already been imparted to the team members in this regard.

The team members should ensure that all the affected farmers were covered, so that they could get adequate compensation from the state government.

District Collector V. Sampath, MLAs A. Maruthamuthu and R. M. Chinnathambi, and senior officials of various government departments participated in the meeting.

### **Monitoring committee to submit report by January 7**



### **342 of 360 revenue villages in Dindigul district affected**

The monitoring committee will submit its report by January 7 to the State government. In turn, the State government would compile reports from all



districts and submit it to the Central government for drought relief, said Principal Secretary and District Monitoring Officer Mangath Ram Sharma.

Talking to press persons at Maanur in Thoppampatti block here on Thursday, he said that the State government had deputed monitoring officers to inspect drought-hit areas, assess the damage in all districts and submit their reports. On submission of report by the State government, the Centre would provide funds for drought relief. The Centre was expected to announce the relief in the second week of January, he added.

While inspecting the damaged crop at Manur, he advised the agriculture department officials to use Bhuvan, a specially designed app, to upload photographs of the affected area, standing crop and quantum of damage immediately to enable the Central government verify the report submitted by the State. He insisted the officials to mention survey numbers and other details of the lands held by each farmer.

Collector T. G. Vinay said that this year's rainfall was 45 per cent less than the average rainfall.

Farmers congregated at several villages and spoke about crop damage and the plight of farm labourers.

The officials said that 342 out of 360 revenue villages were affected.

Mr. Mangath Ram Sharma was the first monitoring officer to visit the Gujiliamparai union, the worst drought-hit union in the district, to assess damage.

Many officers including central teams who had visited the district on several occasions to assess various parameters visited other blocks and ended their trip in Kodaikanal totally neglecting Gujiliamparai union.

## App aids officials working on assessment reports



Bhuvan, a mobile app meant for disaster, comes in handy to agriculture officials and village administrative officers in the district to jointly assess the damage of crop and affected areas and send report from the spot to the government immediately. It will reach the government server to enable the Commissioner for Revenue Administration to proceed further, officials said.

Bhuvan offers more detailed imagery of locations with spatial resolutions ranging from 5 to 100 metres. User may explore and visualise 2D image data along with rich thematic information on soil, wasteland and water resources. Already, the State government had directed all agricultural officers and VAOs to download the app in their smart phones and send their reports.

The user can upload details needed by 30 government departments during flood or drought. It would help State and Central government officers to verify records submitted by the officials with the aid of uploaded visuals and information through the app, the officials added.

The officials who accompanied the monitoring committee members on Thursday photographed the damaged crop, affected area, its survey number and other land details including longitude and latitude and uploaded it immediately. They uploaded all additional details also.

### **Officials urged to do thorough assessment of drought situation and plan mitigation strategies**



Officials from various departments in the district were urged to carry out a thorough assessment of the impact of poor rainfall and chalkout mitigation strategies during a review meeting here here on Thursday.

The review meeting gained significance as a committee from the Central government is expected to visit the district in few days time. Revenue Minister

R.B. Udhayakumar, who participated in the meeting along with Cooperation Minister 'Sellur' K. Raju, said that the central government had formulated elaborate guidelines and criteria for declaring a region as drought-hit.

“One of the prerequisite is that ten percent of the villages in the district should be taken as a sample and a ground-level study in those area. You have already commenced the exercise. Ensure that the study is thorough and meticulous,” he told the officials.

Dharmendra Pratap Yadav, Housing and Urban Development Secretary, who has been assigned the Monitoring Officer for Madurai district to oversee drought related issues, said that the district administration should also come up with a shelf of projects that can be executed under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme as it will provide employment that has been lost due to failure in agriculture.

Madurai Collector K. Veera Raghava Rao urged the officials from Agriculture and Horticulture department to ensure that all maximum area under cultivation is brought under insurance coverage. “For paddy, the last date for insurance is already over. However, the window is still open for millets, pulses and other rabi crops,” he said.

Minister Raju said that the officials should also come up with mitigation plans to address the expected shortage in meeting drinking water needs. “Health department officials should step up their work to ensure that shortage did not result in distribution of poor quality of water to the public,” he said.

Later, the team of Ministers and officials carried an inspection in the impacted areas in Ayilangudi, Therku Theru and Savudarpatti villages.

### **IFFCO to partner with State to market 'Telangana Seed'**

One of the largest cooperatives in the world, with a whopping 29,000 primary agricultural cooperative societies (PACs), the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) has asked Telangana Government to produce more seed every season so that it could brand it as Telangana Seed.

Addressing a packed gathering at a function to mark the Golden Jubilee year here on Thursday, IFFCO's Managing Director U.S. Awasthi said that

Telangana and Andhra Pradesh had always been actively involved with the IFFCO. “I suggest you to step up seed production. The IFFCO will brand it across several geographies as Telangana Seed,” he said, to which State Principal Secretary-Agriculture C. Parthasarathy replied in one word, saying ‘Agreed’.

Earlier, Mr. Parthasarathy wanted the IFFCO to provide Telangana Government with mobile soil testing laboratories, a request to which Mr. Awasthi also replied in one word, giving his nod for the same. Mr. Awasthi recalled that starting with just 57 PACS in 1967, the IFFCO had come a long way with plants and operations in Africa, Jordan and Dubai, to name a few. “Our focus has always been welfare of our members and progress of the PACS,” he declared.

Mr. Awasthi also wanted that more women be motivated to come in the farming sector and become members in the PACS. “At Annual General Body meetings, if about 1,000 members are present, I want to see at least a minimum of 100 women,” he said. Mr. Parthasarathy in his speech, wanted farmers to progressively reduce the quantity of fertilisers and focus on producing food that is healthy. “Telangana Government is striving to bring one crore acres of land under the plough and shall leave no stone unturned in ensuring welfare of farmers,” he said, to applause.

Later, progressive farmers and representatives of the PACS that registered excellent progress were felicitated.

### **Session on composting technology**

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information and Training Centre is conducting a programme on “water quality standards and composting technology” on January 10. For registration and further details, call 044 - 2626 3484.

### **Focus on solar energy**

Solar panels took precedence at the Southern India Science Fair 2017 as majority of the exhibits were based on solar energy. Most of the participants had exhibited models on tapping solar energy for different works. “We have developed a model vehicle that can use solar energy to plough the land or to cut grass,” said Dani C.S. and Reshma S.S. both Class IX students from Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.



A similar model was also exhibited by the Class IX students from the Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh.

Several exhibits were on protection of environment that included application of alternative source of energy for agricultural and industrial use. From chemical-free mosquito repellents to exhibits of biodegradable plastic prepared from banana peel and milk, the exhibits of students from across the southern India focussed on environment protection. There were few model electronic voting machines that could be used to prevent rigging.

### **Minister inspects paddy fields**

Revenue and Agriculture Department officials should work in tandem to assess the area affected by drought conditions before January 9, said C. Vijaya Baskar, Minister for Health.

Addressing officials at a review meeting here on Thursday, he said that the government had constituted special committees to visit the drought-prone areas and prepare a report. He asked the officials to ensure a fair assessment of affected fields.

Collector S. Ganesh said that all arrangements have been made for proper and full assessment of the survey at all paddy fields.

Agriculture Department official said that out of 2 lakh acres, about 50 per cent of paddy crop had been hit as per a preliminary survey held in Avudaiyarkovil, Aranthangi and Manamelkudi blocks. Later, the Minister inspected the paddy at Keezha Pazhuvanji, Mullur, Vennavalkudi and Kothandamaramapuram. Villagers brought damaged crop and explained the loss sustained by them. They said that the tiller growth had not been registered, although the crop was about 65 days old.

### **Plans to turn Peddapalli into seed bowl of State**

#### **Steps being taken to increase forest cover from 14 per cent to 33 per cent**

Collector A. S. Alagu Varshini called upon the officials to play a responsible role in the development of Peddapalli district as a model one in the state by progressing on the agriculture, education, medical and industrial fronts.

Participating at a review meeting on the development of Peddapalli Assembly segment on Thursday, the Collector said that the Peddapalli district was having ample resources and could definitely emerge as model district in Telangana.

The district, carved out of erstwhile Karimnagar district, had ample water resources and was progressing on the agricultural front, she said and added that the district administration would take all steps to develop the district as seed bowl of the state.

### **Action plan**

The administration had chalked out an action plan to increase the forest cover from the existing 14 per cent to 33 per cent.

All measures are being taken to provide all facilities in the Government schools and the administration is striving hard to increase the results in the SSC examinations. The Collector said that the district administration was preparing a master plan for the development of Peddapalli district headquarters with outer ring road and other facilities.

Peddapalli legislator D. Manohar Reddy said that the Peddapalli segment won the Haritamitra award for the plantation of saplings under the Telanganaku Haritha haram and urged the officials to ensure that all the saplings were nurtured.

He urged the officials to educate the farmers about the poly-house, green-house and drip irrigation system for more profits. Joint Collector S. Prabhakar Reddy and others were present.

***Administration is preparing a master plan for the development of Peddapalli district headquarters with outer ring road***